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Social media literacy for empowering children with new literacy skills for reading, writing and interacting in the networked digital setting: An Action Research Study of teenage students in Mumbai

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Social media literacy for empowering children with new literacy skills for reading, writing and interacting in the networked digital setting: An Action Research Study of teenage students in Mumbai

Shaiju Joseph Vadakkemury

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Abstract

This action research study examines the impact of social media literacy education, using a critical social media literacy paradigm, for the children in Indian contexts and reflects how it fits into the wider perspective of media literacy.

Through implementing a participatory social media literacy workshop in two high schools in Mumbai—32 participants in *School A*, and 29 participants in *School B*—the study inquires how the participants respond to the key concepts of social media literacy. To explore the impact of the workshop, the thesis analyses a diverse collection of data sets— material created by participants during the workshop activities comprising of memes, videos and charts; semi-structured interview responses of 9 participants each from both schools; pre and post-workshop survey data; feedback form responses; and the researcher's fieldwork notes.

A reflexive thematic analysis of fieldwork data gives insights in the area of improvements which the participants make in developing social media capabilities and practices when they participate in social media literacy programmes. The findings show evidence that participatory social media literacy workshops enhance participants' critical analysis, informed participation, resilience, creative self-expression, and citizenship.

The study proposes a critical social media literacy conceptual framework both for implementing social media education in schools and also for conducting further social media literacy research in schools in India. The framework has seven inter-related elements that the thesis diagrammatically presents as *social media circuit*—platform use, information access, platform knowledge, visibility management, information management, creative self-expression, and participation and citizenship. In this framework, the traditional concepts of media literacy—representation, language, audience, and production—have been adapted and integrated into the contemporary networked digital setting. While children, born in the digital age, easily develop the skills for *platform use* and *information access*, their development of other areas of the *social media circuit* need some form of learning, support, and mentoring.

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I hereby declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Shaiju Joseph Vadakkemury

Chapter 1: Introduction

Social media are increasingly embedded in people's daily life, especially of young people. Social media may provide many opportunities which young people can use for their benefits especially for connecting, communicating, learning, creative expressions and participation. However, the opportunities that social media may provide do not mean that technology itself has the power to transform young people's lives. It depends on how these opportunities are used for positive results. Children's use of social media platforms can also vary, depending on demographic factors and social, economic, and cultural contexts. Being "tech savvy" does not necessarily mean that one automatically makes good use of the opportunities the platforms provide. Similarly, integrating technologies for educational purposes may not translate into knowledgeable and informed use (Buckingham, 2006; Buckingham, 2013; Buckingham, 2019a).

While social media provide many opportunities, children also encounter many problems on these platforms such as cyberbullying, hate speech, problematic news, inappropriate content, privacy issues, and data misuse. On the one hand, it should be noted that technology must not be seen as the cause of all these issues. These social issues are interconnected with society, media and children's everyday use (Buckingham, 2019a). On the other hand, children should not be viewed either as totally vulnerable or naturally competent in using the technology. While technology has an impact on children's lives, children also use it for shaping their lives (Buckingham, 2013). Many factors influence children's online experience such as their age, gender, socio-economic status; the involvement of parents, school and peers;

and the country's regulations, policies, and cultural values (EU Kids Online, no date; Livingstone and Helsper, 2010).

It is paramount that young people should develop new literacy skills and capabilities to critically understand the operating forces of networked platforms, how and why the platforms work the way they work, manage mediated visibility, evaluate and judge information, and use the enormous opportunities the networked platforms provide for creativity, sharing, collaborating and participating (Meikle, 2016). Such critical understanding is expected to enable children become critical users of social media and grow in using social media for creative expressions and social participation.

Through this study I developed a critical social media literacy framework for developing teens' social media capabilities and practices through classroom learning in Indian contexts. The study aims at helping teens to grow in making critical use of social media for creative self-expression and citizenship. My critical reflection on developing a social media literacy paradigm and implementing it in classrooms in the Indian context contributes new dimensions to the existing body of media literacy research. Based on my review of the literature, this seems to be the first extensive study of social media literacy in Mumbai at a Ph.D level, and therefore the findings may help further research in this field, particularly in other geographical locations and contexts in India.

My motivation for this study, to a great extent, comes from the media literacy workshops I used to conduct for students in four secondary schools in Pune, a city near Mumbai, in 2008 and 2009. The aim of those two-hour workshops was to introduce to the participants how media *represent* reality and how to understand, evaluate and deconstruct media messages. The workshops were conducted using a

framework of media literacy developed by *Centre For Media Literacy* (no date), an organisation based in the USA. The said framework, developed prior to social media, is based on traditional media literacy education. It is centred on five core concepts and five corresponding key questions:

1. All media messages are 'constructed.'
   Who created this message?
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
   What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
   How might different people understand this message differently from me?
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
   What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Most media messages are organised to gain profit and/or power.
   Why is this message being sent? (Centre For Media Literacy, no date)

From 2011 to 2016, when I was founding director of St Pauls Institute of Communication Education, a media school in Mumbai, I organised a number of seminars and workshops on topics such as journalism, photography, and short filmmaking for the teenagers and youth in Mumbai. These experiences gave me a positive outlook towards the impact of media education. I noticed that media education is useful for improving young people's understanding of media, and for developing their skills in using media for creative self-expression. After several years of conducting those initial media literacy workshops in Pune, I came to this action research study,

where I have attempted to develop a critical social media literacy paradigm that suits the contemporary networked era for teenagers in Mumbai and examine its impact.

1.1 An overview of the research

Meikle (2016), in the conclusion of his book, *Social Media: Communication, Sharing and Visibility,* argues the importance of social media literacy—new literacy skills for reading, writing, and interacting in the networked digital setting. Taking insights from Meikle's argument, my study is focused on understanding whether social media literacy education can empower teens in Mumbai, with the new literacy skills that the contemporary social media environment demands.

This action research study explores the following questions:

RQ1: What impact does social media literacy have on secondary school children?

RQ2: Does social media literacy empower secondary school children with new literacy skills for reading, writing and interacting in the networked digital setting?

The first part of the action research study—action planning—focuses on developing a social media literacy framework, and a basic social media literacy toolkit for classrooms in India. The framework and the toolkit are grounded on the literature reviewed, informed by my pilot study in Mumbai, and greatly influenced by my participation in lectures and seminar discussion activities of the Social Media module in the MA Social Media, Culture and Society, at the University of Westminster. Professor Graham Meikle, the course leader of Social Media module, and my Director of Studies, gave me an opportunity to sit in his class and participate in the seminar discussion activities from September to November 2018. While the study draws

insights from the works of several media and communication scholars, the works of media literacy education scholar David Buckingham receive a special attention. *The Media Education Manifesto,* a recent book by Buckingham (2019a), elaborates how to broaden, interpret and apply the core concepts of traditional media literacy—*language, representation, audience* and *production*—in the contexts of social media and information disorder.

The *Global Kids Online* (no date), a research project being implemented on a large scale, has been producing evidence-based knowledge across various countries on children's online access, use, and existing practices. A recent cross-national, evidence-based study in Bulgaria, Chile and South Africa conducted by Livingstone et al., as part of *Global Kids Online* project, suggests a "ladder of online participation" in children's use of the Internet. The findings from the study demonstrate that most children across these countries enjoy entry-level activities such as social activities, gaming, and learning activities. However, the study shows "most children do not reach the point where they commonly undertake many of the civic, informational and creative activities online that are heralded as the opportunities of the digital age" (2019, p7).

My action planning stage, drawing insights from *Global Kids Online* project, included a pilot survey in three secondary schools in Bandra West, Mumbai with 231 respondents from year (grade) 9. The aim of the pilot survey was to understand respondents' demography and identity, social media access and practices, and their critical understanding of social media. The findings from the pilot survey show that although there is high accessibility and social media use among the respondents, most of them do not climb the "ladder" in making use of the opportunities of social media for creative and civic purposes. Their use mostly stays at the phase of managing profiles,

sharing photos and videos, accessing information, and watching videos to learn. In addition, the findings strongly indicate that the respondents have a very limited critical understanding of platforms, algorithm, surveillance and data misuse. Most of the respondents do not know that what they do on social media is public and permanent. They actually believe that they can easily delete information about themselves that they have posted online if they do not want people to see it. They are not aware that social media companies such as Facebook and Instagram archive user activities, keep deleted data and build up a profile of users for advertisers. The majority of them do not know that what they see on a particular social media platform is managed by its algorithm. The findings from the pilot study reveal the need for helping young people to critically understand platforms and also to enhance their interest and skills in using the opportunities social media provide for creative and civic participation. Therefore, the framework of social media literacy and the toolkit factor in these aspects.

In the second part of the action research, through implementing a participatory social media literacy workshop in two secondary schools in Bandra West, Mumbai—grade 9; 32 participants in *School A*, and 29 participants in *School B*—the study inquires into how the participants respond to the key concepts of social media literacy.

To explore the impact of the workshop, the thesis analyses a diverse collection of data sets—material created by participants during the workshop activities comprising of memes, videos and charts; semi-structured interview responses of 9 participants each from both schools; pre and post-workshop survey data; feedback form responses; and the researcher's fieldwork notes. A reflexive thematic analysis of fieldwork data gives insights in the area of participants' perception of social media literacy and the improvements they make in developing social media capabilities and

practices when they participate in social media literacy programmes. The findings show evidence that participatory social media literacy workshops enhance participants' critical analysis, informed participation, resilience, creative self-expression, and citizenship.

1.2 Situating the study in the complex Indian context

The Republic of India, with an estimated population of 1.39 billion people (Countrymeters, no date) is the largest, most populous democracy in the world. India, composed of 28 states and 8 Union territories, is characterised by social and economic class divisions, caste inequalities, and diversity in language, culture, religion and tribes. There are various subclasses and nuances in the composition of the middle class, working class and rural poor based on factors such as household income and consumption, rural or urban contexts, assets, caste, ethnicity, patriarchy, and division of labour based on gender. The changing nature of class and its intersectionality with caste, religion, language, gender, tribes, and migration are peculiar to India (Banaji, 2017). As Krishnan and Hatekar (2017) point out in their study, a significant aspect of class in the recent history of India is the quantitative expansion of a new middle class which is qualitatively quite different from the traditional middle class. In their analysis, the expansion of the new middle class, across states and across rural and urban areas in varying degree, between 2004/05 and 2011/12, has been characterised by the transformation of a sizable section of the poor into the lower middle class. However, the majority of those who migrated to the lower middle class continue to be within the occupational structure of people experiencing poverty. This means that though the emergent new middle class forms a major section, qualitatively the majority of them in rural areas continue to be engaged in agricultural and construction activities, and many

in urban areas continued to be “engaged in manufacturing, trade and construction activities” (2017, p45).

Although India is currently the fifth largest economy in the world and has achieved tremendous industrial and economic growth, the country lags in important sectors such as infrastructure, nutrition, healthcare, education, and employment (Ghosh, 2019; Mehta, 2020). While an estimated 66 per cent Indians live in rural areas, the country faces the huge challenge of “the socioeconomic inclusion of rural India” (Ghosh, 2019). The Asian Development Bank study in the year 2011, defining $1.35 a day as Asian Poverty Line, reported, “two-thirds of India’s population or around 740 million Indian people live in poverty” (Iyengar and Viswanathan, 2011, p3). In 2019, The World Bank reported that India achieved more than 7 per cent growth over the last 15 years and “halved its poverty rate since 1990s”. However, the report also highlights that India still has the highest number of “the world’s poor and sustained effort is required to continue on a path to higher income status that is inclusive of all its citizenry” (2019). In the same year the Asian Development Bank reported that 10.7 per cent of the employed population in India lives “below $1.90 purchasing power parity a day” (2019).

1.2.1 An overview of school education system in India

The Indian school education system, jointly managed by national and state government sectors, is the largest in the world, “catering to over 260 million young people each year” (Anderson and Lightfoot, 2019, p3). The government of India has been taking measures such as *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) to provide access to universal primary education especially for the children from low income groups. A report based on an annual data collected through District Information System of Education (DISE) from 1.45 million schools across India, shows that the enrolment in

primary schools and upper primary schools in 2015-16 were 129.12 million and 67.59 million, respectively. As per the report, a large number of schools, 33.46 per cent, are very small in size – with less than 50 enrolments (Mehta, 2016). Around the same period, the World Bank reports "while more than 95 per cent of India's children attend primary school, less than half of 16-year-olds, just 44 per cent, complete Class 10" (2015). Even though the number of enrolments has increased in recent years, still a large section of children in India engage in daily wage work for a living and do not attend formal schools. Another major challenge in the Indian school system is the low level of learning outcome across all age groups (The World Bank, 2020).

The management of the complex school system in India can be broadly divided into government run schools, government aided private schools, and unaided private schools. As of 2015/16, about 78 per cent of schools were either government run, or government aided. Only 66,454 schools were government aided. In the same period, there were 268,014 unaided private schools (Mehta, 2016). The government aided schools, run by private management, generally receive support from government for payment of salaries, infrastructure, and textbooks. The unaided private schools primarily depend on student fees to run the schools. While most unaided private schools have English as the medium of instruction, most government-run schools and several aided schools have their respective regional language. Children who study in government run schools are mostly from disadvantaged economic backgrounds. The private schools cater to diverse segments of the society depending on their fees and admission policy. The schools that charge high fees and provide better resources cater to the upper class and some sections of the middle class. The low fee schools often lack qualified teachers, facilities and academic standards. Overall, there exists different categories and unevenness in terms of access, facilities, teaching practices,

and educational standards across government, government aided and private schools. The school system, to a large extent, reproduces the social and economic inequalities prevalent in the country (Mooij, 2008; Majumdar and Mooij, 2011). My fieldwork for the pilot study and main study was conducted in government aided English-medium schools.

The pedagogic and curricular aspects of Indian school education have been highly standardised and largely teacher-centric and focused on textbook-based rote learning for exams. As Majumdar and Mooij point out in their study, "it is the 'chalk, talk and memorise' pedagogy that is visible in the classrooms" (2011, p128). Despite the government's initiatives for a comprehensive pedagogical approach to improve the quality in school education through programmes such as the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), introduced since the mid-1990s, the actual implementation of practices envisioned in such programmes are far from satisfactory. While there are schools with innovative teaching and learning practices both in government and private, the number remains marginal. Generally, the approach of school managements and teachers, availability of resources, and the design of classrooms, are not oriented towards participatory and student-centred learning. The evaluation of students' academic performance is based on their practice and ability to memorise and reproduce material from standardised textbooks with little importance given to critical reflections and creative applications. Therefore, the teachers' focus is on delivering the vast syllabus given in the textbooks with very little student activities. All these can impact in varying measure children's curiosity to learn, their involvement in the learning process, and in their development of creative minds. As Majumdar and Mooij note:

> Unfortunately, in some schools, where ‘chalk, talk and memorise’ was implemented without genuine interest and ambition to stimulate children, we found that active ‘de-learning’ was taking place: children being socialised to become less curious and inquisitive; children encouraged not to answer in their own words but just to repeat standard phrases. What happens here can be called ‘brain drain’ – though obviously of another kind than the elite flight to foreign countries. Too much ‘passive learning’ and ‘parrot training’ is going on, if there was any learning at all (2011, p129).

It is in these contexts that the government of India has revised the Education Policy implemented in 1986 with the National Education Policy 2020 approved on 29 July 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020). The new policy aims to reconfigure the Indian education system for ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education” (p3) from early childhood to higher education. Based on the new policy, the existing curricular and pedagogical school structure 10+2 is modified with a new 5+3+3+4 school structure. The new structure brings early childhood education into the formal school system and divides school years into Foundational Stage, Preparatory Stage, Middle Stage, and Secondary Stage:

- Five years of Foundational Stage – 3 years of preschool and Grades 1-2, covering ages 3-8
- Three years of Preparatory Stage – the Grades 3-5, ages 8-11
- Three years of Middle Stage – Grades 6-8, ages 11-14
- Four years of Secondary Stage – Grades 9-12, ages 14-18. The Secondary Stage is further divided into two phases: Grades 9-10 and Grades 11-12.

The new policy also envisions a substantial change in the content and teaching, and learning practices based on the cognitive development of children. It stresses the

need for reducing content and making learning experiential and enjoyable. It highlights developing children's autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, and social and emotional capacities. Overall, the new policy envisages a student-centred, participatory, and integral school education. However, the realisation of the changes prescribed in the policy is a distant reality, and how far and to what measure it can be successfully implemented will only be revealed with the passing of years.

1.2.2 Internet access, social media use, and information disorder in India

A report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI, 2019) shows that India has an overall 40 per cent Internet penetration with 504 million active Internet users as of November 2019. Remarkably, among the Internet users, 71 million are between 5-11 years old and the rest is 12 years old and above. The report states that the main activity carried out on the Internet is social networking, followed by entertainment and accessing news:

> Social Networking / Chatting is the topmost activity done on internet with 9 out of 10 individuals using Internet for Social networking / Chatting closely followed by Entertainment in terms of Watching and Downloading of Music, Movies and Videos. 1 out of 3 use internet to Watch/Read News Online and close to a fourth use it for Email (IAMAI, 2019, p13).

Another report by *Hootsuite & We Are Social* (2020) states that Internet users in India increased to 687.6 million by January 2020 – around half of India's population. As stated in the report, by then, around 400 million people in India used social media, a penetration of 29 percentage. Though the number of social media users is on a steady increase in India, around 70 per cent of the population still do not use it. A report

by *McKinsey Global Institute* (Kaka et al., 2019) shows that in 2018 Indian mobile users consumed, each month, on average, 8.3 gigabits (GB) of data. The report also notes that in the same year, Indians with 1.2 billion mobile phone subscriptions downloaded over 12 billion apps. Despite the fast growth of Internet users in India facilitated by affordable smart phones and mobile data plans, there still exists a huge digital divide.

The advent of smartphone-enabled news access and news sharing has transformed the news ecosystem in India greatly. A survey, conducted by *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism* in 2018 among English speaking respondents, mainly from urban India, reveals an increasing trend of people accessing news online and on social media. While 68 per cent of respondents used smartphones to consume news, more than half of them mentioned that they get news on Facebook and WhatsApp (Aneez et al., 2018). However, the news landscape has to be situated in the social, economic and political context of India and the existence of around 400 private satellite news channels; the public service broadcaster *Doordarshan Television* and the *All India Radio*; around 17,000 registered newspapers (BBC, 2019; Office of Registrar of Newspapers for India, no date) and innumerable online news websites and news channels. All these cater to different language markets such as Hindi, English, Telugu, and Tamil (Banaji and Bhat, 2019). India has an estimated 197 million TV homes out of 298 million households (IBEF, 2020) and around 400 million cumulative newspaper circulation (BBC, 2019).

In recent years, the dissemination of misinformation, disinformation and divisive propaganda has become serious menace affecting the social fabric of India. The information ecosystem situated within India's socio-political context and amplified by the widespread use of smartphones have contributed to unprecedented cybercrimes,

especially against women, and mob lynching incidents in India (Banaji and Bhat, 2019). While fabricated stories and polarising campaigns spread ubiquitously on social media and messaging platforms, they are fuelled by the narratives and discourses of highly partisan corporate-owned mainstream news TV channels. Depending largely on social media both for sourcing stories and for disseminating content, they increasingly substitute objective on-the-ground reporting with “talking heads”, jingoistic flavoured TV debates, to feed into audience emotions for making profit (Rodrigues, 2019; Banaji and Bhat, 2019). A study conducted by Oxford Internet Institute’s *Project on Computational Propaganda,* assessing the amount of junk news and divisive content, various political parties in India disseminated on WhatsApp and Facebook prior to the general elections in 2019 notes: “the proportion of polarizing political news and information in circulation over social media in India is worse than all of the other country case studies we have analysed, except the US Presidential election in 2016” (Narayanan et al., 2019, p7).

The unprecedented and alarming WhatsApp-enabled mob lynching incidents in India’s recent history have received international attention. News website *The Quint* (no date), has tracked and recorded profiles of 119 mob lynching and 106 mob assault victims between 2015 and 2019. In several cases the victims have been Muslims or other minority communities. Banaji and Bhat (2019), in their study of WhatsApp-enabled disinformation and mob lynching in India, reveal the influence of social, political, religious, and caste factors leading to the violence:

> Our analysis found patterns in the data suggesting that WhatsApp messages work in tandem with ideas, tropes, messages and stereotypes which circulate more widely in the public domain, in family and community conversations and in the mainstream news media (2019, p3).

Triggered by the number of mob lynching incidents that took place in various parts of India based on misinformation and disinformation circulating on WhatsApp, a particular district, Kannur, in Kerala, South India, launched a 40-minute literacy class in schools to help children distinguish fake news (Biswas, 2018). In their report, Banaji and Bhat propose "investment for widening efforts to include critical media literacy with an emphasis on constitutional values and human rights" (2019, p5). My study situates in this socio-political context of disinformation, polarising propaganda and cybercrimes in India. The framework of this study includes helping children develop critical literacy for understanding the contemporary information ecosystem and for evaluating and judging the disinformation and propaganda they encounter.

1.2.3 Media literacy in India

Based on my investigation of the related literature, there have been some initiatives and attempts to introduce media literacy in schools in India, mostly as extra-curricular programmes such as "media clubs" initiated by *National Council for Education Research and Technology* (Media Club, no date). Some groups and organisations such as *Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, Abhivyakti Media for Development,* and *SIGNIS* (World Catholic Association for Communication), have taken initiatives to organise media literacy programmes in some schools. Way back in 1979, *The Xavier Institute of Communication Education*, Mumbai, had organised a media education programme called "Media World" for high school students in some schools in Mumbai. These initiatives were mostly limited to organising media literacy workshops or short-term programmes in some schools. Regrettably, the Indian education system has not included formal media literacy in its curriculum. It depends on each school to organise media literacy programmes for their students (Dasgupta, 2011; SIGNIS, 2016;

Jayachandran, 2018). As Jayachandran notes, while various media literacy initiatives have been taking place in isolation, a wider implementation of media literacy has not yet taken shape in India:

> One primary problem is that despite multiple avenues like NGOs, media resources, community radio, e-resources and activist initiatives, they appear to work in relative isolation. A connected engagement in media, educational institutions, building access and technologies is important to meet the goal of development which is the cornerstone of media education… (2018, p81).

A study conducted by Sharma (2012) in Tamil Nadu, reveals that only 46 per cent of those surveyed were aware that media constructed reality and 86 per cent were unaware of the consumeristic motive of the media.

1.3 Limitations of the fieldwork

The fieldwork of this study consists of a *pilot* study in three secondary schools and a *main* study in two secondary schools. Both studies, pilot and main, were conducted in government aided schools in Bandra West, a suburb in Mumbai. The city of Mumbai, consisting of two districts in the state of Maharashtra – Mumbai City District and Mumbai Suburban district – has an estimated 20 million population (World Population Review, 2020). Home to diverse social classes, “Mumbai is marked by its social heterogeneity cutting across racial, religious, regional and linguistic lines” (Risbud, 2003, p3). Mumbai is the financial and commercial capital of India and the centre of entertainment industry. As the city diversified and expanded in manufacturing, trade, financial, and other public and private sectors, Mumbai witnessed the growth of migrant population consisting of skilled and unskilled labour from different states across India.

Around 40 per cent of population in Mumbai is estimated to live in various slum areas. Dharavi, Asia's largest slum situated in Mumbai, has more than a million people (BBC, no date). The residents in Dharavi have a poor living condition as they lack proper food, shelter, drainage facilities, sanitation and living space (Chodankar, 2004). Despite the efforts of municipal schools and non-governmental organisations' initiatives in Dharavi, children's education is still a big concern as many children, particularly girls, end up working in factories and as domestic helpers.

Although Mumbai has people from across the country belonging to various classes, language, castes, religions and culture, one cannot conclude that the city truly represents entire India. The contexts in India vary within and between different geographical locations. But, as Banaji in her book, *Children and Media in India: Narratives of Class, Agency and Social Change*, argues, understanding the contexts of social class and structures is important when studying children and media in India: "Both children and media use should be located within a historically and geographically specific, intersectional matrix that takes account of gender, age, caste and class" (2017, p88).

Social structures impact children's media habits and their limited or lack of access to the Internet and smartphones can disconnect them "from the internet sphere" (Banaji, 2017, p199). Therefore, when studying children and social media, the Indian class structures intersected by castes, tribes, gender, language, religion and ideology; urban and rural divide; the Indian education system; and India's digital and media landscape, are important factors to be considered.

Furthermore, the risks, harms, and restrictions that children and women encounter in public spaces and at home from socially and economically disadvantaged

communities in India can be quite alarming. For instance, in 2015 a survey in slum communities of Mumbai and the neighbouring district Thane revealed the appalling state of restrictions, and lack of access and safety that the young girls faced in their communities and home (Girlhoodindia, 2019). The survey was conducted by 80 adolescent girls from these slum communities who were part of an empowerment programme called *Learning Community*, formed by eight NGO's jointly. The young girls designed the survey questions and executed the survey within their own communities guided by qualified mentors. A glance at these survey respondents' demography – 942 young girls – reveals the complex and diverse contexts even within slum communities in Mumbai and Thane. They belonged to various religions: 56 per cent Hindus, 31 per cent Muslims, 11 per cent Buddhists/Dalits. They also belonged to various sub classes based on their parents' work. Their parents were either daily labourers in construction sites, domestic workers, or taxi or rickshaw drivers.

Remarkably, out of 942 young girl respondents, 91 per cent mentioned easy access to education, but 45 per cent respondents had "some or total restrictions on use of playgrounds, and the majority had little access to the cinema or the mall" (Girlhoodindia, 2019, p6). Sixty per cent of respondents did not have control over access to social media and transportation, "limiting their range of mobility to their immediate neighbourhood" (p6). The survey also revealed the restrictions the girls faced, mostly from family members, with regard to interacting with others: "most girls are not allowed to talk to boys at all, many cannot talk to community members, and some girls speak of not being able to have friends" (p10). Many of them were not allowed to talk loudly or laugh while at home. More than half of the respondents observed that "the restrictions affect their personality" (p10). Furthermore, 60 per cent of them were scared to use public toilets due to the presence of drunkards and

substance-abusers and the unusable condition of the public toilets; 40 per cent found libraries unsafe; and 40 per cent found roads and sports grounds unsafe after sunset. The interventions they sought for enhancing safety consisted of police protection, and CCTV surveillance (Girlhoodindia, 2019).

All these circumstances show that the topics such as access, risks, harm, and privacy that are generally discussed in the studies of children's online space are still the very topics that require attention in a large section of children's offline living space in India (Banaji, 2017). Many school-going young people combat issues of access, privacy, self-expression, mobility, and safety in their offline life. In these contexts, discussing with them online surveillance and issues of social media privacy may be a paradox when in reality they are deprived of online connected space and what they look forward to is police security and CCTV surveillance for offline public space safety. When they face severe restrictions for self-expression, friendship, access to playground, entertainment, mobility and social media, discussing with them the need to develop counter power to challenge platform owners and data brokers or the consequences of uncertain visibility may not be of great value.

In addition to the above circumstances there are millions of working-class children in India for whom the priority is sustaining their life, or negotiating between work, pleasure and study. The problems they face offline – child abuse, trafficking, homelessness, congested living space, and lack of food, medicine and sanitation, and many more – are real and enormous in *digital* India. For these children who struggle to negotiate the abuse at workplace, school, or home; or have to earn a livelihood while looking after their disabled parents (Banaji, 2017), the concept of social media literacy may not make much sense. For them, as Banaji observes:

> […] being digitally illiterate, compromising one's privacy, stumbling across porn or gang-related material online, becoming obese through the consumption of goods advertised without adequate warning, and sharing inappropriate content on social media are not immediate hazards (2019, p191).

Furthermore, the nuances emerging from the intersections of class, caste, religion, ideology, language, and migration and their consequences on media practices in urban and rural contexts, are important factors to be considered when studying media (Banaji, 2017). Teens' encounters of risks and opportunities both offline and online, access to Internet, agency, and development of social media capabilities can be intersected with factors such as class, caste, gender, and religion. Hence, the framework of this study, designed primarily for young people who have a fair access to basic necessities of life including digitally connected life and who enjoy reasonable amount of freedom for self-expression and entertainment, may not be equally suitable for those deprived of such access and freedom. For the large number of young people who lack basic needs and are severely restricted in many ways, interventions for sustainable living, facilitating digital connectivity, and empowering them to self-express, participate and be heard in the society can be more relevant.

Studies discussed in Chapter Two of the literature review show that established Digital Storytelling is a useful framework for empowering children, especially from marginalised sections, to self-express and be heard in the society. However, further study is required in this area as it is beyond the scope of this study. There is yet a further challenge when a classroom has a mixed category of children as can be the case in several schools in India. In these contexts, understanding the development of social media literacy analysed in two groups of teens from two schools cannot be used to extend to other contexts, especially teens from extremely low socio-economic

status. Therefore, although this research presents a basic framework for social media literacy learning, its impact in different contexts and geographical locations, taking into account the intersection of class, caste, gender and religion, should be further investigated.

1.4 Clarification of terms

In the upcoming chapters when I use terms such as “widespread use of social media”, “contemporary networked landscape”, “digital era”, “digitally connected life”, “networked information ecosystem”, and “user-generated surveillance culture”, they do not represent a large population of India who do not have access to the Internet.

Even though I mention on several occasions in the thesis “developing children’s social media literacy”, this study is focused on teens’ social media literacy. Teens and children are used interchangeably in different chapters.

In the area of social media literacy education, I refer to agency as young peoples’ ability for awareness, choices and acting (Maynard and Stuart, 2018) in their lived experiences of social relations and historically specific contexts. I consider voice as young people’s “ability to articulate practical needs and strategic interests, individually and collectively, in the private domain and in the public” (Gammage, Kabeer and Rodgers, 2016, p6). I consider empowerment as a process of increasing young people’s justice-driven agency to participate effectively in one’s on and offline contexts and bring about change without violating human rights.

1.5 Overview of the chapters

Chapter 1 (this chapter) introduces the topic, aim, motivation, and the context of the study. It also gives an overview of the research design and tries to situate the study within the social, political and media landscape of India.

The literature review section has two chapters – Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 discusses various realities of social media, “surveillance culture”, “participatory culture”, and “information disorder” in the context of ongoing “convergence of content, computing and communications” (Meikle, 2016, p140). The discussions demonstrate the importance of citizens’ critical literacies for understanding social media, informed participation, managing information and media visibility, and for transforming the networked ecosystem. Chapter 3 analyses the core concepts of media literacy education and tries to reconceptualise it in today’s context of social media. The pedagogic, creative, and transformative elements from the established Digital Storytelling practice are integrated into the social media literacy framework.

Chapter 4 discusses the research design and methods used in the research. The chapter explains the reasons for choosing action research and its implications for the study, the fieldwork work design – a pilot survey and a main action research study in Mumbai – the ethical aspects, and the methods used for data analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the pilot study findings, analysis and its implications for the main study.

Chapter 6 proposes a framework for critical social media literacy learning. The framework consists of critical social media capabilities and practices, and the *circuit of social media literacy*. The chapter also presents original material for teaching social

media literacy – social media literacy toolkit. Participatory social media literacy learning in secondary schools is proposed for helping teens to progress on the *circuit of social media literacy.*

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 deal with the qualitative data presentation, analysis and discussion. Workshop participants' activity material and interview data are analysed and discussed in detail to evaluate the impact and implications of social media literacy learning.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis by presenting an overview of the research with an emphasis on the importance of developing children's critical social media literacies. The thesis proposes a framework of critical social media literacy both for a further and wider research on social media literacy with children in India, and also for teaching and learning social media literacy in Indian secondary schools.

Chapter 2: Understanding social media, information disorder, and participatory culture

This chapter, part 1 of the literature review, critically analyses the ongoing development and the impact of social media in the social, political and economic contexts. The affordability of corporate owned Internet-based social media platforms has been reshaping the way people communicate, connect, collaborate, and share and consume information. This chapter critically explores how these opportunities are constrained and controlled by various elements such as platform design, algorithms, economic logic, and socio-political contexts. Corporate controlled platforms increasingly shape user behaviour (Zuboff, 2019), reinforce discriminations and inequalities in the society (Lyon, 2018), produce uncertain visibility (Meikle, 2016), and amplify problematic news. The analysis in this chapter contributes to identifying the critical capabilities and skills required for “reading”, “writing”, “interacting” in the networked digital landscape (Meikle, 2016).

This chapter has three sections: a) understanding social media, b) news and information disorder in the age of social media, and c) reimagining participatory culture.

2.1 Understanding social media

Social media can be described as “specific set of internet-based, networked communication platforms” (Meikle, 2016, px) that are built on the mechanism of algorithmically represented user-generated content and driven by the trade of behavioural data (Zuboff, 2019). As Meikle (2016) argues, social media platforms are

founded by exploiting the many possibilities emerging from the ongoing “convergence of content, computing and communications” (p140). Convergence amplifies accessibility, affordances, and networking as content get digitised, accessed and shared on digital devices. Social media have a mechanism, through the values, features, and economic logic embedded in the platforms, to exploit user-generated content (UGC) and associated human experiences resulting from participation on networked platforms (Meikle, 2016).

2.1.1 Web 2.0 and social media

The term Web 2.0 was coined by O’Reilly (2005) to project a newer web space, after the dot.com collapse in 2000, featuring user-friendly interfaces, user-generated database, “collective intelligence” and “customer self-service”. As Gauntlett (2011) describes, the Internet, from 1990s to mid-2000 (Web 1.0: a retrospective term after Web 2.0 was introduced), was a separate, independent space for people to broadcast and to make content available online. In this format, audience visited the websites mainly to consume content. Web 2.0 did not replace the existing web, instead it gave new dimensions to the web that people were familiar with. Web 2.0 was a “particular kind of ethos and approach” (p5) for collective activity on the web, for people to engage in collaborative work. Web 2.0 enabled people to use and to add value to the platform by contributing to it. The approach of connecting collective abilities of people online and the availability of easy-to-use tools to make and share content online have been making Web 2.0 platforms popular. The platform grows bigger when more people use it to make and share things and collectively contribute to it. Social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook are founded on Web 2.0 business models (Gauntlett, 2011).

Furthermore, it is important to take note that the starting of Web 2.0 narrative was not guided by user empowerment or "participatory culture". Instead, the narrative was advocated for promoting a business model to the investors in a particular context of Internet crisis (Meikle and Young, 2012; Hjorth and Hinton, 2019). The Web 2.0 narrative of Internet economic scope was an effective strategy in a post-crisis situation to convince the investors. It was a model framed to revive "capital accumulation for the corporate Internet economy" (Fuchs, 2017, p35). Web 2.0 brought in a new way "that business has come to think about the web and, most importantly, the ability of business to exert control in an environment that had previously been seemingly resistant to it" (Hjorth and Hinton, 2019, p51). The strategic shift in this model was a successful business which runs on users' unpaid activities in creating and distributing content (Meikle and Young, 2012). While the businesses saw in this model, the ability to exert control over users, they presented it to the users as a new model that would empower them (Hjorth and Hinton, 2019). The social media companies, for example, YouTube and Facebook, thrive on accumulating huge profit without making any content on their own, but through developing a database platform of easily sharable user-generated content and personal information (Meikle, 2016).

2.1.2 Convergence of personal and public communication

Meikle (2016) defines social media as "networked database platforms that combine public with personal communication" (p6). Meikle's definition conveys the complex phenomena of communication practices and experiences in the current media environment. This definition shows that the phenomenal change that is taking place with social media is "the convergence of public and personal communication" (2016, px). Prior to social media, personal and public communication were distinct and

separate. Public communication on public media was meant for others/public. Personal communication was not meant for broadcast. Social media enable the convergence of personal and public communication (Meikle, 2016).

As Meikle (2016) describes, the popularity of user-generated content associated with Web 2.0 database business models, the developments of social networking platforms and the mass use of smartphones amplified the convergence of "public media" and "personal communication" on social media. The personal communication and sharing within a network of friends, families and other contacts become unpredictably visible to numerous others on the networked platform (Meikle, 2016).

Meikle (2016) asserts that this personal sharing, in fact, is a "public communication" on social media. The "personal communication" on social media flows on multiple directions through tagging, liking, commenting and sharing in multiple contexts. In the process users lose control of what they shared since others can further share it and the content that is shared becomes part of the database of social media corporations.

Whatever the consequences of the convergence of private and public communication, the reality is that social media is increasingly embedded in people's daily lives. What motivates a huge population across the world to spend money and time to use social media, even if it does not give them any monetary gains? Gauntlett (2011) points out that people, generally, like to get connected, to be part of a community, to join in conversations, and to exhibit their talents. People also have a drive to create, share, give feedback, get recognised and noticed. Social media provide a platform which facilitates all these social rewards, support and happiness. Besides, it also helps them to connect with new people and new communities. Another reason

for social media use is “network effects” – “the more numerous the users who use a platform, the more valuable that platform becomes for everyone else” (Srnicek, 2017, p45). One may decide using a particular platform since one’s family, friends, colleagues or interest groups are using that platform and “often serves as an extension of existing relationships” (Currier, no date). The presence of a number of important contacts on a platform like Facebook or LinkedIn may compel one to continue using these platforms even if one wishes to stop. Social media platforms provide practical benefits of connecting, communicating and maintaining a public image (Currier, no date). Thus, social media has been bringing in a shift in the way people spend time, connect with others and make their work visible to the public. But, there is a cost to all these rewards as the discussion below shows.

2.1.3 The trade of “behavioural data”

While the networked platforms and connected devices facilitate user interaction, communication, sharing, and connectivity, the underlying “economic logic” driving them and built into their design is collection and trade of “behavioural data” (Zuboff, 2019). Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier (2013) call the technological practice of capturing and converting various aspects of human life into data as “datafication”. Through “datafication” of individual’s feelings, mood, behaviour, locations and habits (Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier, 2013), social media platforms generate and collect users’ metadata. The metadata is the data that is associated with the user interactions, behaviour, and engagements such as people with whom users interact, the devices they use, the locations, and time of interaction. Zuboff (2019) points out that in this process, users are treated as a source of raw material in the supply chain of production and trade of behavioural data. In networked businesses platform owners channelise,

collect, and process user experiences, habits and behaviours, and trade them in the market sphere.

In networked ecosystem, user behaviour is predesigned into the platform (Schafer, 2011; Zuboff, 2019). Citizens interact and engage on these platforms using the platform's predesigned language of rating, reviewing, commenting, sharing and liking. Such language of engagement is engineered into platform design for tracking user behaviour (van Dijck, Poell and Waal, 2018). Thus, citizens' participation and agency on networked platforms are turned into additional data in the hands of those who process it such as platform owners, data brokers and state bodies. Citizens have very little control over their algorithmic profiling and representation, and the commodification of their personal data (Hintz, Dencik and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). To where their data flows, for what purposes the data is then used, and its privacy implications, are neither transparent nor comprehensible to the ordinary citizens (van Dijck, Poell and Waal, 2018). The knowledge asymmetry between users and those who are engaged in data collection is huge. Those who collect, process, predict behavioural data and with whom they share that information know much about users. But users are unaware of how much of their behavioural data are collected and in what ways they are put to use. The commodification of user behaviours and its impact on personal autonomy, citizenship, and democracy is elusive and not easily understandable (Zuboff, 2019).

2.1.4 The making of algorithmic identities

Algorithms are sets of instructions designed to perform a specific function. They are embedded on social media platforms to filter, score, sort, rank and prioritise (Beer, 2017) users and content. They function automatically based on their design and logics

and the data that they collect and engage with (Cheney-Lippold, 2019). Algorithms perform various functions on the social media platforms depending on the policies, regulations, and values driving the social media companies. Fundamentally, algorithms work in the backend of social media platforms to process user activities and to provide users with personalised recommendations. The values of social media companies and the information about the user activities enable algorithms to determine what users see and how they see. Algorithms determine the way people and information are represented on the platforms (Noble, 2018).

Social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube create algorithmic identities of users by making automated algorithmic inferences and categorisation from their data (Cheney-Lippold, 2011). While the scoring and categorising of users are based on their data – user activities and behaviour – the making of algorithmic identities are ultimately done by the machines that interpret that data (Cheney-Lippold, 2019). Algorithmic profiling of people based on their data derived from their online interactions have serious implications on surveillance, predictive governance, distribution of welfare resources, persuasion, and control. Corporates and government more and more use machines to algorithmically quantify human beings and their behaviours, to generalise and segregate patterns and models. The algorithmic representations have serious privacy implications and can also result in social, political, economic and religious discriminations (Noble 2018; Cheney-Lippold, 2019; Couldry, 2020).

Pariser (2011), in his book, *The Filter Bubble*, explains that the formation of algorithmic identities and algorithmic recommendations to users can have an impact on diversity and plurality as people see less and less different viewpoints; instead they

engage more and more with information that confirms their thinking. This, Pariser believes, can lead people to be enclosed in their own invisible bubbles without them taking any effort (Pariser, 2011).

Pariser (2011) explains this as he differentiates between the identity Google and Facebook create for their users. He calls the identity Google has for a user as "click identity" and what Facebook has as "share identity". Google creates a profile of people based on the clicks they make on the web. Every click on a Google platform – Google Search, Google Chrome, YouTube, Google Map, Google Calendar, Google Photos – is an additional data (click signal), which the company uses to profile users. Based on these clicks the platform knows users' tastes, interests, and background. The search result, news feed and the personalised recommendation are informed by these click profiling. While Facebook, which owns Instagram and WhatsApp, also tracks the click history of users, its primary way of profiling users is through tracking what they share and who they interact with on their platforms. The Google's "click-based self" and Facebook's "share-based self" are only a one-sided representation of people. Because, one set of data cannot describe who people are. One's identity is beyond what one clicks or shares. Yet, Google and Facebook, to a great extent, succeed in keeping their users lured with their personalised targeting and recommendations.

2.1.5 Social media and surveillance culture

The widespread integration of tracking technologies in everyday life, the convergence of personal and public communication (Meikle, 2016), and the user-generated content sharing have been resulting in unprecedented surveillance. Social media platforms are designed for visibility and surveillance. On the one hand, the platform language for user participation such as liking, sharing, commenting, posting, and following are

engineered for knowing user identity, for tracking and watching users, and for commodification of user data. On the other hand, users actively use the affordances and the language of social media to self-represent and to make themselves visible. They also get involved in watching others by way of checking their profile, images, habits, and location. While some care being watched many others don't seem to care the surveillance; and many like to be watched. In general people are becoming accustomed and "complicit in user-generated convergence" (Lyon, 2018, p18).

Social media system is "characterised by both watching and a high awareness of being watched" (Marwick, 2012, p398). Lyon in his book, *The Culture of Surveillance,* defines surveillance as "the operations and experiences of gathering and analysing personal data for influence, entitlement and management" (2018, p6). Lyon elaborates that various actors engage in surveillance practices with different motives and purposes such as corporate watching users' social media behaviours to *influence* them with targeted campaigns, or government agencies analysing citizens' data to allocate *entitlement*, or security agencies using data for predictive *management*. The emerging "surveillance culture", as Lyon points out, permeates both online and offline areas of human life and is becoming part of everyday life. The widespread integration of surveillance tools such as cameras and scanner; the tracking of loyalty cards, credit cards and shopping details; and monitoring of connected devices and online behaviour, are all leading to a complex culture of surveillance. The contemporary surveillance culture encompasses from ubiquitous data collection by corporations for predicting user behaviours to government agencies using data for pre-emptive measures and predictive governance to ordinary users watching each other.

Lyon argues that a defining element in the dynamic of emerging surveillance culture is user participation, practices, and engagement. The "user-generated surveillance" (p7) takes the forms of users watching others such as friends, neighbours and strangers; users allowing themselves to be watched for visibility or for fun; and users engaging in self-watching for purposes such as monitoring health or sleep patterns. In the social media system people not only watch others but also share information about others and make them visible with various intentions. As Marwick distinguishes, "social media has a dual nature in which information is both consumed and produced, which creates a symmetrical model of surveillance in which watchers expect, and desire, to be watched" (2012, p380).

Although in social media enabled surveillance culture, users participate in watching and being watched, there exists a power asymmetry between users and corporate and government agencies who employ machines to process large scale data from social media in real-time for influence, control and management (Marwick, 2012; Lyon, 2018). Users "cannot watch back, such as marketers or data-miners" (Marwick, 2012, p384). However, as Marwick argues, in social media surveillance, users also exercise some form of power by the choices and practices in their connections and interactions on the platforms. This power relation in surveillance is different from the hierarchical dimension of power exerted by corporate and government bodies.

Focusing on the economic dimension of surveillance, Zuboff (2019) calls it as "surveillance capitalism". She reiterates that the contemporary digital ecosystem is engineered for and runs on surveillance capitalism. Since platforms employ machine learning for behavioural predictions, they require huge volume of behavioural data. In addition, for platforms to enhance the scope of their businesses, they require a variety

of behavioural data consisting of personal habits, activities, reactions, and emotions. Therefore, platforms engineer their design to extract user experiences and behaviour as much as possible for enhanced predictions. Zuboff argues that the mechanisms and the process of automated digital ecosystem is not only limited to knowledge and prediction of human behaviour, but they also shape human behaviour. This emerging surveillance system has far reaching consequences in society since this shaping of human behaviour is engineered for economic benefit and controlled by a few corporates with enormous power.

All these discussions on social media, algorithmic sorting, and surveillance reveal that the emerging surveillance culture is much extensive, widespread, complex and fluid. It has many layers, and it affects the social, political, and economic aspects of human life in many ways. It reinforces the social and economic inequalities in the society through the mechanisms embedded on connected devices and networked platforms (Lyon, 2018). These devices and platforms have contributed to algorithmic sorting and assigning of citizens to “measurable” categories for predictive governance, allotment of benefits, and targeted marketing (Cheney-Lippold, 2019). All these have not only been reproducing and deepening the existing discriminations in the society but also increasingly normalising such practices. While these are driven by powerful corporations, governments collude with them for their own advantages. Broadly speaking ordinary users are unaware of the deeper consequences of contemporary “surveillance culture”, “surveillance capitalism”, and algorithmic culture. Because its mechanism, economic logic, and other driving forces are designed to be elusive and hidden from the “ordinary” users (Lyon, 2018; Cheney-Lippold, 2019; Zuboff, 2019).

While citizens embrace platforms because of their outwardly free service, enticing design, connectivity, convenience, and network effect, their lack of public good, misuse of personal data, and privacy consequences are invisible to them (van Dijck, Poell and Waal, 2018). Therefore, it is immensely important that citizens become critically aware of the factors driving the networked platforms, connected devices and the consequences of algorithmic profiling and the emerging "surveillance culture", on society. Such awareness, I argue is impetus for citizens' informed participation, protection of privacy, and their active involvement in shaping technologies.

Furthermore, as Meikle notes that the visibility that "personal communication" receives on "public media" "demands for new kinds of ethics in everyday life, as we negotiate each other's communications and each other's public identities in making use of these in our own social media presentations of ourselves" (Meikle, 2016, p20).

2.2 News and information disorder in the age of social media

The "convergence of content, computing and communications" (Meikle, 2016, p140), the affordances of networked platforms and the extensive use of smart phones, and the development of user-generated content have transformed the information ecosystem and the dynamics of news. People now increasingly consume, curate, and disseminate news online, social media and messaging applications (Pew Research Center, 2018; Ofcom, 2019).

On the one hand, social media amplify citizen journalism, public debate, and social movements as people easily communicate, connect and share information.

While these can potentially have positive consequences in the area of democracy, public opinion, and free speech, studies also show that constructive political discussions on social media are much less. Indiscriminate, prejudiced, and polarising discussions very often dominate these platforms (Bradshaw and Howard, 2018). As observed in the report of an extensive study undertaken by the House of Commons, UK, the scale and speed in which misleading and hateful content spread on the Internet is unprecedented. Various actors use social media to manipulate information, spread hatred, retaliate with revenge, and attempt to influence public opinion and political election (Collins et al., 2019).

2.2.1 Social media – new digital intermediaries for news

Prior to social media, people mostly consumed news from visiting a trusted news source such as a newspaper, magazine, TV channel or news website. With social media, the consumption of news has changed. As social media algorithmically make available news from various sources, users tend to go with the story rather than the source. In social media information ecosystem, the source inclines to be less important, instead socially shared and algorithmically amplified news tends to get more attention (Messing and Westwood, 2012). In providing personalised content, as Vaidhyanathan argues, the format of the timeline or newsfeed of platforms are not designed to distinguish the source of content. Content from a reliable news site, a propaganda campaign, and an indiscriminate post of a user, appear in the same “frames, using the same fonts, in the same format” (2018, p5) as users scroll on their screen.

While reliable news sources have internal structures for publishing such as qualified human editors, trained journalists and subject experts, who are expected to

follow ethical standards, social media as new information gatekeepers do not have such internal structures (Messing and Westwood, 2012). Nevertheless, social media employ some form of editorial functions by way of selection, classification, presentation, ranking, repetition and exposure of content to users. Social media through their complex algorithms exert power over the way content is filtered, supplied and accessed by users. The architecture of the platform algorithm is designed to feed into users' prejudices and bias. This has serious implications for media plurality, democracy and public opinion (Helberger, Konigslow and Noll, 2015; Tambini, 2015).

As social media are increasingly becoming new digital intermediaries for providing news to the users, their role as gatekeepers is in question (Helberger, Konigslow and Noll, 2015). Social media companies do not want to be considered as media organisations. They claim to be technology companies who only provide platforms for users to connect, communicate, network and share content. These companies do not want to be considered as media organisations as that would mean taking responsibility and making editorial decisions of content published on their platforms. Another important reason for their resistance is that it can have implications on their business model (Buckingham, 2017a; Buckingham, 2019a). Nevertheless, platforms are not neutral channels. While making news and information accessible to people they influence its flow, visibility and exposition on their platforms (Helberger, Konigslow and Noll, 2015). Platforms' algorithm curate news and personalise news to individuals. The opaque algorithms of the platform deeply control the dissemination of news on their platform through news assortment and personalised targeting (House of Commons, 2018). As Buckingham (2019) notes, social media are media organisations and like older media, they represent the world and make meaning of realities from

certain perspectives. Social media are also linked to older media and mostly exist to make profit (Buckingham, 2017).

Algorithms for "engaging" and "personalised news"

Algorithms have different purposes depending on the purpose for which they are deployed. Algorithms have an important role in the context of representation and spread of information on social media. On the one hand, algorithms are designed and embedded on social media platforms to represent personalised content to users (Pariser, 2011). On the other hand, algorithms are designed and embedded for spreading content that engage users (Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

As Pariser (2011) points out, providing personalised news is a strategy adopted by social media companies to capture people's attention, engagement, endorsement and to target them with personalised ads and sell more products. In this personalisation ecosystem, everyone is provided with unique content based on one's tastes and interests. To achieve this, as discussed earlier, platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, create and store profiles of users based on their data primarily derived from their interaction on the platforms. This profiling informs the platforms who people are, their interests, likes and dislikes, tastes and habits, and based on these they are targeted with personalised content. Social media platforms, to a great extent, succeed in keeping their users lured with their personalised targeting and recommendations.

Furthermore, the functions of algorithms in the information ecosystem should also be analysed from the perspective of the "spreadability" of content. As Vaidhyanathan in his study of Facebook points out, it is not the ethical standard, objectivity or credibility of the content that decides its spreadability but the quantity of engagement measured

algorithmically – “the number of clicks, ‘likes’, shares, and comments” (p6). Although quantity is driven by users’ emotions, and social, political, and cultural context, it can also be manipulated both organically and artificially depending on ones’ organisational power or technical skills. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, are designed to amplify content that engages users’ strong emotions. Junk news, conspiracy theories, bigotry, gender abuses, and hate speech spread fast on social media since such topics generate strong reactions from users (Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

2.2.2 ‘’Fake news’’ – A contentious term

The proliferation of inaccurate and misleading information and the increasing use of social media for political propaganda, in the recent years have popularised the so-called ‘’fake news’’. ‘’Fake news’’ in media is not a new phenomenon. Issues related to bias, inaccurate reporting, misleading stories and partisan news existed and continue to exist in the traditional journalism as well. But, the landscape of social media has brought in new dynamics to the dissemination of false stories and rumours in large scale and rapid pace. Sensational news spread quickly on algorithm-driven platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, which have millions of active users (Bradshaw and Howard, 2018).

‘’Fake news’’, though used widely is an ill-defined and inaccurately used term (Wardle and Derakhahan, 2017; Jack, 2017). The term “fake news” does not capture the plethora of problems resulting from “information pollution”. Another problem with the term “fake news” is that politicians have been using the term to invalidate media coverage that do not support them (Wardle and Derakhahan, 2017). As Jack (2017) explains, the problem with the term ‘’fake news’’ is that it is used to mean a wide range of things which have different but overlapping meaning and implications. Any

problematic information such as disinformation, misinformation, political propaganda, satire, and parody are called ''fake news''. But the meaning of each of these differ:

Misinformation is inaccurate information published unintentionally or in error. For example, journalists may misinterpret while reporting facts due to lack of proper evidence or oversight. In such cases, they might correct the errors later once they are aware of the misinformation.

Disinformation is also inaccurate information, but its intent is deliberate. The networked landscape of social media can be easily used to deliberately spread fabricated stories to mislead others.

Propaganda is persuasive publicity campaigns intended to manipulate and deceive public opinion or to destabilise governments or organisations. Political parties, governmental and non-governmental organisations domestically or internationally, may resort to propaganda for campaigns or indoctrinations. Distinguishing publicity and propaganda can be a challenge and greatly depends on the perception of the person seeing it.

Gaslighting is deliberately trying to confuse and mislead people from facts through systematic denial.

Satire, parody and *culture jamming* are interrelated terms. These terms "refer to cases in which fabricated, inaccurate, or exaggerated information is spread intentionally to convey a critique or cultural commentary" (Jack, 2017, p11).

While those who create problematic news can have dubious intentions – economic, political, religious and cultural – ordinary people who spread them on social

media often engage in these acts uncritically and unaware of the facts. Very often these kinds of news are presented in an emotionally appealing manner and people who see them, based on their beliefs and political leaning, take for granted the stories as informative and share them (Jack, 2017).

2.2.3 Digital advertising and clickbait sharing economy

The economics of social media has substantial implication for the spread of problematic news (Buckingham, 2017a; Buckingham, 2019a). The business model of social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, is data-driven digital advertising. Advertisers pay these platforms based on the number of clicks and impressions. Thus, platforms have economic advantage as clicks and engagements grow. In “native advertising” paid ads or sponsored ads generally appear as a normal story or post. People can easily be misled and click on these ads as they populate on the timeline and newsfeed in similar style and presentation of other content. A study conducted by Stanford History Education Group (2016) in the US revealed that 80 per cent of students failed to distinguish sponsored ads from news articles.

The networked media also provide opportunities for anyone to monetise by publishing content that can spread on social media (Nadler, Crain and Donovan, 2018). This click-based rewarding of digital advertising has brought in a new phenomenon called “clickbait’’ – content presented in such a manner to attract people’s attention and stimulate them to click on the link leading to a web page. Clicking on such eye catchy links disseminated on social media may lead to an advertisement, malware, or a news website with advertisements. Individuals and organisations intentionally create content which attracts attention and emotion for the economic advantage through “clickbait” (Bradshaw and Howard, 2018). Taking advantage of the “clickbait”

economics, numerous content websites operate from various parts of the world to drive traffic to their websites by publishing fabricated and sensational stories, and by disseminating them on social media platforms. “Clickbait” helps both the content websites and the social media platforms to monetise.

The impact of “clickbait” became visible to the world during the 2016 US elections. For instance, *The Guardian* reported that it had identified nearly 150 domains of vague political websites operating from Veles, a Macedonian town promoting “clickbait” news on Facebook. By rewriting sensational stories from mainstream media in “clickbait” format and pushing them through Facebook, these websites attracted millions of viewers (Tynan, 2016). As Buckingham (2017b) notes, “fake news often functions as ‘clickbait’, which will generate revenue through advertising and the selling of user data. Networking services – and in particular Facebook – will do most of this work for you: their entire business model depends upon it.”

2.2.4 Techniques used to spread misleading news

In today’s networked media environment, anyone can potentially spread misleading information using a set of techniques for amplification and escalation of content. Some of the tools that hate groups, extremists, ideologues and conspiracy theorists use for manipulating information are: publishing series of articles on the web with specific key words and search terms for page ranking, quoting pseudoscientific information, posting search-optimised persuasive videos on YouTube, sharing memes on WhatsApp, private groups and personal networks on Facebook, influencing the trending news on Twitter, and channelling journalists to pick up a story (Marwick and Lewis, 2017). They strive to engage journalists in discussions on Twitter and influence them to use certain key terms in their coverage to get visibility (boyd, 2019). What they look for is visibility

of their agenda – to make others share. They strive to target people's fears, prejudices, and bias. These actors operate on various social media groups, forums, and anonymous platforms like 4chan, and they try to indoctrinate and spread false stories. Those who intend to spread deceptive information can systematically operate from any part of the world using fake accounts and stay unidentified. Facebook calls such activities as "Information operations", a term originally used in military to counter enemy's information network (Jack, 2017).

One of the tools used for manipulating news on social media is Bots. Bots are algorithm-led computer programs designed to do specific automated functions online. Various actors sometimes deploy bots on social media as proxies for automated creation of fake accounts, to join interactions, and retweet and share images and videos. Maliciously deployed bots attempt to increase traffic, mislead people, join conversations and influence public opinion (Woolley and Howard, 2016). Bots on social media platforms "are often designed to interact with users, boost the number of followers or retweets of a particular hashtag, person, or account, attack political opponents, or drown out activist conversations" (Bradshaw and Howard, 2018, p8).

As I will discuss below, the techniques of those who operate in spreading false news, conspiracy theories, and propaganda have to be seen and analysed in the social, political, and geographical contexts (Chakrabarti, Stengal and Solanki, 2018; Banaji and Bhat, 2019).

2.2.5 Situating information disorder in the social and political contexts

Chakrabarti, Stengal and Solanki (2018), in their study of information disorder in India, point out that the socio-political context influences the consumption and flow of content representing misleading information. In their analysis of what motivates citizens to share false news, they found two broad aspects: a) “civic duty or to attempt to verify through the network”, and b) “a sense of purpose when sharing is for community and nation building or for projection of identity” (p57). For both categories the element of verifying the image or meme they share is not important. The study suggests the need to treat “fake news” as a “social problem” in India since the critical thinking of those who share misleading content seems to be affected by their “national pride, and nationalistic feelings” (p95).

As discussed in Chapter 1, Banaji and Bhat (2019), in their study of WhatsApp-enabled disinformation and mob lynching in India, found the influence of social, political, religious, and caste factors leading to the circulation of false stories and violence. They argue that the affordances of networked platforms and the social, political, and ideological contexts mutually constitute the spread of false news and propaganda. Therefore, analysing and understanding of information disorder should take into consideration the “social norms and contexts” (p11).

In countries such as India the end-to-end encrypted messaging platforms such as WhatsApp is widely used for spreading disinformation. As content is optimised and shared on WhatsApp, what gets more attention are “those that convey a sense of immediacy, and those that can shock” (Banaji and Bhat, 2019, p44). In their report, Banaji and Bhat observe that messaging applications such as WhatsApp are used for

targeting the victims of the mob violence, mobilising groups, and broadcasting the violence.

In contrast to the WhatsApp-enabled disinformation and violence in India, in another socio-political context, in US the appearance of QAnon conspiracy theory shows a different form of information disorder. QAnon is a visible example to show the extent of how a conspiracy theory operates, grows, and influence people. QAnon is a conspiracy theory that says the then US president Donald Trump was "waging a war against elite Satan-worshipping paedophiles" (BBC NEWS, 2020) through a secretive military operation. The QAnon conspiracy theory that seemed to have originated through a post on 4chan soon turned into a movement with many followers. In early October 2020, the Facebook announced its decision to ban accounts related to QAnon conspiracy theory. Recently, Facebook reported:

> As of January 12, 2021, we have identified over 890 militarized social movements to date and in total, removed about 3,400 Pages, 19,500 groups, 120 events, 25,300 Facebook profiles and 7,500 Instagram accounts. We've also removed about 3,300 Pages, 10,500 groups, 510 events, 18,300 Facebook profiles and 27,300 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against QAnon (Facebook, 2021).

As discussed above, although the affordances of networked platforms facilitate the spread of conspiracy theories such as QAnon in US or false stories leading to mob lynching and violence in India, they are largely influenced by social, psychological, religious, cultural, political, historical, geographical, and economic factors. They grow fast when they have support from political, religious or ideological groups. Platforms' actions to purge and restrain are not sufficient to contain the influence of such conspiracy theories and propaganda and their impact. When the platforms take actions

to purge such actors, they tend to mutate their operations and emerge with new forms and methods. Similar to the argument raised in "the surveillance culture" (Lyon, 2018), we can also say that the information disorder is in a flux, it mutates to adjust to the contexts, situations, and regulations. The operators involved in information disorder, though a minority, reach the majority by distorting truth, fact, and science; and by taking advantage of the platform architecture and users' fears, prejudices, and socio-political identity. It is both overwhelming, and unfathomable.

2.2.6 Mainstream news media and information disorder

The news organisations increasingly depend on social media for dissemination and monetisation as their audience is consuming news on these platforms. The information disorder is fuelled when the mainstream news media rely on social media for sourcing their stories as political leaders, activists, citizen groups, and influencers communicate to the audience directly through Facebook posts, and tweets. The tweets and posts made by celebrities or influencers with extreme views, often plugged-in by political parties, become the headlines and narratives in the mainstream media. Such narratives are intended to attract people's emotions, fears, and anger and further polarise communities. On the whole, the mainstream media are involved in spreading barrage of disinformation, discriminatory content, and hate-speech. Focusing on Indian contexts, many mainstream media organisations have not been following journalistic stands and ethics in reporting and news coverage. Instead, they too engage in systematic dissemination of politically motivated disinformation, hate content and propaganda targeting particular communities (Banaji and Bhat, 2019). In packaging and sharing news, virality and speed have become important factors.

As Banaji and Bhat (2019) reveal in their report, the presence of misleading stories across various sections of media, all at the same time, reinforces the narrative that is going on at a particular time. Therefore, even if users fact check their social media information with mainstream media, they might land up encountering the same narrative. Thus, the uncritical reporting and debates in news media lead to normalising misleading information in India.

2.2.7 Response to information disorder

According to a recent *Pew Research Centre* study (Mitchel et al., 2019), majority of American adults feel that "made-up news" was causing great harm to democracy and had to be addressed. They consider made-up news a bigger problem than other major issues facing the country; 68 per cent of respondents feel that made-up news is affecting their confidence in government institutions. While they blame politicians and activists for the spread of such news, they call on the journalists to fix the issue.

Many stakeholders – researchers, legislators, educators and technologists – have recommended media education as a response to the menace of "fake news" (Bulger and Davison, 2018). A report published by *National Literacy Trust* (2018) found that only 2 per cent of children in UK possessed the critical literacy skills to differentiate "fake news" from real news. The study consisted of 388 primary students, 1,832 secondary students and 414 teachers.

The study also found young people are worried that they cannot spot "fake news" and as a result they are losing trust in news. 60.9 per cent of teachers who participated in the survey "believe fake news is having a harmful effect on children's well-being by increasing levels of anxiety, damaging self-esteem and skewing their world view." The

study proposes that young people should be supported to develop critical literacies to understand the information landscape and evaluate the information they encounter online (National Literacy Trust, 2018, p4).

Another study by Wineburg and McGrew (2017) of *Stanford University* found "lateral reading" – verifying and fact checking information and data with other sources while going through a piece of news – an effective method in arriving at web credibility. This comparative study was conducted with professional fact checkers, PhD historians and undergraduate students. The fact checkers navigated to other sources to judge the credibility of the data. While this is an interesting study and ''lateral reading'' can be very useful to judge the credibility of news stories, the challenge is to make it a practice in real life. It is not quite a practice to look for sources and verify data. Making ''lateral reading'' a practice in daily life can be a challenge as it requires extra effort and time to check the links and verify information. Another challenge is that people interpret information from different angles and contexts. What is true and real for one need not be true for another. "There are some absolute truths and some absolute falsehoods, but between them lies a very large grey area. Interpretation is a complicated business" (Buckingham, 2019b, p220).

As Buckingham (2019b) notes, addressing harmful news through media literacy should not be seen as "solutionism" or "panacea". The fact-checking tools and online check-lists for spotting "fake news" are useful as a starting point. The issue of "fake news" has to be seen from the wider context of society, politics and media. Not only young people, but also adults are affected by harmful news. There can be many reasons why people believe in such news. "And we can't stop them believing it just by encouraging them to check the facts or think rationally about the issues" (p218).

Buckingham also argues that the approach of media education in this context should be to teach about bias, objectivity and fairness in the information ecosystem rather than teaching how to spot ''fake news''. Bias can be seen from personal bias, news bias and institutional bias. Personal bias can have serious implications in today's personalised news age. In this regard media literacy should facilitate students to look at their news consumption habits, the sources of their news, and their own judgements of their experience of information ecosystem. Understanding bias in news is highly significant but could be difficult. The way news is set bound to have bias. This means looking at how a story is framed, from what angle it is portrayed, and what information is omitted. Institutional bias can be based on the inclinations of the media organisations, the values the organisations stand for and their beliefs.

Banaji and Bhat (2019) suggest investing in developing citizens' "critical media literacies allied to human rights literacy" (p6) for curtailing the disinformation related violence in India. Such literacies, they argue, should enable citizens to understand the spread of false news within the socio-political contexts and the media landscape. It should also enable people to respect human rights when they exercise freedom of speech and share news content, and also enable citizens to understand how the information landscape is influenced by corporate and political motives.

Responding to the issues of contemporary information disorder is a huge challenge. Various measures from media and technology regulation to media literacy have been recommended to respond to this challenge. Government regulations insisting on platform owners' responsibility for the content on their platforms only partly address the issue. The information disorder is not simply technological. As Banaji and Bhat (2019) have suggested, developing citizens' critical "media literacies allied to

human right literacy" (p6), taking into consideration the socio-political and media environment, is important to enable them to understand the forces operating behind disinformation, to internalise the social problem of information disorder, and to critically consume and engage with information online. I argue that schools can make a great contribution to this by helping children to develop the pertinent skills and competencies to understand the information ecosystem, and the ways to consume news and engage with news while respecting human rights. The framework of social media literacy that this study proposes includes these aspects.

2.3 Reimagining participatory culture

The concept of "participatory culture" has evolved in response to the media convergence, advancement of digital media and scholarly debates (Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2016). Jenkins (1992) first used the term participatory culture in his book, *Textual Poachers,* to describe the active role of fans in cultural production and their creative engagement within the fan community. Social relations and fan culture grew as fans created, remixed and shared content within the fan community (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013; Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2016). Later, in his influential book, *Convergence Culture* (2006), Jenkins elaborates participatory culture in the context of emerging media convergence, collective intelligence, user-generated content, affordances of digital technologies, and networked culture.

Jenkins (2006) believes that media convergence is the flow of content across several digital platforms and intersecting of corporate media and consumer participation. Media convergence reshapes the understanding of popular culture and the power relationship between media producers and consumers. Media convergence

alters the process of media production and consumption. Convergence brings in a new media ecology where consumers produce, remix and circulate media content. Jenkins also claims that the new and empowered consumers in the convergence culture are more active, socially connected, selective in the consumption of media, less loyal to networks, and more visible and vocal through their participation. In his view, while media companies strive to disseminate media content across multiple platforms to increase their market share, media consumers learn to get the best out of these technologies to consume content and to produce and share the content with others. In this vein convergence culture empowers the audience to participate, but, the participation can have different degrees and impacts. However, Jenkins understanding of convergence and participatory culture is seen by some as one-sided and limited. In reality, consumers' creative participation and consumption of media content are embedded, enabled, and directed towards amassing capital. The power to control the flow of content, visibility and attention are mostly in the hands of corporates and those in power. The economic and cultural shift in the power relations between corporations and consumers in participatory culture are increasingly characterised by exploitation, manipulation, control and dominance (Schafer, 2011; Meikle, 2016; Fuchs, 2017; Burgess and Green, 2018).

In an occasional paper on digital media and learning, as part of a five-year study initiated by the MacArthur Foundation, Jenkins et al., defined and elaborated the forms and emergence of the participatory culture in the society:

> A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their

> contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (2009, p3).

Schafer (2011) criticises the definition above, on participatory culture. The four aspects in the definition – mutual support, guidance, community spirit, and participation – usually take place within fan communities. Mutual support, collaboration, community spirit and participation, Schafer argues, appear to be rules to be followed for participation in fan communities. Therefore, they cannot be generalised to the wider public participation. To distinguish this, Schafer points out the explicit participation that characterises the purpose-driven participation of fan communities and the implicit participation that drives the involuntary participation of ordinary users. Implicit participation and explicit participation are two aspects of participatory culture. Explicit participation happens when users appropriate technology and develop their digital skills for user activities. Implicit participation happens when user activities are channelled into information management and advertising data through the platform design. As van Dijck (2013) observes, social media platforms facilitate and transform the casual and informal social practices of people "into formalised inscriptions, which, once embedded in the larger economy of wider publics, take on a different value" (p7). While citizens implicitly participate through platforms because of their outwardly *free* service, enticing design, connectivity, convenience, and network effect, their lack of public values, behavioural shaping, misuse of personal data and privacy consequences are invisible to them (van Dijck, Poell and Waal, 2018; Zuboff, 2019).

According to Schafer (2011), Jenkins' notion of participation is explicit participation: involving precise actions driven by motivation and deliberate appropriation of media content in a community for cultural production. Explicit participation is diverse in content, methods, and objectives for collaboration. Explicit

participation varies depending upon the level of skills, motivation, and interest of the participants. However, implicit participation is to some extent controlled by user-interface, technology design, and automation. Implicit participation need not be motivated by community-oriented cultural production and common objectives. It does not necessarily require the application of heterogeneous methods. The networked platforms demonstrate implicit participation managed within the embedded qualities of platform design. Analysing implicit participation reveals the central role of software design in directing user participation. In implicit participation, agency is not only limited to user activities, but also to the channelling of the user activities through programming of the software.

2.3.1 Audience role in spreading the content

Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) elaborate in their book, *Spreadable Media*, the importance of audience role in spreading the content in the new media ecology. According to them, if the content "doesn't spread, it's dead" (p1). Networked platforms and their technological features for sharing are not sufficient for content to spread. What constitutes the *spreadability* of the content, besides the technological features, are consumer participation. Furthermore, consumers are not mere passive transporters of viral content. They argue that content spreads when people value, reposition, and circulate content for different reasons such as cultural, personal, political and economic. Very often people's participation in sharing media content is to talk about themselves. They make choices, decisions and spend time in deciding what content to share, comment and remix. Consumers find new meaning in remixing, appropriating and circulating the content according to their interests. New technologies have made this easy, quick and effective. In an environment of grassroots participation,

the producers seek out new business models as content reaches a niche audience in the hands of the participating community.

Jenkins, Ford, and Green's (2013) description of contemporary media landscape as a space for non-commercial sharing facilitated by the networked platforms, where consumers actively direct the flow of the content, and where corporates have no tight control of the production and distribution of content, it only reveals partial reality. The other side of the reality is that the sharing is largely controlled by the social media corporations that are structured on the competitive and exploitative principles of capitalism. Users' participation in the repositioning and the circulation of the content exists on the business model of targeted advertising (Fuchs, 2017). For platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, "participatory culture is core business" (Burgess and Green, 2018, p124). The architecture of social networking platforms and their affordances can largely control the spread of information, and the way people communicate and interact (boyd, 2011). Furthermore, as I have discussed in the preceding section on information disorder, the criteria for information to spread on platforms are their visual, emotional, and sensational appeal and the socio-political context. The *spreadability* of content is also manipulated by the traction generated by algorithms, troll armies, celebrities, influencers, and bots. Users participate voluntarily and involuntarily in sharing problematic content. The rise in online hate speech, junk news, gender abuses, and exploitation of children are issues platform owners and regulatory bodies struggle to cope with (Burgess and Green, 2018; Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

2.3.2 Participatory culture and digital labour

Participatory culture is also criticised in the context of digital labour. Digital labour is the unpaid user labour and other exploitative labour used for ICT hardware manufacturing and production. Fuchs (2012) applies the Marxian labour theory of value, "labour that creates value" (p636), to analyse how Facebook and similar platforms exploit the value that is created when users spend time online. The corporate platforms that exist on the targeted advertising business model transform the number of hours people spend on their platform into data commodity. The company then sells the data commodity, or the value created by users' online time, to advertisers; but the profit is not shared with the users. Therefore, corporate platforms such as Facebook exploit the users' free labour and earn huge profit from the value created by the users. When users spend more time online, more data is created, and they are exposed to more advertisements. As Deuze (2008) notes, the corporate platforms facilitate participatory storytelling with underlying marketing and economic motives to co-opt the consumers into producers of content. The corporates appropriate the participatory culture to solicit consumers free labour under a controlled environment in order to provide advertisers with relevant consumer data.

Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) argue that audience labour must not be seen as mere exploitation of the companies. Companies are not the only parties that benefit from the audience labour. In many ways, the users also benefit from their voluntary action of engaging with the media content. Fan communities usually participate not for economic gain but for social and emotional rewards (Green and Jenkins, 2011). However, Fuchs (2017) argues that the corporate exploitation cannot be justified just because the users like and enjoy their online participation. The users' desire for

participation even within the structure of corporate exploitation portrays the contradictions existing in a capitalistic culture. In reality Web 2.0 companies take advantage of users' desire for participation and engagement to increase their profit. Overlooking audience unpaid labour against the argument that they gain social benefits from their participation, is one-sided. Because in capitalism money matters above everything. Money can buy any goods. Jenkins, Ford and Green fail to explain the economic relevance of money in the capitalistic economy. "Money is a privileged medium for achieving objectives in capitalism, which is why capitalism is an economy that is based on instrumental reason" (Fuchs, 2017, p77).

2.3.3 Participatory culture for democracy and diversity

Jenkins, Ito and boyd (2016) depict democracy and diversity as two significant aspects of participatory culture. Democracy implies that participatory culture enables citizens to voice and be heard in the society. Diversity means the stories of diverse people are shared, connected, engaged and benefit each other. Yet, participatory culture characterised by democracy and diversity is far from reality. The stories that get visibility, often, are not of the ordinary people but of celebrities and those in power. Very often platform owners exert more power than the users in the flow of stories through technological control. Burgess and Green argue that the participatory culture facilitated by platforms like YouTube is “as disruptive and uncomfortable as they might be potentially liberating” (2018, p19). Vaidhyanathan (2018) points out that while Facebook’s design is useful for *motivation,* such as soliciting support for charity campaigns or getting people to donate for a cause, or persuading them to buy a product, the platform is not designed for a healthy *deliberation*. The comment section below posts “are nested to inhibit any member of a discussion from considering the full

range of responses. Participants are encouraged to respond rashly, so they often respond rudely (p8). What dominates social media platforms are not objective discussions, or constructive criticism based on facts, or healthy negotiations, but abusive comments, lies, personal attacks, and polarising campaigns.

2.3.4 Participatory culture and change makers

Jenkins (2006) considers the people who actively engage in the convergence culture as change makers. Today's generation uses networked platforms to engage socially, culturally, and politically. They are change makers through their collective action using various online platforms available to them. In contrast to the “Culture Jammers” of the 1990s, who came out to oppose and block the flow of content and products from particular brands and organizations, the new generation in the convergence culture engages in creative strategies for change through remixing, sharing and appropriating the content they are opposing. In this regard, Jenkins comments: “As opposed to the former culture-jamming paradigm, this form of participatory action is referred to as ‘cultural acupuncture’. Cultural acupuncture seeks not to block the flow but to tap into the culture's circulation” (2006, p36). Rheingold (2012) also supports Jenkins’ view that developing online participation skills and competencies can “lead to political, cultural, and economic value” (p111). However, in his view, participatory media is undergoing social, economic, political tensions and regulatory conflicts in controlling the flow of content and sharing of economic benefits. In this scenario, the role of people who actively fight for participatory rights is significant in making participatory media for cultural production and democratic participation (Rheingold, 2007).

Banaji and Buckingham (2013) conducted a research project, funded by the European Commission, to explore the online civic participation of young people. The

study analysed the production, uses, and texts of 570 civic websites ranging from 7 European countries. A survey among the youth as part of this study revealed that around 40 per cent of respondents made some sort of engagements with civic websites by way of forwarding emails, signing online petitions or participating in online polls. Their focus groups and analysis of websites "suggest that the Internet is often a major hub for young people who are active in global or local political, religious, or identity-based groups" (2013, p155). While youngsters are dissatisfied with traditional political parties and governments, they show considerable interest in civic sharing and socially conscious consumption. Young people prefer to engage in discussions or circulation of information on topics related to non-traditional politics and civic issues facing the society. The study found that online and offline civic participation complement each other as there was a considerable positive correlation between the two. Internet platforms enable the mobilisation of young people who are active in offline civic and political activities. The research also suggests that civic and political participation, to a great extent, is based on collaboration, discussion, sharing, and does not merely depend on individual skills and practices.

Kahne, Lee and Feezell (2013) conducted a study to understand the impact of young people's non-political online engagements on their civic and political practices. Their study examined three distinctive areas of online participatory culture based on the motivation for participation: "politics-driven" (a desire to engage with political issues), "interest-driven" (interests that are not explicitly political), and "friendship-driven" (a desire to socialise with friends) (p3). The study revealed that different domains of online participation contributed to different areas of civic and political practices. "Interest-driven" online participation, in contrast to "politics-driven" participation, tended to drive more civic and practices. The youth participated in

“interest-driven” online activities including sports, music, games, and technology by way of blogs, videos, group discussions, feedback, and sharing. Kahne, Lee and Feezell suggest that such online participation in “interest-driven” space can motivate young people to civic and political participation “including volunteering, engagement in community problem solving, protest activities, and political voice” (2013, p12). This indicates that online participatory culture, even if not directly related to civic or politics, can have an impact on civic or political engagements.

Kligler-Vilenchik and Shresthova (2012) made a case study of two organisations, *Invisible Children* (IC) and the *Harry Potter Alliance* (HPA), rooted in participatory culture. These media-based youth organisations, founded on participatory culture model, were extensively involved in civic activities. Both IC and HPA had been organising collective activities using new media tools for obtaining civic objectives. Therefore, they call these two as Participatory Culture Civics (PCC) organisations.

Kahne, Middaugh and Allen (2014) conducted a detailed study of “participatory politics” emerging from participatory culture. The study, focused on youth, showed the extension of participatory culture to civics and political engagements. The affordances of the online platforms enable youth, either individually or in peer-groups, to take up civic and political issues affecting the society. They use new media tools to set agendas, form an opinion and call for action through investigation, dialogue, production, circulation, and mobilisation. The study concludes that participatory politics in the new media environment, "enable individuals to tap vast stores of information, consider diverse views, communicate with potentially large audiences, mobilise others, and work collaboratively for social change, all outside of formal civic and political organisations” (p20).

2.3.5 Jenkins' rethinking of participatory culture

Several years after his first publication of *Convergence Culture,* Jenkins (2014) himself admits the change taking place in his understanding of convergence and participatory culture. While rethinking, Jenkins tries to situate participatory culture within the context of some of the criticisms his definition of convergence and the rhetoric of participatory culture encountered. In this endeavour, he speaks of "towards a more participatory culture" (p272). He also admits the difficulty in overcoming the institutional control, exclusion in grassroot participation on social media platforms, Web 2.0 mechanisms for control, corporate business strategies to "contain and commodify the popular desire for participation" (p272), and the unequal powers in making political decisions. He acknowledges that he "underestimated the barriers to achieving what we see as the potential for transformative change emerging as the public has gained greater control over the means of cultural production and circulation" (p273). True participatory culture is an ideal to which the society strives to achieve by addressing the social and technological gap. In order to participate efficiently, one has to grow in agency, critical evaluation, emotional resilience, networking and social security (Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2016).

2.3.6 Envisaging an explicit, critical, and transformative participatory culture

Technology develops in the society. The technological advancement, in turn, influences the society in multiple ways. While user behaviour is embedded into platforms, users' choices, practices and norms also influence the way technology develops in the society. Social media must be analysed in the context of the interaction

between society and technological developments (Buckingham, 2013; van Dijck 2013; Baym, 2017; Fuchs, 2017; Lyon, 2018).

The Internet-enabled social media is embedded on the social networks and global computer networks. This “techno-social” interaction is shaped by the various power structures in the society (Fuchs, 2017). Power in Web 2.0 is dominantly exercised by those who control the networks, processes, personal data, and the flow of content. The corporates who majorly control the Web 2.0 environment have enormous power as they watch, analyse, control, commodify, and shape human activity and behaviour. The state and public institutions also exercise power over the platforms and networks and over the users by way of regulations, control, and surveillance. The citizens as empowered producers and distributors also exercise “counter power” in their hands. But, their power for participation in contemporary networked ecosystem is limited, since what they communicate is watched and controlled by corporates and surveillance bodies. This power relationship between Web 2.0 corporations and the “counter power” of user-producers is unequal (Carah and Louw, 2015; Fuchs, 2017).

Moreover, in the techno-social interaction, there exists a huge knowledge asymmetry between citizens who use the technologies and corporate who embed their values and logics in the technologies that the citizens use. The logics operating the corporate-embedded technologies and the consequences of technological practices in the society are opaque and not easily understandable for common citizens. I believe levelling the gap in the knowledge asymmetry and developing citizens critical judgement of socio-political-economic factors driving technological affordances and user practices are crucial today for responding to the problems of the networked era.

For understanding the networked platforms and their consequences, citizens should analyse the "technological features" as well as the "personal, cultural, and historical presumptions and values those features evoke" (Baym, 2017). As Baym clarifies further:

> The norms for appropriate use of communication media are in a continuous state of development. By being conscientious and aware of what media offer, what choices we make with them, and what consequences those choices have for us, we can intervene in and influence the process of norm development in our own relationships, our peer and family groups, and our cultures (p179).

The challenge then is in what ways citizens can be empowered to grow in agency and critical evaluation and how does the society progress in addressing the many problems associated with the networked era? I believe developing social media literacy through the educational system can play an important role in achieving these goals. Social media literacy should be geared towards developing citizens critical awareness, understanding, judgement, and their "explicit participation". Developing citizens' critical explicit participation is needed not only for their protection of privacy and personal fulfilment, but also to transform the wider networked community. The techno-social ecosystem affects citizens' lives in many ways. Therefore, citizenship today involves transforming the networked society with justice and welfare values. I argue that the networked era demands citizens' explicit, critical, and agentic participation for this transformation. A transformative and critical participatory culture is crucial in this digital era. It includes but goes beyond informed participation to citizens' agentic action to transform the economic logic (Zuboff, 2019) and political motives dominating the connected society with a welfare and human rights logic. In Chapter 3, I will elaborate

the argument that social media literacy education can make a positive contribution towards this goal.

2.4 Conclusion

The discussions in this chapter showed that on the one hand, social media facilitate "creativity (saying and making), sharing and visibility" (Meikle, 2016, p120). They enable user participation, democratisation, connectivity, collaboration, sharing and communication. Users not only consume content, but also create, distribute and respond to what they consume. Social networking platforms allow individuals to create and manage profile pages containing personal/non-personal information, photos and videos. These platforms also facilitate one-to-one, group or open public communication through instant messages, post share, live chats or electronic emails. (The Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU, 2009). On the other hand, all these come with serious issues of surveillance, corporate control, monopolisation, information disorder, data misuse, bigotry, privacy, discrimination, free labour, and algorithmic bias. While these platforms facilitate ordinary individuals to create, communicate and collaborate, these take place on large networks involving corporates, advertisers, state bodies and other social actors. Any one-sided narrative of social media could be misleading (Carah and Louw, 2015; Meikle, 2016; Fuchs, 2017; Lyon, 2018; Vaidhyanathan, 2018; Zuboff, 2019; Cheney-Lippold, 2019). On social media an integrated and complex communication of various actors in the society with diverse interests takes place (Fuchs, 2017).

Although social media platforms can potentially expand diversity, make visible perspectives, creativity and self-representations beyond cultures and borders, the

crucial questions are: How safe are these platforms for children, women and ordinary citizens? Who controls the visibility? Whose voices are heard? (Burgess and Green, 2018). How to address the problems of bigotry, gender abuse, and various other forms of discriminations on networked platforms? How to address issues emerging from surveillance, algorithmic sorting, data misuse, and predictive governance? As Rheingold in his book, *Net Smart*, asks “how to use social media intelligently, humanely, and above all mindfully” (2012, p1).

While corporate regulations and government policies are important for addressing the challenges of today’s digital era, this study takes the view that social media literacy is crucial for enabling citizens to participate in the networked era, and for responding to the various problems and challenges that it brings. The next chapter, the second part of the literature review, will explore and reconceptualise the field of the media literacy education to suit the social media era. The key aspects that are required for informed and critical participation on networked platforms, such as critical understanding of social media, critical literacies for responding to information disorder, skills and capabilities for managing mediated visibility surveillance, and skills and capabilities for creative self-expression and civic participation will be integrated in this framework. The next chapter will also elaborate how the established Digital Storytelling can be reimagined and integrated into the social media literacy framework.

Chapter 3: Reconceptualising Media Literacy in the context of networked digital environment

This chapter, part 2 of the literature review, explores the core concepts of media literacy education and how they should be adapted and integrated to suit the social media landscape. As the discussion progresses, the creative, pedagogic, and transformative aspects of the established Digital Storytelling method (StoryCenter, no date) would be integrated into the social media literacy education. This chapter does not discuss the traditions of information literacy since it is a separate field and beyond the scope of the discussion. Information literacy is the ability to access, evaluate, and use effectively relevant information from various sources (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2000).

3.1 Defining Media Literacy

Media literacy has received much attention in recent years due to the changing nature of Internet use and the influence of social media, particularly, on children. Media literacy, an interdisciplinary field, is defined in many ways emphasizing various aspects. Academicians and practitioners have approached media literacy from different theoretical framework based on their disciplinary perspectives (Capello, Felini and Hobbs, 2011). The large body of research in the field of media literacy using diverse theoretical framework is complementary in nature (Potter, 2010).

The definition of media literacy developed at the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy, USA, states that media literacy is the ability of a citizen to access, analyse, evaluate and produce content (Aufderheide, 1997). According to this commonly accepted, skills-based approach definition, the four elements – access, analysis, evaluation, and production of content – support and relate each other (Livingstone, 2004).

Ofcom (2004) also defines media literacy in a similar framework: "media literacy is a range of skills including the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and produce communications in a variety of forms". Presently, Ofcom (no date) defines media literacy as "the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts".

The Center for Media Literacy, USA, expanded this definition to include the aspect of democracy:

> Media literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms—from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy (Thoman and Jolls, 2005, p190).

Potter (2014) defines media literacy as "a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the mass media to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter" (p25). The "perspectives" in Potter's definition depends on the three-building block of media literacy: personal locus, knowledge structures, and skills.

Personal locus is one's goals that drive one to seek information. It also helps one to filter information based on the goals. A higher degree of the awareness of one's personal locus is helpful in achieving a greater control over the media influence (Potter, 2014).

Knowledge structures are information/facts systematically organised in the memory with its contexts and structures. One develops this consciously. Information is either factual or social (beliefs). Knowledge structures in the mind provide meaning to the sets of information organised within it. Knowledge structures activate the retrieving and processing of information designed in it. A greater degree of knowledge structures is helpful for a better reception of media messages. For Potter, media literacy must have knowledge structures in five areas: "media effects, media content, media industries, the real world, and the self" (Potter, 2014, p19).

Skills are required for developing knowledge structures. Skills are like tools used to access and select the wide range of information in the knowledge structures. There are seven core skills for media literacy: "analysis, evaluation, grouping, induction, deduction, synthesis, and abstraction" (Potter, 2014, p20).

Potter analyses media literacy from multidimensional approach. According to him, media exposure must be analysed not only from cognitive domain (factual/intellectual information), but also from emotional (information about feelings), aesthetic (information about production of messages), and moral (information about values) perspectives. For an effective media literacy perspective, all the above four information domains have to be integrated. Media exposure results to an overarching perspective when information is gained from these four domains (Potter, 2014).

Potter understands the development of media literacy as a “continuum”, where people have high or low levels of literacy depending upon their perspectives, quality of knowledge structures and skills. Higher degree of media literacy will result in wider media exposure, better understanding and appreciation of media messages, and greater control over the media exposure. However, Potter’s definition of media literacy does not include the aspects of media production and participation. Many media literacy scholars and educators argue for incorporating creative production and participation in media literacy education (Fleming, 2010).

According to Buckingham (2003a; 2007), literacy is not limited to development of skills or competencies. Literacy is dynamic and ongoing, and embedded in lived experiences of social, cultural, and economic contexts. The context in which the encounter between the text and the reader takes place and the socio-economic factors shaping the production and circulation of the media messages, are important in understanding media literacy. Emphasising the social and critical aspect of media literacy, Buckingham articulates that “it must also entail a form of ‘critical framing’ that enables the learner to take a theoretical distance from what they have learned, to account for its social and cultural location, and to critique and extend it” (2007, p45).

Capello, Felini and Hobbs (2011) also argue that teaching media literacy must be imparted in the context of children’s lived experiences. The critical reading of media messages must be brought forth from the personal reflections of one’s own media habits, interests, tastes and media experiences. Connecting critical thinking to the lived media experiences in the classroom can make the learning more “pleasurable” and practical. In this process, the media educator's role is that of a “scaffolder” of learning to facilitate students’ critical thinking of their own media uses and habits.

An important objective of media literacy is “critical autonomy”, a term Masterman (1995) introduced more than three decades ago. For Masterman, an essential aspect of media literacy is to enable students to self-evaluate and judge media messages they encounter in their lives. The role of the media education teacher "is to develop in pupils enough self-confidence and critical maturity to be able to apply critical judgements to media texts which they will encounter in the future” (p24). According to him, media literacy syllabus should focus on the processes and strategies that will lead to empowering students to “critical autonomy”. The teaching method must be student-centred, incorporate dialogue, reflection and action. The content of the syllabus must be flexible to incorporate students’ interests, current media topics, and group activities. Effective imparting of media literacy “demands non-hierarchical teaching modes and a methodology which will promote reflection and critical thinking whilst being as lively, democratic, group-focused and action-oriented as the teacher can make it” (p27).

Kellner and Share (2007) stress “critical media literacy” as a framework which encompasses other media literacy theories while expanding it to include power in representation, alternative media production, and social and cultural context. It includes analysis of how information, power, society, and culture are linked. This approach gives students active role in learning literacy. It imparts in them critical skills for using media for social change and democratic citizenship. “This involves a multiperspectival critical inquiry, of popular culture and the cultural industries, that address issues of class, race, gender, sexuality, and power and also promotes the production of alternative counterhegemonic media” (p62).

Another key point, Simanowski (2016) asserts that media literacy must go beyond what children can do with new media to empowering children to reflect upon what

media is doing to them. Media literacy must focus on both competencies in using digital media and critical reflection of social, economic and cultural implications of digital media in their lives. As Simanowski rightly suggests, media literacy must include perspectives of anthropological and cultural studies to “explore which cultural values and social norms new media create or negate and how we, as a society, should understand and value this” (p15).

3.1.1 Children, digital media, and critical literacies

Prensky (2001) introduced the debatable term “digital natives” to name the generation born in the digital media environment. According to him, “digital natives” grow up receiving and processing information quickly and differently than older generation whom he calls “digital immigrants”. Digital immigrants who have taken efforts to learn and adapt to the digital environment are characterised with an “accent” of a new language. Prensky’s classification of individuals into “digital natives” and “digital immigrant” has been criticised for its “technological determinism” and over-generalisation. But his view, that teachers need to adapt a new pedagogy that suits digital environment, is relevant. Lately, moving on from the concept of “digital natives” and “digital immigrants”, Prensky (2011) introduced a broader notion of “digitally wise”. Through this concept, he rightly advocates the wise use of digital tools irrespective of the age. He defines digital wisdom as “a twofold concept, referring both to wisdom arising *from* the use of digital technology to access cognitive power beyond our innate capacity, and to wisdom *in* the prudent use of technology to enhance our capabilities” (p18). As Prensky (2011) suggests, digital literacy must also impart digital wisdom. Students must be taught to make wiser analyses, judgements and decisions using the digital tools.

According to Buckingham (2006), technologies influence not only children, but also adults. The impact of technology in the lives of people, to a great extent, depends on how they use technology for various purposes. The use of technology also varies based on social, economic and cultural context. He points out that conceptualising a generation as "digital generation" on the basis of its interaction with technologies "clearly runs the risk of attributing an all-powerful role to technology" (p11). Buckingham (2013) further challenges the claim of those who argue "technological determinism", that technology transforms children's lives, without considering children's agency in using technology. According to him, the impact of technology in shaping children's lives should not be over-generalised. Similarly, children should not be seen as totally vulnerable or naturally competent in using the technology. He argues for a balanced approach in understanding the role of technology in children's lives and the latter's role in using technology. While technology has an impact on children's lives, children also use it for shaping their lives. The impact of technology and people's use of technology have to be seen from a wider perspective of economic, social and cultural factors. The relationship between technology and people's use of it is dynamic and depends on many factors: "technology shapes people, but people also shape technology" (p8).

Applying the four basic components of media literacy

Buckingham (2007) upholds the importance of understanding the nature and dynamics of the four basic components of media literacy—representation, language, production, and audience—developed over the years by media educators, are also essential for anyone engaging with digital media.

Representation: Media literacy must enable children to understand that digital media, like traditional media, represent the world and not reflect the world. What digital media portray is an aspect or a particular way of looking at the reality based on selection of values, perceptions, and ideologies. Children must analyse, evaluate and deconstruct the messages they encounter constantly through digital media. It also calls for looking at the source of the materials they encounter; evaluating the motivations of those who produce those materials; and validating it objectively with similar sources and one's own experiences. While looking at what is represented, one must also look for what is omitted, "about whose voices are heard and whose viewpoints are represented and whose are not" (Buckingham, 2007, p48).

Language: To understand, analyse and evaluate the digital media, users must know the codes, conventions, the genre, and the "grammar" of digital media communications. It involves understanding the working of interactive communications, web tools and networked platforms (Buckingham, 2007).

Production: An important aspect of literacy is to understand and distinguish the various actors involved in the production of media materials: corporates, institutions, advertisers, sponsors, promoters, etc. Children need to identify if the communication targeted to them is by public or corporate institutions or private persons. They also need to understand the commercial aspect of the communication they consume and the commercial implications of the information they share online. In the digital age, anyone can produce and diffuse materials using online tools and networked platforms. Even if the communication is not commercially targeted, it is important to identify the motives of the interest groups/persons of those communications (Buckingham, 2007).

Audience: Literacy entails enabling children to reflect on their own role as the audience of media consumption. They also need to understand how different people access and consume media differently. Digital media are increasingly targeting individuals based on their interests, habits, and behaviour. It is used by diverse groups/individuals to communicate. There is no particular way of responding to media messages. It changes depending on the platform, contexts, interests, and values. (Buckingham, 2007).

Thus, for Buckingham, media literacy in a digital age is not merely accessing or using digital media. It entails "a much broader critical understanding, which addresses the textual characteristics of media alongside their social, economic and cultural implications" (p49).

Livingstone (2009) is also of the view that the basic components of media literacy are applicable for media literacy in the digital age. These components receive new meaning and direction when applied in the new context of the online environment. She notes that critical literacy must be broadened to include information searching, navigation, sorting, assessing relevance, evaluating sources, judging reliability and identifying bias" (p187). Besides, media literacy endeavours to enable children to use the internet not only for consumption of content critically, but also to produce and diffuse content effectively (Buckingham, 2007).

3.1.2 The diverse media experience of children and teachers

Buckingham (2003b) points out that the media experience of one person could be quite different from the other. But, the experience of children's relationship with the contemporary media, compared with teachers', can have a huge difference. There is

a big gap between today's children growing up in the media environment and the teachers' own childhood with the media. Media education teachers must be aware that this varied media exposure will have an "implication for the theoretical assumptions that inform [their] teaching" (p315). While media is constantly changing, the way people interpret and interact with media is also increasingly changing. Buckingham exemplifies this with teaching "representation", an important concept in media literacy. For instance, the concept of representation of gender in media has been changing over time. Unlike in the past, the representation of female body is not necessarily seen as "objectification" or "stereotypes" of the body, but as portrayal of agency or "girl power". Similarly, the understanding of gender and identity has also been changing. Therefore, deconstructing media messages based on outdated concepts and practices will not be helpful in making the students connect and get interested in media literacy classes (Buckingham, 2003b).

As Buckingham (2003b) observes, in the postmodern time, children learn using new and contextual means of learning. Their learning is not limited to the "traditional, rationalistic academic mode" (p325). In this context, Buckingham suggests the inclusion of media production in media literacy teaching. When children are engaged in media production, they can experience play and pleasure while discussing pop-culture and collaborating with peer groups. While media education must not abandon cultural criticism, it needs to reconceptualise its learning methods by incorporating new media practices and postmodern approaches. In this way, media education will help children to reflect, connect and understand their engaging and experience with the media (Buckingham, 2003b).

3.1.3 Balance between risks and opportunities in children's Internet use

There has been much discussion, debate, and studies in the area of risks and opportunities of children's Internet use. On the one hand, the Internet is seen as a place perpetrating violence, racism, distorted behaviours, and on the other hand, it is depicted as a medium helpful for developing children's artistic skills, creativity and communication (Renee Hobbs, 2016). However, many scholars argue for a balanced approach to risks and opportunities in children's online activities (Livingstone and Helsper, 2010; Capello, Felini and Hobbs, 2011; Hobbs, 2011).

Though Potter's contribution in *Media Literacy* (2014, 7th edition), and in several other publications, is well received, he was criticised for his subjective and unrepresentative portrayal of media literacy in his review article (2010). His review article concluded that the common theme prevalent in media literacy studies is that media cause potentially negative effect upon people. Another common idea that he deduced in his review article is that the purpose of media literacy is to help people gain control over the media messages, and protect themselves from the negative effects of media. He also expressed in his article the lack of multi-dimensional perspective in media literacy education. Though, media influence people in a multi-dimensional way, the effects are usually negative or not helpful to them. Therefore, media literacy is an intervention in the life of an individual to avoid such negative effects or to reduce existing negative effects the media exerted upon them in the past. The intervention does not require scholars or experts; instead, parents or concerned individuals mediate the literacy to protect their children from the negative effects. The intervention happens on a day-to-day basis of media exposure. The intervention is not dependent on a

theory or research literature, but on the judgements of the agent/parent of what might be useful in protecting the children from the media effects.

Hobbs (2011) challenges Potter's review article for his portrayal of media literacy as an intervention for protection from negative media effects. According to Hobbs, Potter overlooked some of the important, innovative studies conducted in recent years. Potter also ignored the application of media literacy, on a large scale, in education across many countries. Hobbs disagrees with Potter's supposed misconception of media literacy by stating that positioning media literacy only to protect from media effects is to miss out various objectives of media literacy that have been identified with clear evidence around the world. Two prime aspects of media literacy are protection and empowerment. Scholars had diverse opinion regarding the relation between the two. Potter avoided the aspect of empowerment which has emerged in the recent years in the convergent and networked culture. Hobbs argues that media literacy, conceptualised on constructivist learning framework "emphasizes young people as capable, resilient and active in their choices as both media consumers and as creative producers" (p422).

Though Potter had presented protective media literacy in his review article, his own position of media education, in his book, *Media Literacy* (2014), is a broader perspective. He states that the book "attempts to show you that media messages also offer far more opportunities for positive effects" (p16). For Potter, media literacy's response to the ever-changing media world is that of adaption: "We adapt by opening ourselves up to a wider variety of messages, then analysing those messages for new elements and evaluating those elements to appreciate their value" (p16).

In addition, Potter (2013) points out that the traditional media literacy was focused on empowering audiences to be effective receivers of media messages. Here, the attention was on interpreting the media content the users encountered daily. In the new media environment, users are both recipients and senders of messages. Media literacy in the participatory culture is not limited to developing skills for producing texts for the new media. Instead, media literacy expands to include understanding the risks and opportunities while using Internet-enabled platforms. Media literacy should empower people to be active participants taking advantage of the opportunities of the Internet while avoiding the risks. “Central to this expanded awareness are three issues: managing identity, negotiating privacy, and improving skill sets” (p239).

Livingstone and Helsper (2010) advocate that media literacy research and discussion should look at risks and opportunities not as opposing factors but as correlated factors. Their study based on a national survey of children's Internet use in the UK has revealed positive correlation between risks and opportunities. They conclude that the possibility of encountering risks should not limit Internet use, because teenagers benefit from internet opportunities. The more they use the Internet, the more opportunities they gain from it. The more opportunities they have, the more risks they encounter. The study also found demographic factors influencing Internet access, skills, opportunities, and risks. The older teenagers are better skilled in Internet use which in turn leads them to have more opportunities and risks.

3.1.4 EU Kids Online network

EU Kids Online (no date) conducted an evidence-based, massive study, from 2006 to 2014, of children's Internet use consisting of over 150 researchers from 33 countries (Livingstone, Mascheroni and Staksur, 2018). The study was conducted in three

phases. In the first phase, the network identified, analysed and drew conclusions of around 400 existing previous studies in the field. In the second phase, it surveyed children and parents in 25 EU countries. The third phase consisted of comparisons and analysis of the two studies and the long tradition of children's media use studies (Ólafsson, Livingstone and Haddon, 2014).

For this study, *EU Kids Online* network developed a wider framework of children’s online experience, taking into account the context and various changing factors shaping children’s online engagement. This child-centred model had three levels: “individual level”, “social level”, and “country level”. The network treated both child and the country as a single unit. “Individual level” is characterised by a child's demographic and psychological factors. The social mediation happens through family, educators, peers, community and digital ecology. The “country level” takes into account the influence of socio-economic inequalities, policy regulations, technology provisions, educational system and culture and value system prevalent in a country. These three factors interact, change and influence each other (Livingstone, 2012). Thus, the questions for the research were formulated considering the wider framework model shaping children’s Internet use. The questions, primarily, aimed at identifying the risk factors in children’s online experience and the amount of harm resulted from the risks or how they cope with the risks leading to resilience.

The study also found the link between children's Internet use, skills gained, benefits and risks. Children's Internet skills develop when they use the Internet which in turn leads to opportunities. However, the more opportunities they have, the more chances of encountering risks. The research shows the probability of harm arising from particular online risks seems to be low. While some children become victims of online

risks leading to harm, a vast majority of them learn to navigate through online risks and gain resilience (EU Kids Online, no date).

The benefits gained and the risks causing harm depend on an individual's demography, parental support and the availability of good content to them. Many factors influence children's online experience such as their age, gender, socio-economic status, the involvement of parents, school and peers and the country's regulation, policies and cultural values. The study further shows the important role played by family, education, society, technology provisions and culture. What is important in children's Internet use is the strategy for providing more Internet opportunities and support for reducing the harm caused by risk. Parents and educators have a vital role to play in this regard (EU Kids Online, no date). In this context, the challenge for various stakeholders is to balance between providing online opportunities and introducing measures for reducing risk. While providing more online opportunities without adequate safety measures may expose children to more risks online, introducing measures to minimise risks may reduce online opportunities (Livingstone, 2012).

The study also analysed children's experience of distinct mediation from parents, teachers and peer group in helping them in their online opportunities and reducing risks. The result revealed:

> Parents are more present, more accepted as qualified authorities and more often consulted about problems…Teachers are seen as trusted advisers in terms of avoiding risks, but not as reliable people from whom to seek support if upset about something related to the internet (Pasquier, Simoes and Kredens, 2012, p228).

While parents' restrictive mediation lowered risks experience, it also reduced Internet activities, competencies and opportunities. Other types of mediation—active mediation (parents open discussion) and monitoring tend to increase activities and skills. Children who have experienced harm tend to seek parental mediation. Though it is difficult to find an ideal mediation model, parents must use suitable mediation without curtailing children's opportunities (Garmedia et al., 2012).

Mediation from teachers and peers help children, especially younger age group, in their online activities and skill development. Many parents expect teachers to provide digital literacy skills in schools, but many teachers are not equipped to impart digital literacy. However, teachers have an important role to play in helping children to use the Internet and manage risks (Kalmus, Felitzen and Siibak, 2012).

In the ever-changing environment of Internet and children, EU Kids Online network advocates empowering children with digital skills, literacies, and coping strategies. The key domains of children's lives and relevant contexts of Internet use are children's rights to "provision, protection, and participation"; "information, education, and informal learning"; "health, advice and well-being"; "identity and relationships"; and "creative, collaborative, and civic engagements".

While *EU Kids Online* encourages maximising children's Internet opportunities and minimising harm, the network gives evidence-based recommendations to various stakeholders involved in it: family (children and parents), educators, awareness raisers and media, and government and industry. Children are advised to make the best use of the opportunities the Internet provides for participative and creative engagements. They should share responsibility for online safety, follow the age limits, privacy settings, seek help from others and develop handling online risks. Parents should

encourage children to take advantage of the opportunities the Internet offers and discuss with them managing risks, coping skills and resilience. Educators must incorporate children's positive and safe use of technology and integrate into the curriculum online safety awareness programmes.

Furthermore, in a review article, Livingstone, Mascheroni and Staksur (2018), explore the development of research in children's Internet use, taking as case study the three stages of *EU Kids Online* project. They point out that children's engagement with the world is mediated by the Internet which is constantly changing. According to them, *EU Kids Online* present some important principles as foundation for research such as recognising children's agency, contextualising the study, and understanding the interconnectedness of risks and opportunities of Internet use.

However, they raise concern over the attempt to adapt the model developed for European kids to other countries including Brazil, Russia, Australia, Argentina, Chile, South Africa and the Philippines. It is high time a similar extensive study, covering the various states, to be conducted in India. India is characterised by digital and economic divide and diversity in language, culture, religion and caste. Therefore, drawing insights from major studies like *EU Kids Online*, I attempt to develop a model that suits the context of Mumbai—understanding and developing teens' social media literacies and practices.

3.1.5 Children and social media

There have been studies and policy debates in the field of social media and associated risks, as it has become an integral part of children's lives in many countries. However, the way children understand social media and risks are quite different from their

parents or regulators. Children, increasingly, use social networking sites for building contacts, finding friends, and relating with others online. What adults see as risks leading to harm may be viewed as positive values by children for which they share their personal details. In this context, social media literacy has a role to play in helping children to manage privacy, identity, friendship and networking online (Livingstone, 2014).

The *Safer Social Networking Principles* for the EU (2009), a self-regulatory framework initiated by EU for children's online safety, identified four categories of potential online risks when children use social media: illegal content, age-inappropriate content, inappropriate contact from adults or young people, and conduct (bullying, potentially risky behaviour, etc.).

In order to minimise the potential risks, the *Safer Social Networking Principles* for the EU came up with principles such age-appropriate awareness programmes for people, ensuring services are age-appropriate, empowering "users through tools and technology", and enabling "users to employ a safe approach to personal information and privacy" (2009, pp6-9).

Livingstone, Ólafsson and Staksrud (2013) conducted a study to analyse the effectiveness of the *Safer Social Networking Principles* for the EU. The study covered children in the age group of 9 to 14, in 25 EU countries. The study, interestingly found, though the age limit varies among social networking sites, the age limit tools or mechanism to ban lower age groups, do not yield the required result as "38% of 9- to 12-year-olds use SNSs" (p317). Though the *Safer Social Networking Principles* demands the profiles of children under 18 to be set private, the study found "one in four 9- to 16-year-old SNS users claims that his or her profile is public" (p317). Since

social networking sites are evidently used by younger age group who are not meant to be using them, the study recommended measures for children's protection online.

In a separate study, in the same year, Staksrud, Ólafsson and Livingstone (2013) explored children's social media use and associated risks. The study covered children in the age group of 9-16 years old from 25 European countries. The risk factors tested were: "seeing sexual images on websites", "being bullied on the Internet", "meeting online contacts offline", "seeing or receiving sexual messages", and "encountering negative user-generated content". The study found children who use social media encounter more online risks compared to those who are not on social media by way of exposure to sexual images, sexual messages, negative content, online bullying and meeting new people. Moreover, children who are more digitally skilled in using social media encounter more risks online in comparison to children with less social media skills. Because the more competent they are in social media skills, the more they explore online. Digital skills do not guarantee avoidance of risks; instead they increase the chances of risks. Furthermore, children who engage in more risks related social media use – public profile, personal details, adding more contacts – encounter more risks online than children who are cautious about social media use. Thus, there is a correlation among digital skills, risky practices and encountering online skills. This result indicates that children need to learn safe and productive social media use (Staksrud, Ólafsson and Livingstone, 2013).

Nevertheless, the studies analysed above have mainly focused on children's opportunities, risks and harms and the various stakeholders involved in mediation. It is to be noted that the aspects of responding to information disorder, visibility, corporate control, surveillance, commodification of data, and the addictive nature of

social media are not covered in these studies. In today's social media context, there may be more serious risk factors than those were tested in the study such as hacking, stalking, body shaming, hate speech, disinformation, addiction, and lack of resilience. In addition, an important question to be asked is: do obvious opportunities justify underlying harm? How does media literacy contribute to shaping a networked society in which citizens' privacy and identity are respected, and equality, justice, and tolerance are valued?

3.1.6 Social media literacy

As Meikle (2016) points out, there is a need to revisit the imparting of media literacy in the environment of networked digital media and convergence. The regular use of social media platform is not a guarantee for literacy. Social media literacy is not about learning how to use Facebook and YouTube for posts and sharing. One of the factors that distinguish social media literacy to traditional media literacy is the *social* dimension. Social media literacy involves developing skills, competencies, and human values to participate and engage meaningfully in the networked society. It also involves understanding issues of surveillance and corporate control as public and personal communication converge on social media.

Meikle (2016) argues, on the one hand, social media literacy should empower people to use the enormous opportunities the networked platforms provide for creativity, sharing, collaborating and participating. On the other hand, it should enable them to critically understand the operating forces of networked platforms and the "risks of mediated visibility in a social media environment where the personal and the public converge" (p147).

Livingstone (2014) recommends developing and imparting social media literacy, taking into consideration the diverse social media experiences of different age groups and cultural differences. While social media literacy must be rooted in the core concepts of traditional media literacy such as representation, institution, and judging what is real, it has to incorporate the distinctive characteristics of children's social interaction through social media and its participatory opportunities. It has to also consider the change in children as they grow towards parental mediation, peer pressure/relationship and their motivation to use social media for identity affirmation (Livingstone, 2014).

According to Jenkins et al. (2009), the new media landscape demands "new media literacies" (p4). Educators must empower youngsters with "new media literacies" consisting of "cultural competencies and social skills" (p4) to respond and participate in the contemporary media environment. "Collaboration and networking" (p4) are the essential components of social skills. Rheingold (2012) supports this view that besides an individual's technical skills, one needs to develop social skills to get involved, collaborate, share and participate. Jenkins et al. (2009) suggest some skills for cultivating cultural competencies and social skills: "play", "performance", "appropriation", "multitasking", "distributed cognition", "collective intelligence", "judgement", "transmedia navigation", "networking", and "negotiation" (p4).

Jenkins, Ito and boyd (2016) further suggest that the approach to media literacy in the new media environment must incorporate young people's shared culture, identity and practice. The traditional media literacy framework of responding to media message may not suit learning in the networked culture. Instead, participatory learning focuses on collective and peer-centered learning and developing the skills to participate with

the networked public. It connects peer-centered learning activities with academic, civic and career topics. In participatory learning, the contribution of every member is valued, and everyone is part of decision making. Students exert some kind of control over their learning while contributing to collective decision making. They also learn to take accountability for their social media participation. Participatory learning strives to loosen the authoritative structures of the classroom through students' involvement in curriculum design by considering their interests, passions, identity and shared culture (Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2016).

In Rheingold's (2008; 2012; 2013) view, literacy will enable people to access and use the infrastructure of new media to be effective participants of "participatory culture". Furthermore, the need for knowledgeable use of the tools of new media to gain freedom, resist corporate control and get economic reward is ever increasingly important in the context of corporate controlled broadband, platform monopoly, and copyright laws. When people learn the skills of using participatory media to examine, learn, collaborate, link, connect, influence and organise, it will lead to a broader participatory culture. Society progresses when digital participants realise the importance of their agency and act together (Rheingold, 2012). As Rheingold (2008) observes:

> Participatory media literacy is an active response to the as-yet-unsettled battles over political and economic power in the emerging media sphere, and to the possibility that today's young people could have a say in shaping part of the world they will live in—or might be locked out of that possibility (2008, p100).

Therefore, the networked era demands new literacy skills – social media literacy – for enabling citizens to critically understand the operating forces of networked

platforms, how and why the platforms work the way they work, manage mediated visibility, evaluate and judge information, and use the enormous opportunities the networked platforms provide for creativity, sharing, collaboration and participation (Rheingold, 2012; Meikle, 2016; Buckingham, 2019a). However, as I will argue in the discussion below, the social media literacy should include another dimension. This new dimension is focused on citizens' role and contribution to shape a networked society in which citizens' privacy, dignity, and identity are respected; equality, justice, plurality, and tolerance are valued; and facts and trust are upheld. This new aspect of social media literacy is focused on transforming the networked landscape with citizen's decisive and agentic action.

3.1.7 Social media literacy for shaping a just and democratic networked society

The discussion in the previous chapter on convergence, social media, surveillance culture, participatory culture and information disorder had shown that, while the networked era provides opportunities for connectivity, collaboration, participation, and creative self-expression, these opportunities are constrained and controlled by various elements such as platform design, algorithm, economic logic, corporates, socio-political contexts, and those with power and malafide intent. While social media platforms can potentially be used to expand diversity, make visible perspectives, creativity and self-representations beyond cultures and borders, the crucial questions that were raised in the discussion in the previous chapter also included: How safe are these platforms for children, women and ordinary citizens? Who controls the visibility? Whose voices are heard? (Burgess and Green, 2018). Other questions include how to address the problems of information disorder, hate speech, bigotry, gender abuse, and

various other forms of discriminations on networked platforms, and how to address issues emerging from surveillance, algorithmic sorting, data misuse, and predictive governance.

I argue that the responses to these questions demand not only skills and capabilities to understand and use networked platforms but also citizens' critical and transformative participation and citizenship in shaping a just and democratic networked society. Citizens' critical and transformative participation is essential for embedding human rights, dignity, and welfare values in the networked society. With this in mind, the study proposes a new dimension to social media literacy—shaping a democratic, networked society through a critical and transformative participatory culture. The social in social media demands citizens' critical and transformative social participation. Thus, social media literacy includes but goes beyond developing skills and capabilities to access, evaluate, network, and self-represent to critical and transformative participatory culture for a networked society that values human rights, dignity, and welfare. It means citizens' active and agentic role in shaping a democratic networked society through a process of understanding its social problems – within the socio-political and media-technology ecosystem – internalising them, and transforming them through critical and creative participation. It entails enabling citizens to not only understand and adjust but also resist surveillance culture; enabling citizens both to evaluate and judge false stories and also internalise the social problem of polarising campaigns and resist them. It involves literacy skills to understand and appropriate the corporate logics driving networked platforms. It includes but goes beyond empowering citizens to appropriate the networked platforms for creating, remixing and sharing content to citizens' agentic participation in appropriating and embedding the welfare and human right logic into the networked society.

While platform regulations and government interventions are needed, these are neither sufficient to address the problems of a networked society nor can they be completely left in the hands of government and corporates. Governments have political agendas and can also be party to disseminating hate content. The control of personal data cannot be left in the hands of monopolistic corporates either. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have been taking measures to moderate hate-speech and information disorder. But the problems these platforms navigate are interconnected with their very business models; then there are issues affecting free speech, transparency, equality and justice when commercial platforms use accountability to moderate content. Hence, transformation cannot happen with a top-down approach alone. In addition to these, regulations alone cannot completely address the issues involved in the networked society. For instance, those who spread conspiracy theories or disinformation mutate their operations when they encounter a purge and regulations.

Digital citizens have a significant role in addressing the issues affecting their life and should exercise their counter-power to ensure platforms guarantee transparency, fairness and justice (van Dijck, Poell and DE Waal, 2018). While regulations are imminent, they need to be guided by social justice and welfare of the society. Even in regulations, a bottom-up approach is required – people with critical knowledge should contribute to the change. What is equally or more important is levelling the gap in the knowledge asymmetry existing between corporations, who embed connected and networked devices and applications, and the "ordinary" citizens. Therefore, the framework of this study is focused on the role of citizens who as users of the technologies, can play an important role in shaping the same.

As discussed in the previous chapter, citizens are an important actor-component in the interaction of technology and society, along with corporate and government. However, since there are power and knowledge asymmetries between citizens and other actors, the study argues that critical social media literacy education can be helpful in levelling the gap. The counter power that exists in participatory culture can efficiently be used when there is critical participatory culture.

The more the users internalise the social problems of information disorder, surveillance culture and algorithmic bias, the more they grow critical in using the technologies, and the more their contribution can help in shaping a democratic networked society. Citizens' critical and active involvement is required for reducing the inequalities and discriminations that are reinforced in the digital era. The study proposes that the "surveillance and economic logics" driving the contemporary digital era has to be transformed with a "justice and welfare logic" – a justice and welfare logic that will not compromise on objectivity, dignity, equality, fairness, inclusiveness, tolerance, and diversity. For these to happen citizens have to play a critical and transformative role. Shaping of social media to suit a welfare and democratic networked society demands critical and transformative social participation. The critical discussion of public value platforms (van Dijck, Poell and DE Waal, 2018), surveillance culture (Lyon, 2018), and information disorder have to reach farther than the academic and citizen-watchdog circle to "ordinary" users. Therefore, participatory culture has to grow towards critical and transformative participatory culture. In addition to the voluntary or community assisted participation of users (Jenkins, 2006), there should be a collective and coordinated efforts from various stakeholders to empower digital citizens with a new mindset and new literacies.

This study defines *social media literacy as skills and capabilities for critically analysing and engaging in the networked society, evaluating information, managing mediated visibility, participating in creative self-expression, and transformative participation and citizenship for developing a democratic networked society characterised by justice, and welfare.* Although various actors have to work together to create citizens' awareness and capabilities, this study focuses on developing young citizens' social media literacies through the education system. With this in mind, this study will propose a framework of social media literacy education. Chapter 6 of this study will elaborate the framework and how it can be used for empowering teens with critical social media capabilities and practices. The framework adapts and integrates the creative, pedagogical and empowering elements from the established Digital Storytelling method. The next section will elaborate the development, form, and method of Digital Storytelling and try to reimagine it in the context of social media literacy education.

3.2 Reimagining and integrating the established Digital Storytelling in social media literacy education

Digital Storytelling as a discipline is a particular media practice and an established model. It was developed in California, in mid-90's, and diffused to different parts of the world (McWilliam, 2009). The underpinning principles of Digital Storytelling are: everyone has a story to share, people share their stories when there is an environment to share, constructing the narrative is subjective, creativity is inherent in human being, and people have the capacity to develop the competence to work around the landscapes of standard technology to suit their needs (Lambert, 2009). Digital

Storytelling, in its original understanding, is the creation and presentation of personal narrative using digital media technology (Khan, 2015). It is a means for people to create, preserve and share personal stories using digital media, conveying a meaningful message to the audience (McLellan and Wyatt, 2006). For Hartley and McWilliam, "it is at once an emergent form, a new media practice, an activist/community movement and a textual system" (2009, p4). Digital Storytelling provides an opportunity for self-expression of the personal experiences using creative tools and technology (Prins, 2016). The production happens using texts, images, audio narration, music and video clips (Khan, 2015). Daniel Meadows, one of the pioneers in the field in UK, defines digital stories as "multimedia narratives, short movies told in the first person, with feeling" (Photobus, no date).

In Robin's (2006) view there are mainly three types of digital stories: personal narratives, historical documentaries, and information/instruction focused stories. Personal narrative is the most commonly used type in Digital Storytelling. Lambert (2013), the co-founder of *The Center for Digital Storytelling* (CDS), now *StoryCenter*, notes that *StoryCenter*, prefers personal narratives and only out of necessity it may use documentary style, in some situations. There are seven components of Digital Storytelling developed by *StoryCenter*: self-discovery, personal or first-person narrative, description of moments, photos more than moving image, soundtrack, length and design, and intention. Lambert states that the focus in Digital Storytelling is the unique and powerful story of the individual and the narration of it through digital media. In Digital Storytelling practice, the cooperation of facilitator and storyteller, the function of literary voice, and the style and the form the story develops are important.

Lundby (2008) characterises Digital Storytelling as a participatory media art form; “small-scale” due to the shortness of the stories (usually 2-3 minutes long); produced using low-cost, ordinary digital tools; and centred on narrator's own experiences. McWilliam (2008) classifies this as specific Digital Storytelling compared to generic digital storytelling. Digital storytelling in its generic understanding is any digital narratives such as hypertext fiction, game and YouTube narratives (Hartley, 2008). However, there are discourses for including all types of digital narratives to be regarded under this genre including personal narratives in blogs, web home pages and social media profile (Lundby, 2009). Jenkins also explores the genre in its generic understanding in the context of making, sharing and collaborating using digital platforms: “Digital Storytelling could include stories generated via digital tools, stories that involve various forms of networked participation or interactivity, stories that are distributed via digital platforms, or stories that are consumed on digital platforms” (2017).

A distinguishing difference in specific Digital Storytelling compared to the generic is that “it is taught” (Hartley, 2009, p31). Educators in many parts of the world have integrated Digital Storytelling as a media literacy tool in classrooms. As the discussions in the later part of this section will elaborate, such integration of Digital Storytelling in education have shown evidence that it enhances student participation, engagement, creativity, visual literacy and multimodal communication (McLellan and Wyatt, 2006; Lowenthal, 2009; Clarke and Adams, 2010; Warfield, 2016).

3.2.1 Adaptations of the Californian model

The Californian model (StoryCentre, no date) – a private, community-arts practice, distributed through art-festivals or cultural organisations – received a new approach

when Daniel Meadows, re-conceptualised the model to integrate it with the well-established public broadcasting in the UK in 2001. Later on, this broadcast distribution model was adapted by *Australian Centre for Moving Images* (ACMI) in Australia to launch Digital Storytelling (Hartley, 2008).

The approach of BBC's *Capture Wales* programme, based on the original model, was to introduce a new broadcast form which gave the people, using the means of new digital tools, the power to voice their opinion and thus transform the audience to active participants in broadcast production (Meadows, 2009). In an interview, Meadows (2017) shared that *Capture Wales* programme was launched before the advent of YouTube and other social media platforms, which are now commodified since they are owned by private companies with business motives. His vision was to scale up the production through BBC by paying individual facilitators a small fee to conduct workshops. Some of the participants in the workshops, in turn, would become facilitators to conduct similar workshops and thus multiplying the number of facilitators in various localities who would facilitate quality production with ordinary people. Meadows wanted the public broadcasting system to create a broadcast form for the creation and sharing of content made with/by people that could be replicated by other countries to become a global movement. He feels the vision did not materialise since BBC decided to wind-up the programme in 2008.

Grounded on his vast experience in Digital Storytelling, Meadows (2009) suggests that the assumption that people produce media content when they are given computer and digital gadgets is not fully correct. In his view, what people need most are "the tools of empowerment – confidence, self-belief, and assistance with

scriptwriting and skill acquisition" (p116). He believes that people learn these tools with the help of a facilitator in the settings of a workshop (Meadows, 2009).

Simondson's (2009) view, based on her involvement at the *Australian Centre for Moving Images* (ACMI) which adapted the Digital Storytelling project, resembles Meadow's, regarding the role of facilitators to equip participants with the skills to creative production. For her, the production workshop must balance the "process and the product". From her workshops, she has learned "that it is the screen literacy and facilitation role of Digital Storytelling trainers that is key to assisting people to produce the best story they can" (p121).

Lambert (2017) notes that, over the years, the StoryCenter has been working with a wide sector of collaborators from fields such as education, health, civic, cultural, government and NGOs. While it does not stick to a particular theoretical framework, it was open to adaptations and multiple approaches to its model similar to the Open Source movement. From its foundation in 1993, it has assisted more than 20,000 persons, internationally, to share their stories powerfully (StoryCenter, no date).

Digital Storytelling, a means to drive change (Dunford and Jenkins, 2017) has taken a variety of approaches with the progress of technology and global diffusion in multiple contexts. The main reason for this is that the practice has been open to experimentation, adaptation, and it is not limited to a particular framework (Lambert, 2017). As Hartley and McWilliam argue, Digital Storytelling "represents something of a social movement" (2009, p4). It has spread significantly in various contexts globally "from cultural institutions and community development programs to screen innovation and commercial applications" (Hartley and McWilliam, 2009, p4). But according to Burgess and Klaebe (2009), the goals of Digital Storytelling continue to focus on

helping people to create and share their stories with an aim to be heard. Though practitioners have adapted the form and method of the Californian model, in a number of ways, the core elements of collaborative workshop and first-person narrative were invariably present in their projects.

Digital Storytelling which began as a workshop-based practice attracted traction from practitioners as well as academicians around the globe (Dunford and Jenkins, p17). The field has seen much attention from scholars to research the form, content, process and the impact. It has also been used as a method to conduct research (Lambert, 2017) especially “as a means of gathering personal testimonies” (Dunford and Jenkins, 2017, p17).

3.2.2 Digital Storytelling around the world

Digital Storytelling has been widely practised in North America, Europe and Australia compared to Africa, Asia, and South America. Though there have been Digital Storytelling movements in Africa, Asia, and South America, they have been, mostly, led by Western workshop facilitators and by and large did not emerge as a successful local movement with continuity (Hartley and McWilliam, 2009). A general observation for this uneven diffusion of Digital Storytelling is the digital divide and people's lack of competence to use the digital tools. For example, Lundby argues: “Digital Storytelling has been mainly taken up within the regions, cities, and networks of high modernity, where electricity runs smoothly, computers are available, and ‘ordinary people’ have the competence to use them” (Lundby, 2009, p178). However, in today's context, it calls for further research to understand why Digital Storytelling did not spread in some of the countries even after digitalisation? In countries like India, though the digital divide permeates, a large section is digitally active in consumption, user-generated

production, social sharing, and engagement. India is also home to Bollywood and regional cinema culture.

According to Lundby (2009), three matrices that substantially led to the diffusion of Digital Storytelling are tools/competencies, institutions/economy, and culture/hegemony. The availability of digital tools and the ordinary people's competence to use them for making their digital stories are an important matrix for the diffusion of Digital Storytelling practice. Furthermore, Digital Storytelling is driven by institutions from both the public and private sector or educational institutions.

Dunford (2017), based on the case studies from the international Digital Storytelling conferences held in Ankara 2013, Boston 2015 and London 2017, notes that Digital Storytelling practices have been mostly prevalent in sectors such as education, health service, cultural (museums or libraries) and civic development programs. This supports McWilliam's (2009) survey of 300 ongoing, workshop-centred, Digital Storytelling practices around the world, which have a noticeable online presence. Remarkably, among these, 123 practices were educational applications, primarily used as an ongoing pedagogical tool to improve media literacy skills and increase student participation in K-12 schools, colleges and universities. As noted by Lambert (2017): "In the United States, media literacy in particular was a highly encouraged new area of concern. So, projects and processes that helped students discover the way media were used to influence their perspectives were welcomed…" (p23).

This – the educational application of Digital Storytelling for media literacy education – for me, sheds light on why Digital Storytelling practice did not spread, particularly, in the Indian education sector since media literacy is not prevalent in Indian

schools. As discussed in Chapter 1, there have been some initiatives and attempts to introduce media literacy in schools, such as media clubs by NCERT (Media Club, no date). However, unlike in many other countries, schools and colleges in India have not introduced formal media literacy course as a module (SIGNIS, 2016). Secondly, institutions and community arts organisations in India did not come forward in importing the Californian method to India. As Lundby (2009) noted, "Digital storytelling occurs within set institutional frames" (p180). Thirdly, I feel, Digital Storytelling spread in countries where academic research is high. India is much behind in academic research compared to countries where Digital Storytelling is popularly diffused. Overall, Indian educational system is slow in developing a culture of research (Chakraborthy, 2017). In India research mostly takes place in "specialized research institutions" (Pai and Sridar, 2018) compared to research conducted in universities. "With a tiny 141,037 students enrolled in Ph.D. (0.4% of total enrolment), India has a long way to go in producing more research scholars from Universities" (Pai and Sridar, 2018).

Few years ago, the *Center for Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Innovation in Sexual and Reproductive Health* (Ci3) at the University of Chicago was granted $1 million by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for a research project to be conducted in Lucknow, India. The research was to Digital Storytelling workshops to explore and to find out new insights to enhance adolescent sexual and reproductive health (University of Chicago Urban Network, 2015). "Combining personal narratives, photographs, writings, and music, the short documentaries will present rich portraits of lives of Indian youths ages 15-24" (Ye, 2016). This study may be first of its kind in India, where a research topic related to health and gender issues in a marginalised society is approached through a Digital Storytelling environment.

3.2.3 Digital Storytelling as extended selfie

One form of Digital Storytelling may also be seen as an extended selfie, a representation of oneself with a narrative. The artefact in Digital Storytelling and selfie is self-creation, self-reflection, and self-representation. Both convey one's own story, reflect one's own choices, selection of events, emotions, and memories. Both are characterised by technological and cultural filters, and are created with digital technologies, useful for self-documentation, and often shared with friends and public on social media (Rettberg, 2014). As Meikle explains, "the creation of the selfie is a moment of writing oneself into being in public. It is a performance, a pose, a claim" (2016, p95). In this sense, a selfie can be seen as a digital story conveying powerful emotions.

As Rettberg (2014) describes, today we use digital media to see a part of our self. Our selfies, blog posts, Facebook status, and activity trackers, reflect our self-representation. The self-representation is also distorted by technological and cultural filters we use to create and share. In Digital Storytelling and selfie, one subtly filters out many aspects based on one's past experiences, customs and conventions. One carefully chooses what one likes to present to others. These selections are guided by previous works of others, one's attitudes, personality traits, traditions and conventions. Digital Storytelling and selfie enable people to connect with others. The persons within the frames of digital stories and selfies are seen as living beings and not as texts. This is the power of self-representation in digital stories and selfies (Rettberg, 2014).

Time-lapse selfies which have become popular on social media are digital videos containing carefully chosen selfies over a period of time (Rettberg, 2014) conveying a personal narrative. Time-lapse selfies are effective form of Digital Storytelling to create

and share personal stories with a meaningful message. Ahree Lee's video, titled *Me*, uploaded on YouTube in August 2006, is an early example of time-lapse video. She created the time-lapse video with daily photos she took of herself over three years. Seeing Lee's time-lapse video on YouTube, Noah Kalina immediately created a time-lapse video, titled *Everyday*, using photos of himself taken around 6 years. Both videos became popular on YouTube and attracted many to make similar videos of themselves (Rettberg, 2014). Thus, time-lapse videos can be powerful digital stories portraying feelings, emotions and a point of view.

3.2.4 Reimagining Digital Storytelling in the social media era

Meadows (2017) expressed in an interview that the quality of the narrative distinguishes Digital Storytelling from the social media user-generated content. According to him, ordinary people in Digital Storytelling create "high emotional content" using editing technique, but, in social media people share unedited footage which impacts its effectiveness. According to Simondson (2009), "inside each digital story is a profusion of ideas and emotions that are edited together into meaningful sequences" (p123). However, I argue that the underpinning differences between the social media storytelling and Digital Storytelling are not primarily in terms of narratives, self-representation, and use of editing or filters. On one hand, social media has become a space for all types of content, from casual, random selfies to powerfully narrative selfies and highly emotional, self-representing videos. Many make use of the editing features and filters available on smart phones and online platforms to represent their stories creatively. Digital Storytelling, on the other hand, is a method; a practice involving specific forms and processes; its content has particular elements; and it has specific aims. It is an organised, structured, institution-supported and facilitator guided

practice. The process involved in making digital stories, the literacy aspects of Digital Storytelling workshops, the role of the facilitator, and the collaboration in the group differentiate Digital Storytelling from social media storytelling. Social media storytelling is associated to "uses and affordances in terms of creativity (saying and making), sharing and visibility" (Meikle, 2016, 120) made possible through platforms, database and networking. Content generation and circulation on social media is large-scale and mostly unguided. As seen in the previous chapter, the affordances of networked platforms, the economic logic driving the platforms, and the socio-political contexts mutually constitute the large scale and unguided user-generated content sharing on social media. Unlike in Digital Storytelling, which operates on the logic of empowering citizens, the logic that is driving user-generated-content is capitalism.

I envisage reconceptualising Digital Storytelling in the larger context of creative and agentic participation on networked platforms within the frameworks of social media literacy in educational settings. Digital Storytelling in the networked digital environment is multimodal and hypertextual. It has to do with remixing, organising, creating, and sharing (Meikle, 2016). Digital Storytelling should include, but not limited to, responsible creation and sharing of memes, remix videos, podcast, music, info graphics, news reports, debates, and blogs. However, the adaptation and integration of Digital Storytelling should retain its core transformative and pedagogic elements and the aspects of participatory story-circle, group works, and facilitator role. These core elements are significant in today's expert-less YouTube and Instagram culture. The reimagined Digital Storytelling aims to develop citizens' creative participation on social media. It also aims to transform the impetuous and user-generated sharing with agentic and justice driven storytelling. It values citizens' agency in storytelling. It should also happen in an environment where citizens creation and sharing are not used for

algorithmic profiling and corporate monetisation. Therefore, reimagining Digital Storytelling in the social media era demands the following dimensions:

1. Empowering citizens with creative and critical skills required for user-generated creation and sharing. These involves developing citizens' creative and aesthetic skills; self-discovery; social skills for collaboration and networking; and values of ethics, fairness, and objectivity.
2. Critical capabilities for understanding and judging social media platforms along with the issues associated with the networked digital era and the socio-political contexts.
3. A method of social media literacy education that integrates Digital Storytelling is suggested for addressing the two dimensions mentioned above. How this can be done will be further elaborated under the following topic and in Chapter 5.
4. Various stakeholders should participate in empowering citizens with social media literacy education such as educational institutions, media organisations, government, non-governmental organisations, and community centres.
5. Development of public funded and monitored platforms for facilitating user-generated content sharing and networking.

3.2.5 Integrating Digital Storytelling in social media literacy education

The discussions in the preceding pages demonstrated the value of Digital Storytelling as a classroom method for enhancing students' self-expression, empowerment, and civic participation. These elements are also integral dimensions of social media

literacy. My social media literacy conceptual framework, that will be discussed in Chapter 6, integrates the pedagogic, creative, and transformative dimensions of Digital Storytelling method.

Pedagogic dimension

An abundance of Digital Storytelling applications can be found in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education by way of classroom integration, Digital Storytelling contests and after-school programs (Lowenthal, 2009; Yuksel, Robin and McNeil, 2006). Digital Storytelling is considered as a useful means to develop students' visual literacy skills for the creative use of technology (McLellan and Wyatt, 2006) and media literacy skills since they have to be involved in understanding the purpose of their story, searching and analysing reliable sources for their production. Students also learn the basics of digital technology related to video editing, sound recording and web tools (Warfield, 2016). The exercise of creating digital stories can make students more engaging and be participating. The process also develops their creativity, research skills, content analysis, collaboration, team work and communication skills. Thus, students' participation in Digital Storytelling initiates them into digital media literacy (Robins, 2006).

In Digital Storytelling, participants receive a hands-on experience and understanding of the key concepts of media literacy: representation, media languages, audience, and production. Digital Storytelling helps to understand representation and enhance one's resilience to representation – "resilience to representation is enhanced by expertise in representing" (McDougall, 2019). Digital Storytelling involves making choices, reflecting, deciding what values, feelings, viewpoints and beliefs to include or omit and what perspectives are shown. Digital Storytelling also helps to understand

media languages as it involves using multi-modal languages and genres that suit the platforms and the audience. Digital Storytelling also helps to reflect on audiences, the people for whom the stories are made and shared and how to get their attention.

Smeda, Dakich and Sharda (2014) demonstrate Digital Storytelling as a method for constructivist learning, which emphasises the social aspects and the use of contexts. In Digital Storytelling, students, facilitated by the teachers, work in collaboration to develop their own stories by taking individual approaches from their learning experiences.

Clarke and Adams (2010), who studied the pedagogical application of Digital Storytelling by Australian academics in higher education, found disparity related to the way Digital Storytelling is defined, its applications and the outcome. While Digital Storytelling resulted in student-centred learning, collaboration and multimodal communication, constructive alignment of Digital Storytelling with stipulated learning outcome was lacking in many instances. The defining of Digital Storytelling, the class composition, and the availability of resources is important in implementing Digital Storytelling in education. Clarke and Adams exhort the academics to redefine Digital Storytelling for its application in higher education: “One could even propose a shift in terminology as simple as ‘digital response’ or ‘digital critique’, which might more adequately fit with academics’ usage of this flexible multimedia tool” (p172).

While educators have applied the Digital Storytelling based on the StoryCentre model, they have adapted it to suit the contexts. As Lowenthal (2009) suggests: “Perhaps the power of Digital Storytelling is not in the CDS method but rather in providing students with an opportunity to have a voice and to create something that is meaningful to them and relevant to their life” (p259).

Based on the pedagogical dimensions of Digital Storytelling method, my social media literacy framework adapts the participatory and student-centred aspects of Digital Storytelling in classroom learning and teaching. Group work, reflexive discussions, sharing, and collaborating that are part of Digital Storytelling are integrated in the pedagogy of social media literacy. A facilitator-led workshop format is an important aspect of Digital Storytelling. The role of the facilitator is that of mentorship and guidance. The pedagogy of social media literacy also gives importance to the facilitator-led workshop format.

Creative and transformative dimensions

According to Erstad and Silseth (2008), Digital Storytelling applications in schools bring about new ways of learning using digital tools, which can lead to empowerment and citizenship. In their view, agency in Digital Storytelling denotes the way students take decisions in the process of Digital Storytelling and in their self-representations. Similarly, Benmayor (2008), who applied Digital Storytelling in teaching her course *Latina Life Stories* at California State University Monterey Bay, argues that Digital Storytelling as a pedagogy facilitate students' involvement and active participation leading to empowerment: "Digital Storytelling is an assets-based pedagogy where students can bring their own cultural knowledge and experience to the fore, including their skills and comfort with technology, to transform their thinking and empower themselves" (p200). Hull and Katz (2006) demonstrate through their case studies that authoring stories using multimodal tools helps the participants in fostering agentive self. According to them "enactment of an agentive self" (p71) is vital for effective learning. Digital Storytelling fosters the agentive self by providing opportunity for the

leaners to define the self, relate to others, use the digital tools and voice themselves in the society.

Benmayor points out that the students were encouraged to focus the story, centred on a particular aspect, that moulded their identity such as an important moment, event or an influential person in their lives. After the digital story production, students were asked to analytically reflect the creative process and theorise the stories they produced. Students were also facilitated to connect their stories to the key concepts, theories, elements, and social change factors that they study in the class and to look for new insights relevant to their contexts. This, according to Benmayor, helped them to critically look at the factors that shaped their perspectives which in turn gave them new insights.

There are a number of Digital Storytelling applications in different contexts that have shown the empowering aspect of Digital Storytelling especially for marginalised people (Chen, 2015)). For example, Sawhney's (2009) study of the role of Digital Storytelling for empowering marginalised youth in refugee camps found that the Digital Storytelling workshops enabled many youth to give expression to their traumatic experiences and also to manifest their inner voice through multimedia format. Alexandra (2008) who designed an ongoing weekly workshop on Digital Storytelling for migrants in Dublin notes that Digital Storytelling workshop enabled each participant to self-inquiry, leading to identify a story, representing the experiences and had one's own vision for sharing the story, though, there were many challenges such as sourcing images, and visually representing complex experiences. Hlalele and Brexa (2015) who studied Digital Storytelling as a methodology for empowering girls and young women in South Africa, found that Digital Storytelling transformed the marginalised girls and

young women to come out of their gender stereotypes, in spite of their past experience of violence, and emerge powerfully, empowered with self-confidence, self-esteem, identity and leadership qualities.

As noted by Meadows (2003), Digital Storytelling, though not easy, can be learned by anyone since everyone has a story to tell. It gives the participants an active role throughout since they also do the final editing to produce their own story. Instead of being passive users of media, Digital Storytelling gives them the power to participate in the entire creation process. Overall, the practice and research in this field have manifested that Digital Storytelling is an effective tool for empowerment through self-discovery, collaboration, self-representation and identity. Further research may be required to study whether Digital Storytelling empowers especially the marginalised people to effectively participate in creating engagements, online conversations and pushing their stories on social media, and be heard in the society.

Therapeutic, democratic and creative functions

Thumim (2017), in her analysis of the Digital Storytelling practices around the world, inspired by *StoryCenter* model, explored the therapeutic and democratic functions of Digital Storytelling and the tension that exists between the two. Digital Storytelling workshops facilitate self-representation in group sessions. Well planned group sessions are required for the self-representation of ordinary people to happen, which implies the link between therapy and democracy both for enabling the self-representation and to representing it in public. Thumim argues:

> So the self in self-representation, because it is linked to the therapeutic self, valorises individual experience. And, at the same time, the notion of representation in self-representation invokes not only re-presenting but

also the hope of a link to democratic outcomes – being represented in public (2017, p231).

Though there are two vital functions of Digital Storytelling, namely individual's experience of therapeutic healing and democratisation of media, the process should not be limited to these two aspects only. Thumim has observed that while self-representation in Digital Storytelling helped the therapeutic aspect, the experience also enabled the storyteller to rise, to voice and to stand out in the society. Gathering insight from Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) exploration of Williams' (1965) understanding of the link between representation and creativity, Thumim connects ordinary people's use of creativity to self-represent in Digital Storytelling. To voice and to be heard in a mediated world necessitates the creative use of media materials. Self-representation, creativity, and democratisation are linked since self-representation in a mediated world takes place through creation enabled by democratisation of media.

Based on her experience in psychoanalytic field and interactions with the Digital Storytelling facilitators, Brushwood Rose (2017) explored the impact, the creative experience of Digital Storytelling process and the creative self-representation, and the effects in an individuals' emotional aspects and the social world. She emphasised the immense value of the Digital Storytelling workshops and the role of the facilitators. Digital Storytelling workshops, though, have social purposes; the process, assisted by facilitators leads to getting in touch with deep-seated emotions and self-discovery. The emphasis, during Digital Storytelling workshop, is to explore within, to identify the self and to make connections to the outside realities through creative expressions.

Therapeutic, democratic and creative impact are some of the major factors that distinguish the “classic” Digital Storytelling from other digital stories available on social

media. The pedagogic, creative, therapeutic, democratic, and transformative functions of Digital Storytelling show the significance of integrating this method in social media literacy education. These are also important dimensions for informed and agentic participation, and for managing visibility and creative self-expression on social media. The participatory learning of social media literacy in schools that my study proposes integrates elements from the methods of Digital Storytelling discussed above. The framework includes active and reflexive involvement of participants, sharing, self-representation, creative making, the role of the facilitator, and the collaboration in the group.

3.3 Agency, voice, and empowerment

This section examines the complex, contested and interrelated terms: agency, voice, and empowerment. Based on the analysis, I draw out definitions of these terms for this study.

3.3.1 Understanding Agency

The concept of agency is defined and interpreted in different ways. Bandura (2018) refers to agency as people's capacity to influence their functioning and the course of events by their actions. Bratman (2007) considers self-governance, the ability of a person to direct and govern "her practical thought and action", as a core aspect of agency. Kabeer considers agency as "the capacity to define one's goals and act on them (2008, p20). Sen (1999) refers to agency as a person's freedom to pursue and achieve goals and values that she considers important in her life. For Jeffery, agency "implies the ability of individuals or groups to act on their situations, to behave as

subjects rather than objects in their own lives, to shape their own circumstance and ultimately achieve change" (2011, p6).

The above notions of agency show different aspects such as making choices, acting in situations, freedom to pursue goals, self-governance and achieving change. An agent's ability or freedom to make choices and act upon them is not just a rational aspect but comprises the social, institutional and historical aspects (Bifulco, 2013). It includes "the meanings, motivations, skills and purpose that people bring to their actions, their 'sense of agency'" (Kabeer 2008, p20). Agency is intertwined with structures in the society: "Choice takes place within certain social structures, themselves the outcome of previous choices and structures" (Folbre, p39). Structures of class, caste, and gender and "norms of acceptable actions and behaviours, discourses that frame how they are perceived and laws that bind them" (Maynard and Stuart, 2018, p78) implicitly and explicitly pervade every aspect of human life. These circumstances impact, limit, or shape people's choices.

Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conceptualisation of agency as temporally embedded and dynamically situated within the variable historical contexts, and agency as habitual or routine and deliberative or purposeful is useful to understand people's, including children's, agency (Banaji, 2017). They suggest that in acting, people simultaneously engage with past behavioural patterns, imagine prospects of actions in the future, and make judgements and practical choices for the present by evaluating the contextual conditions. While human action is intertwined with variable social contexts and temporal contexts – past, future, and present – it also can impact both social and temporal contexts. The way people engage with past experiences, future

orientations and present conditions, for making practical and evaluative choices in different situations, can shape their actions and the intended outcome.

Banaji's (2017) study among working and middle-class children in India showed empirical evidence of how children's agency emerges in different ways in their everyday life influenced by class, caste and gender structures. The examples of children from working class and low-income communities show that they expressed their agency in caring for their family members; in the uptake of routine works to earn a livelihood for self and family; in patient navigation through the pressures and risks at home, community or work place; and in creative ways of reusing whatever material they could find for pleasure and play. Nevertheless, Banaji noticed that some of the choices and engagements of middle-class children online, especially some boys, contributed to the reproduction of discrimination and violence. These included comments and posts related to racism, misogyny, patriarchy and anti-reservation. Banaji refers to such expressions of agency as contaminated agency, since those are influenced by class superiority, hegemonic thinking or adult pressure. Children's acts, whether resistance or conformity, are complex and nuanced and only specific attention to such acts in the context of their social situations can reveal whether they contribute to the reinforcement of discrimination, promote justice, or are practised for the sake of maintaining the affective relationship of family and community:

> In practice, as agency emerges in situations of relationality (ethical or otherwise) and social reproduction, agency can be expressed through a host of actions on a spectrum of conformity and resistance. Some agentic choices serve to build communities and relationships, which can be a form of resistance or can be contaminated by those communities' discriminatory practices, and also be a form of conformity (Banaji, 2017, p194).

In the area of social media literacy education, I refer to agency *as young peoples' ability for awareness, choices and acting* (Maynard and Stuart, 2018) *in their lived experiences of social relations and historically specific contexts*. *Awareness* means knowledge and critical reflection of one's intersectional identities and how they inflect one's everyday practices both offline and online; awareness of what contributions one's practices make in the maintenance or resistance of social injustice; understanding why ideas, norms and values are exercised in certain way and not otherwise and whose interest are they serving; and scrutiny of what is going on in the society. *Choosing* involves 1) forethought – ability to plan, set goals, and anticipate the outcome – and 2) self-reflectiveness – capacity to self-examine their goals, efficacy, values, and the ethical implications of their pursuits (Bandura, 2018). *Acting* means carrying out or enacting the plan both individually and collectively. It involves young people's ability to self-regulate, adjust their behaviour and manage their conduct through self-governance (Bandura, 2018). Acting in pursuit of one's goals and objectives also entails making responsible choices, those that do not violate others' rights (Sen, 1985).

3.3.2 Understanding Voice

Considering voice as a facet of agency, Gammage, Kabeer and Rodgers, refer to voice as "the ability to articulate practical needs and strategic interests, individually and collectively, in the private domain and in the public" (2016, p6). They also argue that for voice to matter, "voice must go beyond the capacity to speak, it must be heard, listened to, and acted on" (p6). Young argues that individuals and groups should be able to participate and "communicate with others or express their feelings and

perspectives on social life in contexts where others can listen" (1990, p38). Couldry refers to voice as "the process of giving an account of the world in which we act" (2010, p96). The absence of voices or silences can signify people's constrained circumstances without other alternatives (Kabeer, 2008). When an individual or group is denied their capacity to express themselves on social life or when voice is silenced on account of class, gender, age, race, disability, history, religion and other power relations, it means denial of a fundamental aspect of life (Young, 1990; Couldry, 2010).

For voice to matter, Couldry (2010) argues, its process dimension and value dimension are essential. The value aspect of voice means organising the social, political and economic dimensions of human life in a manner that recognise and give importance to people's voice. It means the development of a society where people, especially the oppressed and subordinate groups, have opportunities and access to means to narrate their life accounts where there are avenues for those voices to be listened to and recognised. It also involves opposing those conditions in society, especially "neoliberalism's reductive view of democratic politics" (p3), that strive to deny some sections or groups their voice. Neoliberalism, a policy framework adopted internationally from the 1980s, devalues all aspects of human life, except the market function, and endeavours to normalise it as inevitable for the social organisation. It considers democracy as a means for enhancing individual's so-called freedom to compete in the market and accumulate wealth while disregarding the corrosion in political and social life (Couldry, 2010).

The process dimension of voice means "the process of giving an account of one's life" (Couldry, 2010, p7). Voice is a socially grounded process that requires resources such as language, social status, and other people to whom the narrative is being made.

The exercise of narrating one's life is also "a form of reflexive agency" (Couldry, 2010, p8). It involves analysing and interpreting one's past and present situations, consciously choosing life accounts and taking responsibility for what is being shared. Voice, as an embodied process, is plural and distinct and involves self-reflection and action – speaking and listening.

In her essay, "Can the subaltern speak?" Spivak (1988) critically analyses the voice of subalterns. The term 'subaltern' implies, broadly, various groups in society who face discriminations and oppression because of reasons such as gender, class, caste, age and geographical location; those who are excluded in the hierarchy of power structures, and those who are not able to represent themselves. Spivak questions whether the subaltern groups can speak for themselves and whether what they speak is listened to and acted upon. Spivak argues that many factors prevent the subalterns from speaking for themselves and being heard. Often, the powerful and privileged class in the society, such as men, academics, politicians, religious leaders and upper caste people speak for them. When subalterns are spoken for by the powerful classes, and when they have no opportunity to represent themselves, the practical changes that they need in their life and in their life conditions do not take place (Spivak, 1988; Riach, 2017).

As Spivak points out, it is vital to be conscious of the cultural differences when people represent other groups and speak for them. People's values, beliefs and norms, condition and limit their perception and understanding of other cultures. An individual or a group cannot substitute the voice of another individual or group. While those oppressed are given the opportunity to speak for themselves and act upon what they speak, there is also a need for collective voices to alter the social arrangements in

society that create oppressive systems and oppressed groups (Spivak, 1988; Riach, 2017).

In social media literacy education, I consider voice as young people's "ability to articulate practical needs and strategic interests, individually and collectively, in the private domain and in the public" (Gammage, Kabeer and Rodgers, 2016, p6). Voice is an aspect of agency, and both are interrelated and mutually supportive. In exercising agency for social transformation, individual and collective voices have great significance. Listening to young people's voice and recognising it promotes their agency (Graaf, 2017).

Social media literacy education strives to promote participants' individual and collective voice through their critical reflection, creative works, groups activities, and civic participation. Researchers and facilitators of social media literacy workshops must listen and discuss the perspectives of young people and also "step back and think about the silencing of certain 'voices'" (Hadfield and Haw, 2001, p498).

However, for the social process of voice, for voices to actualise – listening and acting – resources and structural changes in the social, political and economic domains are required. Creating listening space for children also entails "pro-actively looking for opportunities to highlight the resources children draw on in expressing agency, and exploring how these shape their participation in different ways" (Graff, 2017, p266). Programmes and policies that affect young people's lives, including education, should include and recognise young people's voices. As Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan argue, "[i]f girls' voices do not centrally inform the direction of policy and programs, their needs are likely to be misconstrued and their strength and resilience ignored or lost" (1995,

p1910). Furthermore, "[t]o include girls' voices requires listening to listen to them, but it also requires recognizing adult resistance to doing so" (p192).

3.3.3 Understanding Empowerment

The term empowerment, popularly used in developmental fields and gender studies, is conceptualised in different ways for specific fields and groups. Alsop, Bertelsen and Holland define empowerment "as a group's or individual's capacity to make effective choices, that is, to make choices and then to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes" (2006, p8). They highlight that agency, an individual's or group's ability to make choices and act, is interrelated to the institutional conditions, which they call *opportunity structure*. For people's exercise of agency, the institutional conditions must be favourable.

Kabeer (1999, 2008), in her study of women's empowerment, refers to empowerment as the process of acquiring the ability to make strategic choices for those who have been disempowered or denied such choices. She distinguishes between mundane choices of everyday life and the ability to make strategic choices that can bring about positive changes in their lives. She considers resources, agency and achievements as integral and interrelated aspects of empowerment. While people need material and social resources as a base for making strategic choices, they also need to experience the outcome or the positive impact for a sustained further action for change.

Gutierrez defines empowerment as "a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations" (1990, p149). For empowerment to take place, it is important to develop "a

sense of personal power, an ability to affect others, and an ability to work with others to change social institutions" (p150).

Young's (1990) notion of self-determination and self-development, and how these are affected by social and institutional constraints, is useful in understanding empowerment. Young, considering power as relational, argues that the dominating and oppressive forms of relationships affect people's ability for self-determination and self-development necessary for living a good life. She defines a person's ability for self-determination as "participating in determining one's action and the conditions of one's action", and self-development as "developing and exercising one's capacities and expressing one's experience" (1990, p37).

Individuals or groups face domination when they are restricted from participating in decision-making concerning the norms, values, practices, and institutional arrangements in which they live. Individuals or groups face oppression when the prevailing norms, practices, and institutional arrangements constrain their development of capacities and self-expression. Allen argues, "just as domination and oppression are understood in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political relations that impede self-determination and self-development, empowerment must be understood in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political relations that foster and promote these same capacities" (2008, p165).

Young's (1990) conceptualisation of five different ways oppression operates in a society is useful for understanding why some groups are not able to develop their capacities and are not able to voice what is going on in their lives and how the structures and systemic processes in the society allow such constraints. These are: 1) exploitation – appropriation and systematic transfer of the benefit of the labour and

energies of members of one social group to another group; 2) marginalization – non-recognition of some sections of people as useful members in the society since they are not part of the labour force; 3) powerlessness – when some social groups must always take orders from others while they themselves do not have the power to decide; 4) cultural imperialism – enforcing the dominant group's values, perspectives, and practices as norms to others; and 5) violence – some groups, because they belong to those groups, are systematically attacked and humiliated, and their properties are damaged.

In the Indian context, the individual's or group's experience of exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence is deeply intersected with class, caste, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, geography, and history. Therefore, understanding the contradictory nature of Indian democracy, which pledges equality and inclusiveness, requires an analysis of power relations in everyday life. Behl proposes situated citizenship, an intersectional and embodied approach which "makes citizens' embodied, lived experience of gender and other intersecting categories of difference centre to the analysis" (2019, p4). In framing citizenship not only as a fixed legal status comprising of stipulated rights and duties, but also as "a situated social relation" (p3), the framework of situated citizenship tries to understand the ubiquitous contradictions and unevenness of Indian democracy experienced in daily lives and how they are maintained and resisted in social practices.

Thus, the process of empowerment is dependent on social justice – social justice in this context means the elimination of domination and oppression both in public and private spaces (Young, 1990). According to Young (1994), it involves critical self-reflection – supported by dialogue with others to understand the social contexts

influencing individual action – and democratic collective action to change the structures.

Nevertheless, individual and collective actions for change can become anti-democratic and violate human rights when those engaged do not critically evaluate their actions and are not guided by equality, inclusiveness and equity (Banaji, 2008; Kabeer, 2008). The intersection of social categories like class, caste, gender, and religion can make individuals or groups experience domination or oppression while simultaneously perpetuating domination or oppression on some other groups or in some other areas of life. In the name of empowerment, those facing oppression can be co-opted into discriminatory, neo-liberal, and depoliticised collective action which does not challenge the existing social structures (Batiwala and Dhanraj, 2004).

With reference to social media literacy education research, I consider empowerment *as a process of increasing young people's justice-driven agency to participate effectively in one's on and offline contexts and bring about change without violating human rights*. It entails processes through which young people expand their critical awareness, the ability for choosing and acting, both individually and collectively. It involves developing skills and capabilities for critically analysing lived experiences and practices and power relations operating on and offline, evaluating information, managing mediated visibility and gendered identities. It involves the recognition of the inherent dignity of the human person, which manifests in treating others as equals while respecting their difference (power from within), relating to others for collective voice for social transformation (power with), and acting towards inclusive, equitable and democratic social arrangements (power to) (Rowland, 1997). It entails engagements and practices in the public and private space that are transformative,

pro-democratic and inclusive and transforming those that reproduce domination and oppression.

The process of empowerment envisioned through participatory critical social media literacy programmes in the school context includes critical reflection, developing knowledge, learning new skills, group activities, creative self-expression and civic participation. In Chapter 6, I have presented a theoretical framework, pedagogical methods and some basic learning programmes to help the process of empowerment in the school education context in Mumbai. It needs to be situated in the social, political and cultural context. It needs to be improved to factor in participants' existing values, civic sense, everyday practices, gendered identities and other aspects of situated citizenship with which they approach the learning programmes and how those impact their learning and empowerment.

3.4 Conclusion

I believe that a systematic and organised integration of participatory social media literacy education in schools that integrates the pedagogic, creative, therapeutic, democratic, and transformative functions of Digital Storytelling can make valuable contributions for the personal growth of students and for the welfare of the society.

The next chapter, on the research design and methods, and Chapter 6, the framework of social media literacy, will further elaborate and envision critical social media literacy education in schools for empowering children and for contributing to the transformation of the social media landscape.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

This chapter discusses the overall framework of this study. In this chapter I will outline the five parts of my action research study: action planning, implementation, data collection, reflexive analysis and evaluation (Smith and Rebolledo, 2018), and ethical procedures (Nolen and Putten, 2007). This action research study hinges on these five aspects.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the process of reviewing the literature on social media, participatory culture, media literacy, and Digital Storytelling and my attendance at a social media module conducted by Professor Graham Meikle, my director of studies, at the University of Westminster, from September to November 2018, have helped me to reflect on social media, society, and citizenship. These have also enhanced my own agency and critical autonomy. All these factors have contributed in planning and implementing a participatory social media literacy workshop on two groups of secondary school children in Mumbai.

4.1 Action research design

The methodology of my study is action research. Action research is about working towards practical outcomes and also about creating forms of understanding. Action research is usually conducted by practitioners wishing to improve various aspects of their practice so that they can be more effective (McKernan, 1996). Action research has received attention in the field of education for studying the impact of teaching and learning (Nolen and Putten, 2007). Classroom research is done by

practicing teachers to critically examine their professional development, curriculum, learning or improving aspects of education (Hopkins, 2014). As Nolen and Putten observe:

> Traditionally employed across many practitioner-related disciplines in the health and social sciences, action research has garnered particular attention in the field of education. Educators see it as a practical yet systematic research method to investigate their own teaching and their students' learning in and outside the classroom. Examining the normal schooling process has valuable advantages in informing what is known about teaching, learning, and content and curriculum design (Nolen and Putten, 2007, p401).

Mcniff and Whitehead point out that the action in action research is the practice where the practitioner is an insider in the research. The action of action research is always informed and purposeful: "The action begins with a felt need to do something, which transforms into intent, which in turn transforms into action" (Mcniff and Whitehead, p40, 2010).

In my action research, the felt need is development of teens' critical social media literacy in Mumbai. Therefore, I designed a "purposeful action with educational intent" (Mcniff and Whitehead, p18, 2010). The "purposeful action" is a one-month workshop for two groups of teens in 2 secondary schools (90-minute session, a week), based on the social media literacy framework and the toolkit which I have developed. I implemented the action having in mind the improvements in learning the action makes for the target group. While the action research is motivated by my values and vision for social improvements, I tried to test the validity of the assumptions I formulated and critically judge the findings (Mcniff and Whitehead, 2010). The process of developing a plan, implementing it, observing its impact, and critically reflecting the how and why

of its impact “becomes a process of theory generation”. (Mcniff and Whitehead, p19, 2010).

Though my study is in the context of school children, I am not a practising schoolteacher. But, I have some experiences of teaching media literacy to high school children. I conducted media literacy workshops for high school students in four schools in Pune, India, during 2008-2009. This experience enabled me to write and direct a 35-minute documentary titled, *Media Today*, produced by St Pauls Audio Visuals in 2009, which became an aid for teaching media literacy in schools. From 2011 to 2016, while I held the role as the director of St Pauls Institute of Communication Education, a media school in Mumbai, I organised seminars and workshops on topics such as journalism, photography, and film-making (short film) for the teenagers and youth in Mumbai. These experiences have helped me to deduce that media education can help children to use media for creative self-expression and in improving their understanding of media.

Furthermore, after I have completed my PhD research, I plan to conduct social media literacy training programmes for students and teachers in Mumbai and other parts of India. The social media literacy toolkit which I have made available online http://socialmedialit.org/ is aimed at helping secondary school teachers in Mumbai with a framework and materials for classroom teaching to improve children’s social media literacy. I also plan to circulate a report of the social media literacy framework and toolkit among policy makers and school principals in Mumbai with an aim to integrate social media literacy programmes in school curriculum. Thus, through this study I aim to contribute to classroom teaching of social media literacy in Mumbai. This study aims

to improve the social media literacy of teens in Mumbai so that they can grow in making critical use of social media for creative self-expression and citizenship.

As an action research, my study involves addressing problems, participants' collaboration and the involvement of the researcher in training, refining the methods, coordinating, observing and evaluating the entire social media literacy training process.

The action research design of the project comprises the following:

Action planning

a. Pilot study
b. Development of critical social media literacy conceptual framework
c. Development of social media literacy toolkit

Implementation

Social media literacy workshops

Data collection

a. Pre and post workshop survey
b. Materials from group works,
c. Digital Storytelling assignment,
d. Interviews,
e. Observation, and
f. Fieldnotes.

Critical reflection, explanation, analysis and evaluation

Ethics

4.1.1 Action planning

The action planning part of the study consisted of a pilot study, development of critical social media literacy conceptual framework, and the development of social media literacy toolkit.

Pilot study

For the pilot study, a survey was conducted in 3 secondary schools in Mumbai to test the social media literacy levels of students in year 9 (14 to 15 years age group). The objective of the survey was to understand the social media use and social media literacy level of the said secondary school students in Mumbai. The survey had questions aimed at understanding what social media mean to school children, their attitude towards social media, their understanding of the platforms, the types of platforms they used, their critical knowledge, and the ways they used them in their life. The findings of the survey helped me in developing the social media literacy conceptual framework and teaching materials on social media literacy.

The survey questionnaire (Appendix A) had 15 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. It covered five areas: demographics (questions 1-6), access (questions 7,8,10), opportunities and practices (question 11), critical knowledge (question 12), and news and “fake news” (questions 13-16). The questions on identity included age, gender, parent’s educational qualification and the school name. The questions related to access covered the devices they owned and the frequency of accessing the Internet using various devices; and the frequency in accessing various social media platforms. The questions on critical knowledge included critical

understanding of social media such as economics of social media, data, algorithm, surveillance, visibility, and representation.

The survey was administered online using Google Forms. A total of 231 participants took the survey in the school computer lab in the presence of a teacher. The pilot study revealed that the use of social media among the respondents was mostly limited to entry level use—connecting with friends, getting information, posting pictures, and entertainment. The study also affirmed that their critical knowledge of social media was inadequate. The findings from the pilot study are analysed in details in Chapter 5.

Development of critical social media literacy conceptual framework

Based on the literature review, pilot study findings, and my own critical reflection, I developed a social media literacy framework. The paradigm of social media literacy for children comprises of critical social media capabilities and practices, the circuit of social media literacy, and social media literacy programmes. The critical social media literacies and practices is divided into five key areas—platform knowledge, visibility management, information management, Digital Storytelling, and participation and citizenship. Social media literacy programmes in schools are suggested as a means to help children progress from mere platform use and information access to critical, creative and transformative users of social media. Chapter 6 elaborates the social media literacy framework.

Development of social media literacy toolkit

Based on the social media literacy framework, discussed above, I designed a social media literacy toolkit consisting of teaching materials for conducting social media

literacy workshops in secondary schools. The learning goals of the social media toolkit are: to help children harness critical social media capabilities and practices, and to help them progress on the circuit of social media literacy. The social media literacy toolkit is composed of the following four topics: understanding social media, understanding visibility and identity, managing online news, and Digital Storytelling. The workshop has video lessons, carefully chosen group activities, and creative making. The purpose of this toolkit is to provide a realistic and practical foundation for media literacy that suits the contemporary social media environment (Buckingham, 2019a). The toolkit is presented in the final section of Chapter 6.

4.1.2 Implementation

The second stage of the action research consists of implementing a participatory social media literacy workshop in two secondary schools in Bandra, Mumbai. I conducted the workshop among Year 9 students, who were around 14-15 years old. There were 32 participants in *School A* (girls' school), and 29 participants in *School B* (boys' school). I chose this age group as they have entered their adolescence and were very likely to be actively using social media. According to Livingstone's (2014) study of children's social media use conducted in the UK, Spain, Romania and the Czech Republic, the age group 14 to 16 tend to be reflexive in their social media use. They prefer to be independent of parental and teacher control in their use of social media. These youngsters, apparently, are interested in meaningful social experiences. They are, increasingly, able to think for themselves, have views, engage with the wider online circle, and in some instances use social media platforms to participate in civic activities and for creative expressions. My study analyses if similar patterns can be found among 14-15-year olds who took part in the study in Mumbai.

The workshop had four sessions. The participatory learning, for each session, was facilitated through a warmup activity, a video lesson and a main activity. The warmup activity was meant to elicit participants prior knowledge and to introduce the topic of a session. The video lesson was meant to introduce the core concepts. Group activities involving creative making and co-learning were aimed at their reflection and discussion of the core concepts.

A teacher from the respective school was present during the workshop sessions. I also took informal feedback from the teacher during the workshop sessions. A detailed discussion of the implementation and the impact of the workshop is presented in the analysis chapters – Chapters 7,8, and 9.

4.1.3 Data collection

In the third stage of the action research, which is connected to the implementation stage discussed above, I collected the data to evaluate the impact of the social media literacy framework and the workshop. The data collection involved the following aspects:

Pre-workshop survey

Before the workshop, participants were invited to take a survey. The survey instrument that was developed for the pilot study (Appendix A), discussed in Chapter 5, is used for the introductory survey as well. The purpose of the introductory survey is to understand participants' demography, social media access and practices, and their critical knowledge of the platforms.

Gathering participants' activity materials

Participants' activity material consisted of diagrams, comments on news articles, memes, news and opinion articles, and warmup activity sheets. I collected the original activity papers from the workshop for analysis. The activity material formed an important resource to understand participants' grasp of key concepts, reflections, voice, creativity, and connecting the topic to real life.

Digital Storytelling Assignment

After the workshop, participants were given a Digital Storytelling home assignment. They were invited to make a short video, using images, videos, music and voice over, either individually or in self-formed groups. They were given a sheet which included examples of topics related to social media and the 7 elements of Digital Storytelling. These elements are presented in Chapter 6.

There were 6 short videos made by 13 students from *School A* as part of the video assignments. I took feedback of their video-making process and experience during the interviews and post workshop survey. I also analysed the videos to understand the impact of social media literacy learning – their interest in the topic, reflection, creativity, appropriate use of digital tools, and connecting the topic to real life. The participants from *School B* did not make any video.

Observation (ethnography) and Documentation (field note)

Observation is a fundamental tool used in action research for inquiry (McKernan, 1991). During the workshop, I observed how the participants were responding to the lessons and activities, their grasp of the key concepts, interest, involvement and the

learning. I recorded my observations after every session. The following aspects were considered in my observation and recording during the workshop:

1. Grasp of key concepts such as platform knowledge, visibility management, information management, representation, and languages
2. Participation: participants' interest, attentiveness and involvement in discussion, activities
3. Attendance
4. Creativity
5. Reflection and critical thinking
6. Class management
7. Any specific or interesting episodes
8. Challenges
9. What works and what does not work in the toolkit?

Post-workshop survey

After the workshop, the participants were invited to take the survey. The survey had six open ended questions (Appendix B) related to understanding platforms, data, visibility and information disorder.

It also had a closed-ended category, with 19 items, for evaluating participants' critical understanding of social media, such as economics of social media, data, algorithm, surveillance, visibility, and representation. This closed-ended category is available in Appendix A, question 12 (a section in the pilot survey). This category was also included in the pre-workshop survey.

Workshop feedback form

After the workshop, the participants were given a feedback form (Appendix C). The feedback form had four open-ended questions on what they liked and did not like in the workshop, suggestions for improving the workshop and describing the overall experience of participating in the workshop. The form also had a close-ended category with 15 items.

Semi-structured interviews

Four weeks after the workshop, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 participants (9 each from each school). The four-week gap between the workshop and the interview was intended to give time for the participants to reflect on the workshop. The interviews were aimed at understanding the impact of the workshop and their grasp of key concepts related to social media competencies and practices. The teacher from the respective schools coordinated the selection of participants for the interviews. Each interview was completed in less than 60 minutes. The interviews were held in the classrooms of respective schools. More details about the interviews are given in the introduction to data analysis in Chapter 7. For conducting the semi-structured interviews, I prepared some main questions and probe questions (Appendix D). These questions were meant as a reference and guide. The questions were not asked in the same order, but rather the conversation guided the sequence.

4.1.4 Critical reflection, explanation, analysis and evaluation

In the fourth stage of the action research, the data was analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019). In the first part of Chapter 7, an introduction to reflexive thematic analysis method and details of the process of

my data analysis are presented. In my data analysis I have tried to particularly focus on participants' voice and their perceptions of the workshop and the social media literacy learning. By analysing the data and critically reflecting what elements in the workshop helped in improving participants' learning, and what additions or changes are required in further designing social media literacy programmes, I have tried to contribute to the field of social media literacy education.

Action research is cyclical. The framework, and the teaching material, developed in this study and the critical reflections on the impact of the workshop are useful for further classroom teaching of social media literacy in secondary schools in India.

4.1.5 Ethics

Action research as an "insider research" has serious ethical implications (Nolen and Putten, 2007). While designing the action research, I took special care of the ethics protocol involved in it.

My fieldwork commenced only after my ethics application for conducting the study had been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Research Committee at the University of Westminster. I abided by the "University's Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research" for my research.

Since the study involved secondary school children, I prepared separate sets of information sheets and consent forms for children, parents, and school management. These were prepared separately for the pilot study and the main study. Furthermore, for the main study I prepared additional sets of consent forms and information sheets

for the participation in the post-workshop interviews. These had been reviewed and approved by the University Ethics Research Committee.

Ethics procedures for the pilot study fieldwork

The information sheet for the pilot survey clearly stated the purpose and the aims of the survey, anonymity and confidentiality of personal data, and that the participants can withdraw from the survey at any time, without giving a reason for withdrawing.

A list of information sheets and consent forms that were prepared for the pilot study are given below (Table 1).

Pilot survey
Information sheet for children
Consent form for children
Information sheet for parents
Consent form for parents
Information sheet for school principal
Consent form for school principal

Table 1: A list of information sheets and consent forms for the pilot study

The original consent forms for the pilot study are given in the Appendix E.

Since I was in London when the pilot survey was administered, I organised to send the copies of the information sheets and consent forms to the principals (head teachers) in schools through my colleague in Mumbai. The principals then distributed the forms with the help of class teachers to students. Forms for the parents were sent across to them through the respective students. Only those students and their parents

who signed and returned the respective consent forms were allowed to participate in the survey. Though, consent forms and information sheets were distributed to 680 students and their parents, only 231 students took the survey from three schools. My colleague collected from the school all the signed consent forms and gave them to me. The survey was administered online using Google Forms. Participants took the survey in the school computer lab in the presence of a teacher.

Ethics procedures for the main study fieldwork

The information sheet for the participation in the social media literacy workshop (main study) clearly mentioned the purpose of the workshop, its duration, topics, involvement in the activities and the video assignment, and the participation in a survey before and after the workshop. The sheet also clearly stated that the participation is voluntary, that the participants can decide not to participate in some activities or not to answer some questions and that the participants can drop out at any time. It also specified that I would observe and take note of the process of participants' learning during and after the workshop for my research and the findings from this study would be presented in my PhD thesis and possibly published in a report, blog, journal article or book; participants would not be identified in any way in these publications; and no information identifying the school, household, individual children or their parent would be reported or published.

A list of information sheets and consent forms that are prepared for the main study are given below (Table 2).

Main study	
Social media literacy workshop	**Interview – after the workshop**

Information sheet for the participants	Information sheet for the participants
Consent form for the participants	Consent form for the participants
Information sheet for parents	Information sheet for parents
Consent form for parents	Consent form for parents
Information sheet for school principal	Information sheet for school principal
Consent form for school principal	Consent form for school principal
Consent form for the video presenter (for the toolkit video)	
Consent form for the teacher (present during the workshop)	

Table 2: A list of information sheets and consent forms for the main study

The original consent forms for the participation in the workshop and the interview are given in the Appendix F and G, respectively.

Prior to the social media literacy workshop, I gave the copies of the information sheets and consent forms to the school principals. The principals then distributed the forms with the help of class teachers to those students who showed interest to participate in the workshop. Forms for the parents were sent across to them through the respective students. Only those children and those parents who signed and returned the consent form were allowed to participate in the study. I explained to the participants before starting the workshop the objectives of my research, the aims of the workshop and the voluntary nature of their participation. I also reiterated that they were free to stop participating in the workshop or activities at any point of time.

I took measures not to cause any risk or harm of any type to anyone during my study. In this regard, a teacher from the respective schools was present during every session of the workshop. The presence of a teacher was aimed at helping participants to approach the teacher if they had any personal needs or difficulties. The presence of

a teacher would also help me to handle if any unforeseen issues were to happen during the workshop.

Ethical procedures in research analysis

I have strictly adhered to the confidentiality of personal data and information. The pilot study survey was anonymous – respondents' names were not included in the questionnaire. In the analysis of the survey data, the results were presented for the whole group of respondents, and no information identifying the school, household, individual respondents or their parent were reported or published.

In the analysis of the workshop and interview data, the names of the participants have been anonymised in the thesis – pseudo names have been assigned to the participants while reporting. I have not used any identifiable material such as images, or video in the thesis. I deleted the names that were mentioned in some of the videos that the participants had made for the Digital Storytelling assignment. The thesis does not mention the names of the schools where the fieldwork was conducted. I also anonymised the names of schools that were mentioned in some of the activity sheets that the participants had prepared.

4.2 Context, normativity and self-reflexivity

As discussed in Chapter 1, India is characterised by overlapping categories of class, caste, gender, religion, tribes, language, patriarchy, rural and urban divide, and migration. Adult lived experiences and those of children are not homogenous within and across urban and rural India. Banaji's study of Indian children showed that class and caste were "dominant structures, while gender inflects the way agency can be

displayed in different class contexts" (2017, p193). Although the Indian Constitution of 1950 guarantees equality and inclusive democracy, in practice, discrimination and violence based on gender, sexuality, caste, tribes and religion are rampant both in public and private domains in India (Behl, 2019). Behl notes that the "Indian constitution protects gender equality, while also retaining a plural system of personal law that protects cultural differences but perpetuates gender-based inequalities" (2019, p16). Women and LGBTQ+ communities in India experience citizenship and law as uneven and contradictory since they face discrimination, violence, limited individual rights and mobility (Nambiar and Shahani, 2018; Behl, 2019).

The social stratification of individuals into hierarchical ranks based on their birth – caste – and the resulting discrimination is still prevalent and visible in the Indian society, especially in rural parts of India. There are nearly 4000 *Jatis* or castes and subcastes in India – the Sanskrit word *Jati* "means 'birth' and represents the genetic ethnic communities" (Vallabhaneni, 2015, p362). The caste structure, intertwined with religion, class and patriarchy system, is maintained through strict adherence to marrying within the same caste (Hoff and Pandey, 2004, p5). Caste has psychological, economic, religious, and social consequences (Banaji, 2017).

The framework for social media literacy education, discussed in Chapter 6, is based on a normative approach focusing on critical analysis of society and creative and transformative pro-democratic citizenship. On the one hand, this normative approach necessitates "historically and socially contextualised" (Young, 1990) reflection and learning. It offers flexibility for educators to explore further and adapt the framework and pedagogy based on students' unique situations, contexts, practices, and needs (Kellner and Share, 2007). Although I have given a basic social media

literacy toolkit in Chapter 6, educators who may use it would need to further revise and adapt it to suit children's comprehensive analysis of their citizenship based on their "embodied, lived experiences of gender and other intersecting categories of difference" (Behl, 2019, p4).

On the other hand, the critical analysis of power relations and transformative pro-democratic approach of the framework may not be appreciated and welcomed in all contexts. A critical social media literacy education may not be welcomed in schools managed by those who believe in racial or religious fundamentalist ideologies or authoritarian philosophies such as the far-right Hindu organisation, The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), linked to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), spread across India. It has a history of engaging in xenophobic Hindutva agendas characterised as nationalism and community building "civic" actions. The RSS has been in the forefront in training young volunteers about its ideologies and philosophy (Banaji, 2008).

Moreover, Banaji observes "[a]mongst middle class children and youth in India, there are forms of political extremism – they are often surrounded by Hindu chauvinist and casteist frames of mind and organisations both on and offline; others see sexism naturalised in everyday contexts" (2017, p191). In contexts where young people are already influenced by such discriminatory prejudices, social media literacy programmes oriented to critical analysis of power relations, critical self-reflection of their practices and individual and collective actions for equality, equity and human rights can be a huge challenge. Had I conducted the workshop in a different geographical location in India where caste and religious intolerance is high, then participants' responses to the workshop were likely to be considerably different, and I

might have had a different result. Similarly, if the workshops were held in a rural part of India or a slum locality, then participants' reaction to the lessons and activities and their learning were likely to be very different.

Social media literacy education gives importance to young people's individual and collective voice, rights, and democratic participation. This depends enormously on young people's opportunities to speak and the disposition of adults and those who control power relations to listen – government, educational institutions, religious leaders, political parties, corporates, media, and parents. When young people's collective voice is for structural change affecting the policies or ideologies of the regimes in power, then they are often suppressed and not listened to (Banaji, 2008). Recent incidents of government sanctioned police violence, sedition charges and imprisonment unleashed against students protesting in public universities in Delhi and other parts of India against the controversial and discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), manifest the high-handedness of the state in silencing student voices (Alam and Jaya, 2020). When "expulsions, incarcerations and fines have been used to reduce and strip the agitating students to a state of powerlessness" (Chaudhuri, 2018, p344), sustaining their collective voice for change becomes extremely difficult.

This action research study is affected by my positionality. I was born in a middle class, farmers' family in a small town in Kerala, South India. I completed my school education from a Catholic run school there. My positionality as an adult, male, Christian, priest, researcher, and facilitator of the workshop would have had issues of power relations with the participants. I was also an outsider, not part of the school community. The unequal power relations would have impacted the way participants

perceived me, their behaviour during the workshop, and their responses to the surveys and interviews. The way participants perceived me overlapping with my own positionality would have affected what I observed or did not observe and my interpretation in data analysis. Since the workshop was conducted over a month-long period, it helped the participants and me to familiarise with each other, and it seemed to have developed their trust in me. My attempt to create an atmosphere of dialogue, sharing, listening, and participation during the workshop and interviews showed a positive outcome. Some in the boys' school were reluctant to take my instructions and the workshop seriously.

There were visible differences in the way boys and girls responded to the workshop. In general, girls showed more interest and involvement in the workshop. They connected to the topics, especially on visibility and identity, more than the boys, and they spoke for resilience and against gender violence online. Boys, in general, were less engaged with the activities. None of them participated in the Digital Storytelling home assignment. During the activities and interviews, most boys did not express the issues of gender abuses and how gendered norms affect society.

Although I had some experience in conducting media literacy workshops, this was the first time that I held the dual role of a researcher and educator. Due to the lack of initial conceptualisation of agency, voice and empowerment, I did not give sufficient attention to participants' lived experiences, their gendered identifies, their existing values and how they "understand and react to difference based on unspoken codes about caste and class" (Banaji, 2017, p193). My failure to include a detailed understanding of participants' existing values, civic sense, prejudices, and everyday practices and how they are influenced by their class, caste, religion, and gender has

affected the analysis and the thick description in the interpretation of data (Geertz, 2017).

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research design and the methods used in this study and the ethical procedures that had been followed in the fieldwork and research analysis. The process in action research is cyclical and not linear. It involves planning, exploring, and improving the practice based on the impact analysis of the action (Smith and Rebolledo, 2018). In my action research, the literature review and pilot study survey formed the planning stage. The workshops in schools and data analysis formed the exploration and impact analysis stages respectively. The process of planning, exploration and impact analysis further helped me to refine and revise the social media literacy framework.

The next chapter will analyse the pilot study survey findings.

Chapter 5: Pilot study findings and their implications for the main study

The purpose of the pilot study survey was to know the secondary school children's understanding and use of social media in Mumbai where the study was conducted. The survey questionnaire (Appendix A) aimed at understanding what social media mean to teens, their attitude towards social media, their understanding of the platforms, their critical knowledge, and the ways they use them in their life. The survey had a special focus in knowing their critical knowledge of the platforms and whether they use the opportunities social media provide for creativity and self-expression. The survey questionnaire had 15 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. The findings from the open-ended question (Q 9): *what does social media mean to you* are discussed separately in the second part of this chapter.

5.1 Survey instrument

The survey instrument covered five areas: demographics (questions 1-6), access (questions 7, 8, 10), opportunities and practices (question 11), critical knowledge (question 12), and news and "fake news" (questions 13-15). The questions on demography (questions 1-6) included age, gender, parents' educational qualification and the school name. The survey instrument did not include questions on the economic status or the religion of parents. Based on my informal discussion with the school principals, majority of respondents belong to low income families. The questions related to access (questions 7, 8, 10) covered the devices they own, the frequency of

accessing the Internet using various devices, and the frequency in accessing various social media platforms. Question number 11 – opportunities and practices – listed 19 items on time spent in using social media for various practices. The categories of practices consisted of learning, social relationship, community participation, civic participation, creative participation and entertainment. The questions on critical knowledge (question 12) included critical understanding of social media, such as economics of social media, data, algorithm, surveillance, visibility, and representation.

Questions 5 (demography), 6 and 8 (access), and 11 (opportunities and practices) were taken and adapted from the core-questions of the *Global Kids Online* (no date). The *Global Kids Online,* an International research project, has created a research toolkit to understand children's use of the Internet across various countries. It has a section on children's online practices which are adapted from the survey instrument developed by Helsper, Deursen, and Eynon (2015). For my survey in Mumbai, I adapted a list of activities children do online from the *Global Kids Online* (no date) research toolkit. While the *Global Kids Online* studies children's Internet use broadly, my study is specific to social media use. Therefore, I selected relevant questions and adapted them to make them specific to social media practices.

The question on online practices in *Global Kids Online* survey is formatted as *How often have you done these things ONLINE in the past month?* Since I had more questions related to creative expressions and wanted to cover activities not specific within the past month, I followed the format and measuring style of the *Transmedia Literacy* project survey question: *Indicate the time spent on each of these activities: (1 = never; 2 = less than twice a month; 3 = at least twice a month; 4 = at least twice a week; 5 = everyday)* (Ardèvo, 2017).

The *Global Kids Online* has two questions on creative participation: *I created my own video or music and uploaded it to share; I created a blog or story or website online*. Since my survey had an emphasis on creative participation on social media, I included six questions related to creative expressions: *1) I shared my art work (paintings, drawings, design etc.) on social media. 2) I remixed or changed existing content and shared it on social media. 3) I created/remixed my own video and posted it on social media. 4) I created/remixed my own music and posted it on social media. 5) I created/remixed GIF animation and posted it on social media and 6) I wrote a blog.*

Some other adaptations I made from the *Global Kids Online* were mainly related to contextualising the questions to social media. The original questions from *Global Kids Online* and my adapted version are given below (Table 3).

Global Kids Online questions	***My adapted survey questions***
I learned something new by searching online	*I watched YouTube videos to learn new things*
I looked for resources or events about my local neighbourhood	*I looked for resources or events about my local neighbourhood on social media*
I looked for news online	*I looked for news on social media*
I discussed political or social problems with other people online	*I discussed political or social issues with other people on social media*

Table 3: The original questions from *Global Kids Online* and my adapted version

Question number 6 on demographics, *who you live with,* was taken from *Transmedia Literacy* project *(*Ardèvo, 2017).

Question number 12 on critical knowledge had 15 items. I developed these items for a nuanced analysis of teen's critical knowledge of social media based on the literature review and the lectures on Social Media in MA Social Media, Culture and

Society at the University of Westminster. For this question, respondents had to mark how much they agreed or disagreed on a rank of 1-5: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

The question on sources of accessing news (question 13) was taken from Ofcom (2017) study. Questions related to children's awareness of the so-called term "fake news" (questions 14-16) were taken from the National Literacy Trust (2018) study on *Fake news and critical literacy*.

5.2 Sampling and administration of the survey

A total of 231 students from three schools in Bandra West, a coastal suburb in Mumbai took part in the survey. The survey was conducted for year (grade) 9 students. Though consent forms and information sheets were distributed to 680 students and their parents, only 231 students took the survey. The main reason for the poor response rate was that the survey was conducted during a period when students were busy with their annual exams. For some students, their parents did not consent to take the survey. The survey was administered online using Google Forms. Participants took the survey in the school computer lab in the presence of a teacher.

There were 73 students from *School A* (girls' school) who took the survey on 9 and 11 April 2019. Another 27 students from *School B* (boys' school) took the survey on 16 April 2019. A further 130 students from *School C* (girls' school) took the survey on 9 April 2019. Though 40 students from School D (boys' school) had signed the consent form, they were not able to take the survey since the computer lab had issues with the Internet access on the day of the survey. As it was the last day of their annual exams, the survey could not be conducted afterwards.

5.2.1 Age and Gender

The majority of participants, 69.1% (159) were 14-year-old students; 26.5% (69) were 15-year-old; 9 (3.9%) were 13-year-old; and 1 (0.4%) was 16-year-old. Most participants, 87.8%, were female. While only 11.4% were male participants, 2 participants opted 'prefer not to say' option. Among the three schools which took part in the survey, *School A* and *School C* were exclusive for girls; *School B* was exclusive for boys.

5.2.2 Education of parents

A separate set of questions were asked regarding the educational attainment of father and mother. With regard to the education of father, respondents marked the following (222 responses): 43.7% 'college/University', 27% 'secondary education', 11.3% 'high school', 3.6% 'primary', 2.7% 'never been to school' and 11.3% 'don't know' (Figure 1). To the question of mother's education (226 responses), 46.5% marked 'college/University', 24.3% 'secondary education', 11.9% 'high school', 8.4% 'primary', 2.2% 'never been to school' and 6.6% responded saying 'don't know' (Figure 2). Mothers ranked slightly higher than to fathers for highest educational qualification, the difference being 2.8%. While 11.3% respondents did not know the educational qualification of their fathers, only 6.6% said that they did not know their mothers' educational qualification.

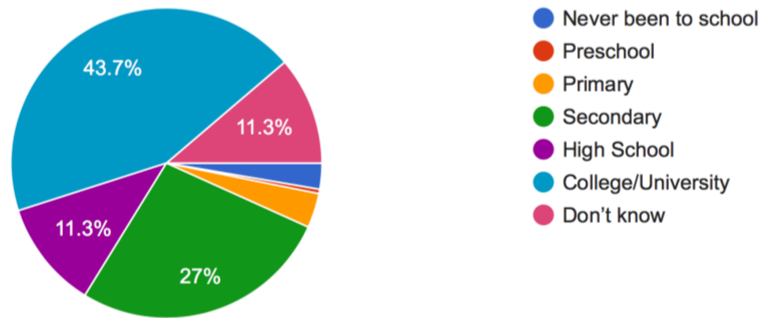


Figure 1: What is the highest level of school or college that your father attended?

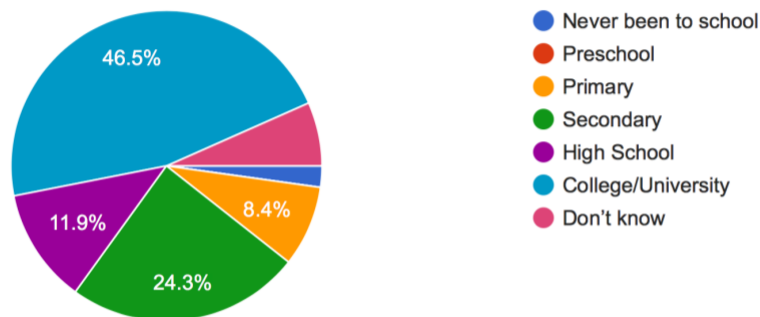


Figure 2: What is the highest level of school or college that your mother attended?

5.2.3 Devices and Internet access

The question regarding the devices they personally owned such as a smart phone or tablet had a low response rate. Out of 154 responses, 76% of respondents indicated that they personally have a smart phone; 27.3% have their own Tablet; and 21.4% have a laptop/desktop computer (Figure 3).

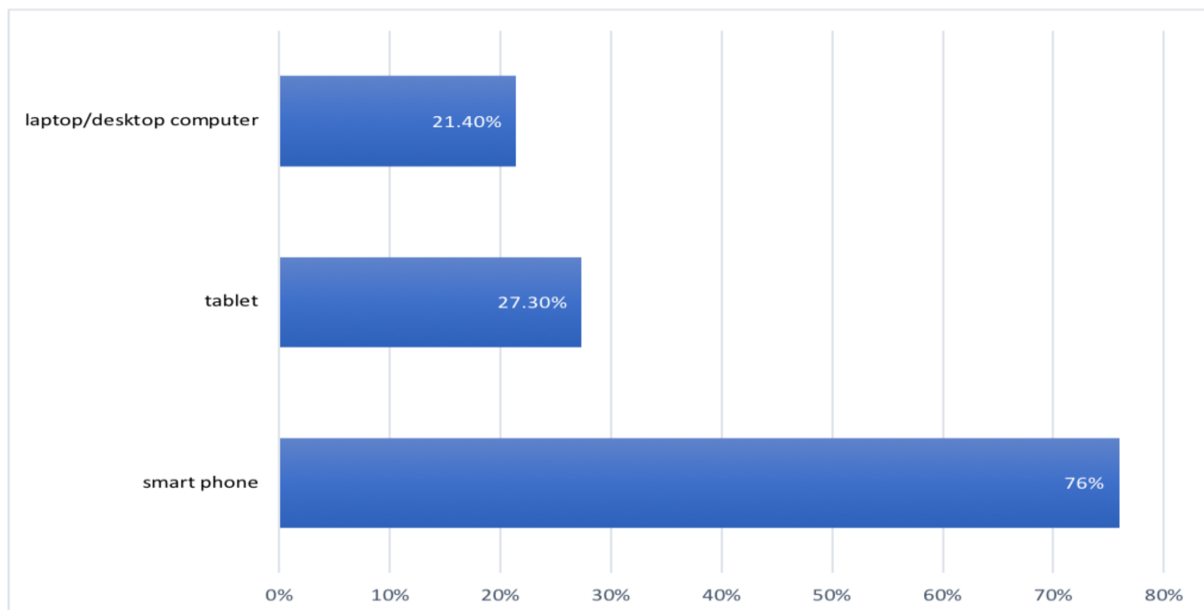


Figure 3: Do you personally have your own: Smart phone, Tablet, Laptop or desktop computer?

The respondents primarily use mobile phones to access the Internet. Out of 222 respondents 73% go online using a mobile phone at least once a week. Among them 23% access the Internet using a mobile phone ‘daily or almost daily’, 31% ‘several times each day’ and 12% ‘almost all the time’ (Figure 4). The use of television to go online was also quite high. This indicates the penetration of Internet enabled television viewing in Mumbai. But, the survey showed that the participants’ use of a desktop computer or a laptop to access the Internet was very minimum. Similarly, the participants’ use of a game console and a tablet to access the Internet was much less compared to the use of smart phone and television. According to the survey, majority of them never or hardly ever used a desktop computer, a laptop, a tablet or a game console to access the Internet.

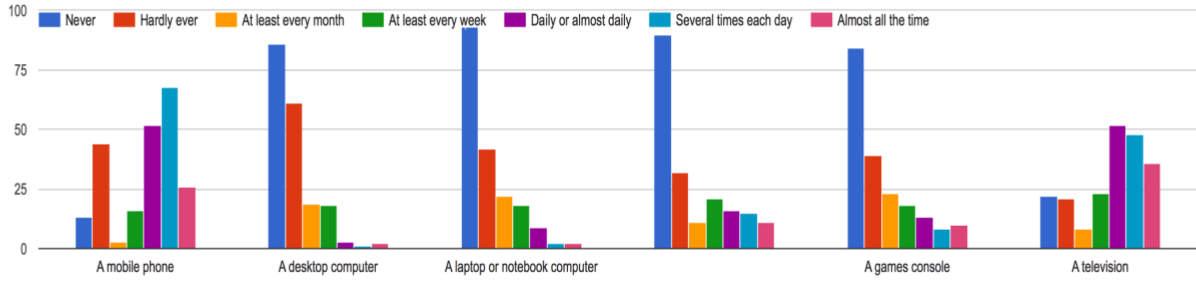


Figure 4: How often do you go online (use the Internet) using the following devices?

5.2.4 Use of social media platforms

Among the platforms, most respondents used YouTube and WhatsApp daily or several times a day. While 20% respondents indicated using YouTube 'almost all the time'. Similarly, 18% respondents noted that they used WhatsApp 'almost all the time' (Figure 5). Interestingly, the use of Facebook and Twitter was extremely low. Snapchat and Instagram were the preferred social media platforms, and nearly half of the respondents used these two platforms. TikTok is also popular among respondents in comparison to Facebook, Twitter, Hike, ShareChat, Pinterest, and Reddit.

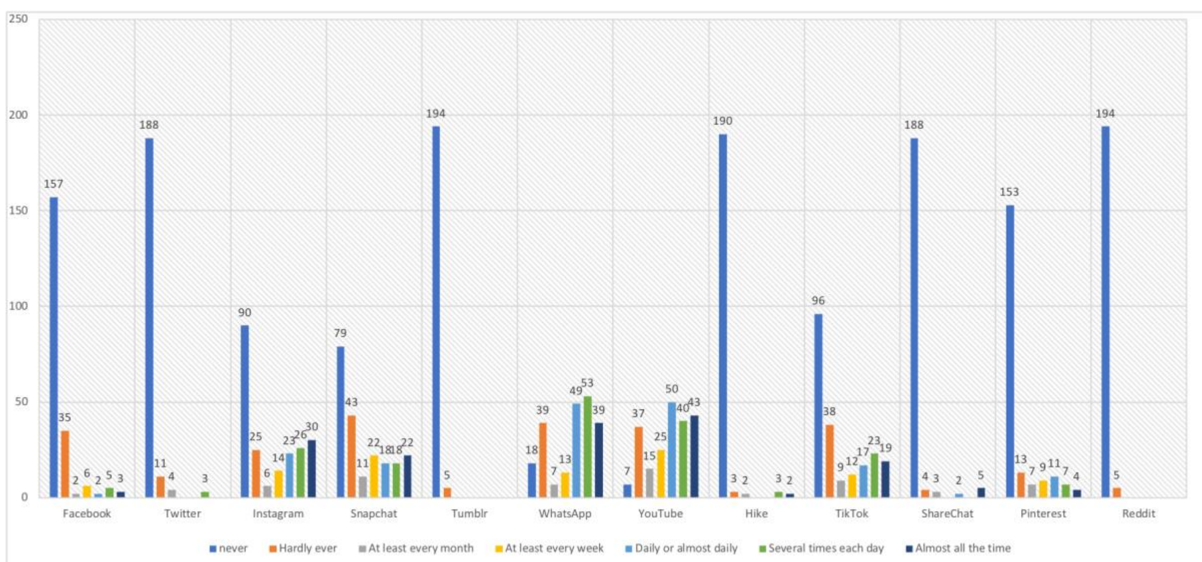


Figure 5: How often do you use the following social media platforms?

5.2.5 Practices

According to the survey, watching YouTube videos to learn new things had an extremely high ranking. Most participants indicated using YouTube to learn new things – 44% of them used it 'every day', 25% of them used it 'at least twice a week' and 13% of them used it 'at least twice a month' to learn new things. This result indicates that children today are interested in watching videos online to learn new things.

The survey also reveals that majority of the respondents used social media to connect with friends – 36% of them used social media 'every day', 19% of them 'at least twice a week' and 8% 'at least twice a month'.

Moreover, a considerable number of respondents also indicated that they looked for news on social media – 20% of them looked for news on social media 'every day', 19% of them 'at least twice a week', and 15% 'at least twice a month'.

The survey indicates that the creative use of social media – writing blogs, creating and sharing videos, music and GIF animation – is very limited. Only a handful of respondents noted that they remixed or created their own video, music or changed existing content and shared it on social media. But, some of them shared their art work (paintings, drawings, design, etc.) on social media.

The survey also indicates very minimum use of social media for civic purposes, such as getting involved with a campaign on/through social media and discussing political or social issues with other people on social media. But, there is some interest among them to use social media for community purposes—to look for resources or events about their local neighbourhood on social media. Respondents' use of social media for various practices are given below (Table 4).

	responses	never	less than twice a month	at least twice a month	at least twice a week	every day
I communicated with my teachers on social media	*212*	150	26	17	10	9
I watched YouTube videos to learn new things	*219*	7	33	28	54	97
I used social media to connect with friends	*217*	50	30	17	41	79
I looked for resources or events about my local neighbourhood on social media	*207*	101	35	25	38	8
I used social media to talk to people from places or backgrounds different from mine	*209*	146	19	15	13	16
I looked for news on social media	*214*	60	40	32	40	42
I discussed political or social issues with other people on social media	*208*	172	25	3	5	3
I got involved with a campaign on/through social media	*210*	187	11	6	3	3
I shared my art work (paintings, drawings, design, etc.) on social media	*213*	137	21	24	13	18
I remixed or changed existing content and shared it on social media	*200*	181	12	4	3	-
I wrote a blog	*206*	186	10	5	2	3
I created/remixed my own video and posted it on social media	*211*	174	14	5	12	6
I created/remixed my own music and posted it on social media	*212*	194	9	4	2	3
I posted photos on social media	*216*	114	41	31	18	12
I created/remixed GIF animation and posted it on social media	*207*	195	8	2	-	2
I watched videos on social media	*208*	48	38	27	35	60
I played online games on social media	*214*	119	23	21	28	23
I blocked messages on social media from someone I don't want to hear from	*203*	101	41	31	18	12
I changed the settings so fewer people can view my social media profile	*207*	131	29	12	14	21

Table 4: Indicate the time spent on each of these activities (ranked by frequency)

5.2.6 Understanding of platform, surveillance, data misuse, and trust

This section (see Table 5) tried to measure the participants' critical understanding of social media such as economics of social media, data, algorithm, surveillance, visibility, and representation. The result shows that their knowledge of platform, data, algorithm, and surveillance is very limited.

Platform

Just 17.1% of the respondents mentioned that what they do on social media is permanent. Majority of the respondents believed that they can easily delete information that they have posted about themselves online if they do not want people to see it. A small number, 14.9%, were aware that they cannot easily delete information that they have posted online. A bulk of participants felt that what they do on social media is private – only 24% felt everything they do on social media is public. Only 36.2% felt that what they see on their Instagram is managed by its algorithm. Less than half of them, 46.6%, were aware that social media companies manipulate users to spend more time on their platforms; 23.8% were not sure about it.

Surveillance

About 39.5% respondents were aware that governments and security agencies watch social media and their users. Just a quarter of respondents, 26.5%, were aware that Instagram and YouTube monitor and archive the activities of users on their platforms. Similarly, only less than a quarter of respondents, 22.4%, felt that Facebook is designed in such a way to do surveillance on user activity.

Data misuse

Only 33.2% of respondents think that YouTube sells customers' data to advertising companies. Similarly, just 30.7% of respondents were aware that social media firms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube watch their users in order to build up a profile for use by advertisers. Just 27.6% were aware that Facebook keeps deleted data; a considerable number, 36%, were unsure about it.

Trust

Overall, respondents were aware that they cannot always trust what they saw on social media. While a small number of them, 7.7%, thought that they can always believe when they saw something on social media, and 18.5% were unsure about it. Furthermore, only 32.7% thought that their friends photos on social media were accurate representation of what was going on in their life; 20.9% were unsure about it.

Nearly half of the respondents were aware that memes on social media very often get involved with political issues.

	responses	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Everything I do on social media is permanent	*223*	58	49	78	18	20
What I see on my Instagram is managed by its algorithm	*185*	49	28	64	21	23
Governments and security agencies watch social media and their users	*213*	43	31	55	44	40
When you see something on social media you can always believe that it is true	*222*	110	54	41	13	4
YouTube sells customer data to advertising companies	*205*	39	43	55	41	27

I feel pressured to post photos even when I don't want to	*213*	135	28	29	11	10
Social media firms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube watch their users in order to build up a profile for use by advertisers	*205*	51	40	51	37	26
Memes on social media very often get involved with political issues	*208*	45	22	47	51	43
I can easily delete information that I have posted about myself online if I don't want people to see it	*215*	22	10	25	60	48
Instagram and YouTube monitor and archive the activities of users on their platform	*196*	42	22	80	34	18
Facebook is designed in such a way to do surveillance on user activity	*188*	38	35	73	30	12
Everything I do on social media is public	*221*	103	33	32	23	30
Photos your friends post on social media are accurate representation of what is going on in their life	*221*	58	40	44	46	23
Social media companies manipulate users to spend more time on their platforms	*202*	34	26	48	46	48
Facebook keeps deleted data	*188*	39	29	68	23	29

Table 5: Please mark how much you agree or disagree with each of these (ranked by frequency)

5.2.7 News

The survey asked participants to mark the medium they mostly used to get updates on news stories. They were asked to mark several options from a list. The survey result indicates a substantial interest among respondents in news consumption. The result (224 responses) also shows a considerable use of social media and online platforms for news consumption—40.2% used social media sites, 55.4% used search engines, and 15% used other online sources such as a website or app to get updates on news

stories. While majority of them, 56.3%, watched news on television, 36.2% read paper copies of newspapers (Figure 6).

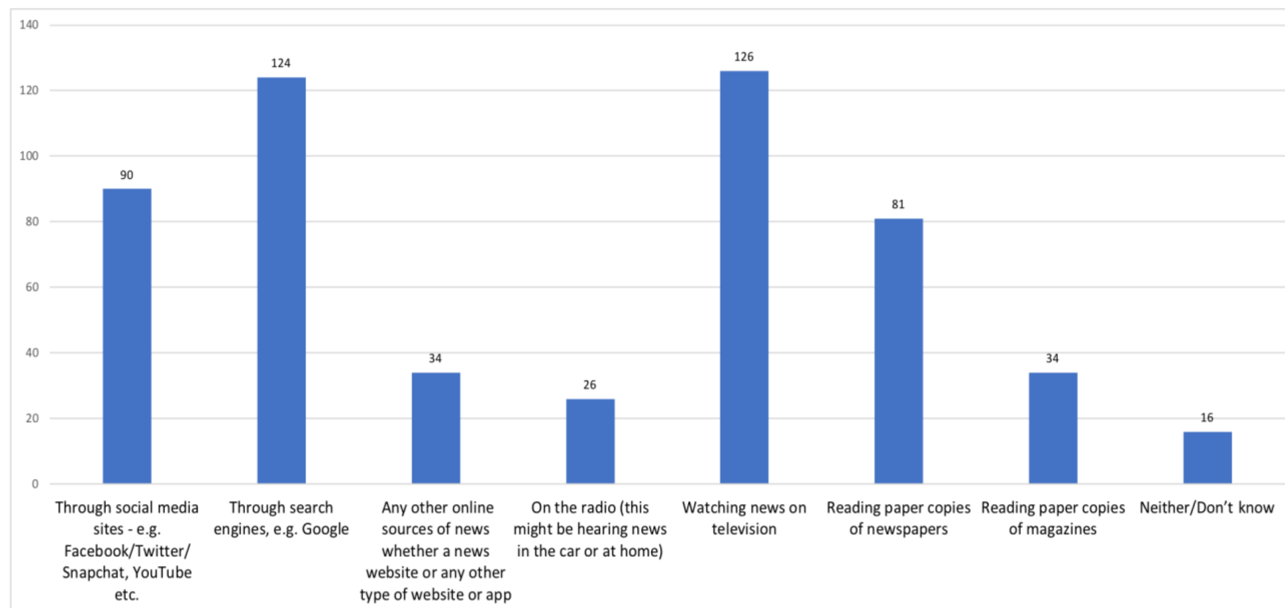


Figure 6: Which of these you use most to get updates on news stories?

5.2.8 "Fake News"

Evidently, out of 226 respondents, most of them, 83.2%, had heard the phrase "fake news" (Figure 7). While 61% of those who had heard the phrase "fake news" had seen something online or on social media that they thought was "fake news", 26% were unsure whether they had seen "fake news" online or on social media (Figure 8). Among them, 18.5% had shared a video or an article that they later discovered was false or not entirely true (Figure 9). Overall, the survey had a positive result regarding their awareness of fake news as majority of them had heard the term "fake news". However, a good number of them, 39.1%, though had heard the phrase "fake news" were not able to spot "fake news" at all.

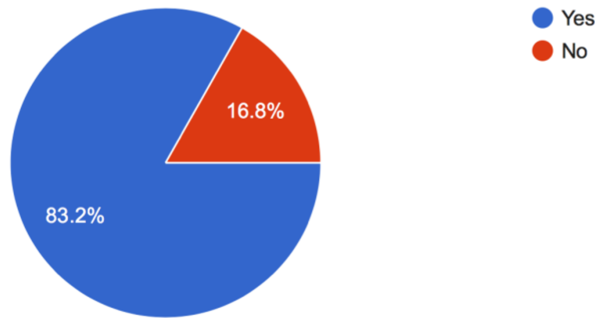


Figure 7: Have you ever heard the phrase “fake news”?

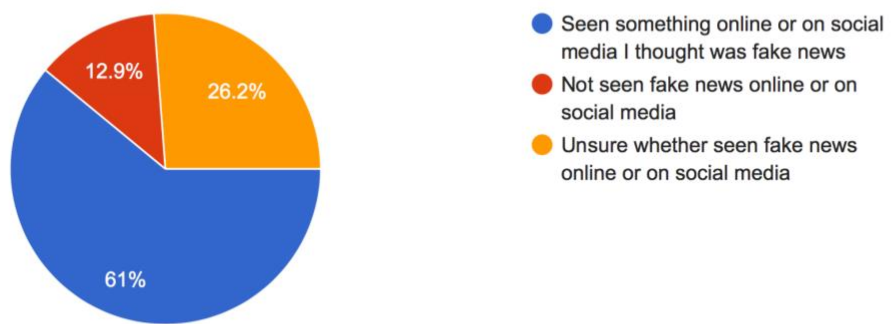


Figure 8: Have you ever seen anything on social media that you thought was a ‘fake news’ story?

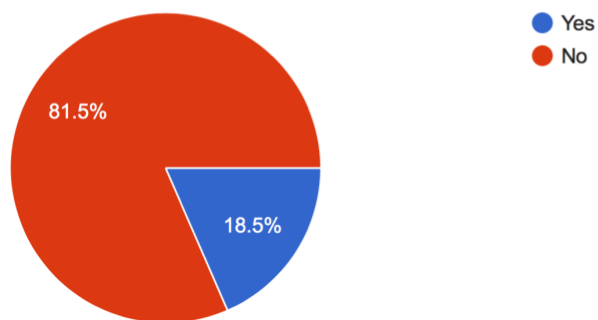


Figure 9: Have you ever shared a video or an article that you later discovered was false or not entirely true?

5.3 Discussion and the implications for my study

The data enumerated above show that a vast majority of the respondents have a smart phone, which they used as their primary means to go online. Majority of them went online daily or several times a day. It means my social media literacy toolkit has to factor projects and activities which children can do using a mobile phone as most of them do not use a desktop computer or a laptop to go online.

Across the social media platforms, YouTube and WhatsApp were the most popular platforms for the respondents. Snapchat and Instagram were also the preferred social media platforms with nearly half of the respondents using these two platforms daily or several times a day. Notably, the use of Facebook and Twitter were extremely low. Howeveer, TikTok was more popular among them in comparison to Facebook, Twitter, Hike, ShareChat, Pinterest and Reddit.

The findings proved that the respondents were interested in watching videos on YouTube to learn new things. It indicates the importance of integrating online learning and video lessons in education. Video lessons will be an integral part of the social media literacy toolkit.

The findings also indicate that the creative use of social media – writing blogs, creating and sharing videos, music and GIF animation – is very limited. Only a handful of respondents noted that they remixed or created their own video, music or changed existing content and shared it on social media. Nevertheless, some of them shared their art work (paintings, drawings, design, etc.) on social media. The toolkit will have elements to involve them in creative use of social media in order to enhance their interest in participatory culture. The toolkit will have a module on remix and

participatory culture. The final assignment, a Digital Storytelling project, is expected to introduce them to use social media for creative expressions.

The survey also indicates that only a few of the respondents utilised social media for civic purposes like getting involved with a campaign on/through social media and discussing political or social issues with other people on social media. But, there is some interest among them to use social media for community purposes – to look for resources or events about their local neighborhood on social media.

Though there is high accessibility and social media use, the findings strongly indicate that the respondents had a very limited critical understanding of platforms, algorithm, surveillance and data misuse. Most respondents did not know that their activities on social media are public and permanent. They believed that they can easily delete information about themselves online if they did not want people to see it. They were not aware that social media companies such as Facebook and Instagram archive user activities, keep deleted data and build up a profile of users for advertisers. Majority of them did not know that what they saw on social media platform is managed by its algorithm. The findings also reveal that they were not aware that governments, security agencies and platform owners track users' online activities and collect their data. Teaching children critical understanding of platforms, data misuse, surveillance and algorithm is important, and the toolkit will focus on these aspects.

On news consumption, the findings indicate a substantial interest and considerable use of social media and online platforms among the respondents. The result also shows a considerable use of social media and online platforms for news consumption. Positively, most respondents have heard the phrase "fake news" and many of whom have also spotted "fake news" on social media. Notably, majority of the

respondents were aware that they cannot always trust what they saw on social media. Many of them were also aware that memes on social media very often get involved with political issues. The need to teach children news literacy is highly important as fake news in India is constantly disseminated through social media. The toolkit will have a lesson on news literacy.

The section below presents the findings and analysis of the responses to the open-ended question.

5.4 Analysis of the responses to the open-ended question

Question number 9 in the pilot survey was an open-ended exploratory question: *What does social media mean to you?* This was the only open-ended question in the survey. The purpose of this question was to explore respondents' understanding, views, and opinion of social media; to know how they explained and described social media which most of them used regularly. This question was presented in the survey prior to other questions on social media. Among those who took the survey, 157 students responded to this question.

5.4.1 Method used for analysis

After going through the whole data, I took note of the themes using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet – information, knowledge, learning, communication, interaction, connecting, post and share things, self-expression, positive effect, negative effects, waste of time, distraction, addiction, entertainment, and proper use.

After the initial categorisation, I further reviewed the data and refined the themes. Based on these, I grouped them under two themes: “uses of social media”, and “effects”. Reviewing them further, I made changes to the subcategories. Using NVivo software, I then coded the themes and categories to analyse and interpret the data. Every response was assigned to the appropriate codes. The ones which did not fall into a particular code was grouped under “other”. The two main themes that emerged while going through the data were “perception of social media based on platforms uses” and “effects”. Many respondents view social media from the perspective of their uses of the platforms. Many of them also view social media based on the positive and negative effects of social media. The following are the main themes and the subcategories that I coded from the data:

Uses of social media

a. Social uses
    i. Connect, interact, communicate
    ii. Post, share and self-expression
b. Entertainment
c. Information and learning

Effects

d. Positive and negative effects
    i. Waste of time, distraction
    ii. Addiction
e. Only Negative attitude

Other

5.4.2 Uses of social media

Majority of the respondents described social media based on their use of social and the opportunities these platforms make possible. The following uses of the social media were identified based on the response analysis:

Social Uses

Social uses were the major function of social media for most students. The theme "social uses" was further classified and coded into 1) connect, interact and communicate, and 2) share and post things. Social uses had 109 references – 91 for connect, interact and communicate; and 18 for share and post things.

Connect, interact and communicate: Majority of the respondents understood social media as a place to connect with friends, interact with people and find new people. Some of them specified that social media is a useful means to communicate. The words "connect/connecting" appeared 25 times, "interact" 9 times, and "communication" 15 times in the data. The use of the words connect, interact and communicate give a sense that these words are used to mean interacting and chatting. Some of them used the word "connect" to specify finding new friends or people. The following examples from the data explain how they understood social media as a means to connect, interact and communicate:

> "social media is a medium for me to connect with my friends"
>
> "A way to connect people from around the world"
>
> "very good thing that can use for information and make friends"

"Its a very easy platform to interact with everyone and become more social"

"Social media to me is a way to connect with the world. To discover and interact"

As the word tree "connect" below (Figure 10) demonstrates, respondents perceived social media as a means for connecting people from various places and connecting with friends.

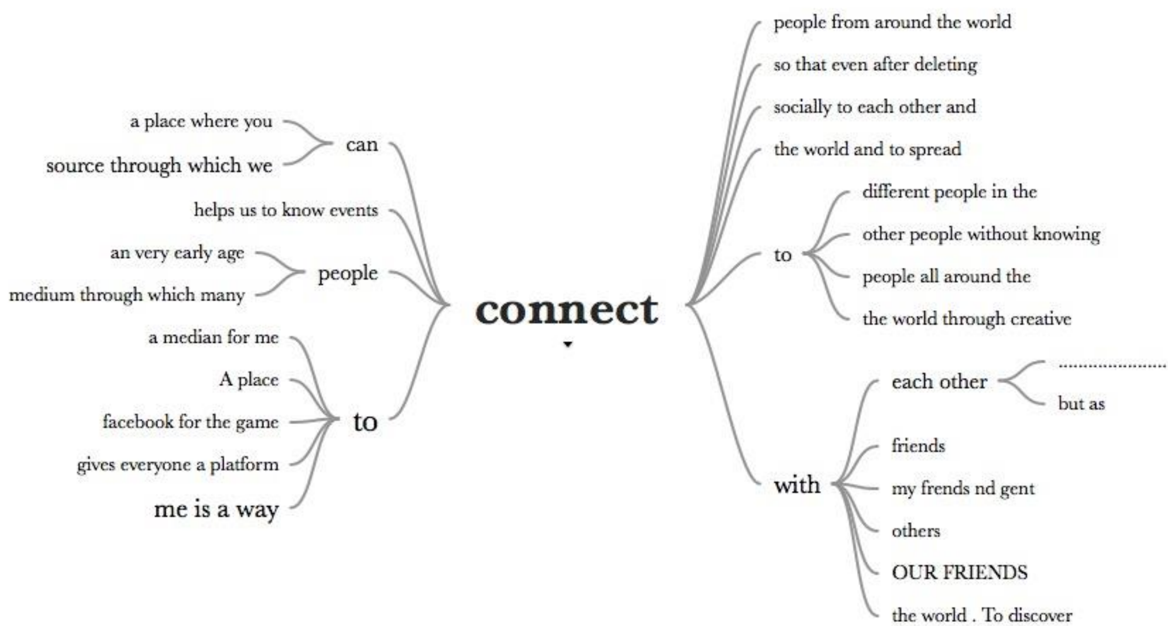


Figure 10: Word tree for "connect"

The word tree "communicate" (Figure 11) shows the use of social media to communicate with friends, family and other people.

Figure 11: Word tree for “communicate”

Share and post content: For 18 respondents, social media is a means to share feelings, experiences, information, and post pictures – *“...social media is to share our photos and memories with others”.* Though they mentioned sharing and posting content, only a couple of them specified using social media for creative self-expression. One of them specified writing blogs for self-expression – “*I personally write small blogs regarding trust, humanity, etc. on my Instagram account with my parents’ consent.”* The second just said, *“To me, social media is a platform to express myself.”*

Information

The use of social media for information was the second major theme that emerged from the responses. For them social media are a source for information, knowledge and learning. The code “information” contained 55 references. It included knowledge, learning and awareness. Some of them described what types of information they received from social media – world, society, politics, various topics, music, and what is going on around the world.

> “social media means a lot to me because of several types of videos from which I get information about the animals birds and news about the politics etc.”

> “its a medium which helps us to gain knowledge or information about whatever we need”

"social media help us to gain information and news related to worlds"

"social provides a lots of information on varios subjects, that helps in understanding things more easily"

"…be informed of the latest news related to celebrities, politics, etc."

For a particular respondent, social media was "knowledge center" and for another "a box of information". A few of them were specific about gaining information for their projects or for educational purposes.

"…social media provide a lots of information about education"

"…from social media i get to know different types of ideas of creating various projects and arts"

"… to find information for projects"

"to search information to get knowledge of the history legend and to find about projects"

Following word tree "information" (Figure 12) further demonstrates the use of social media for information:

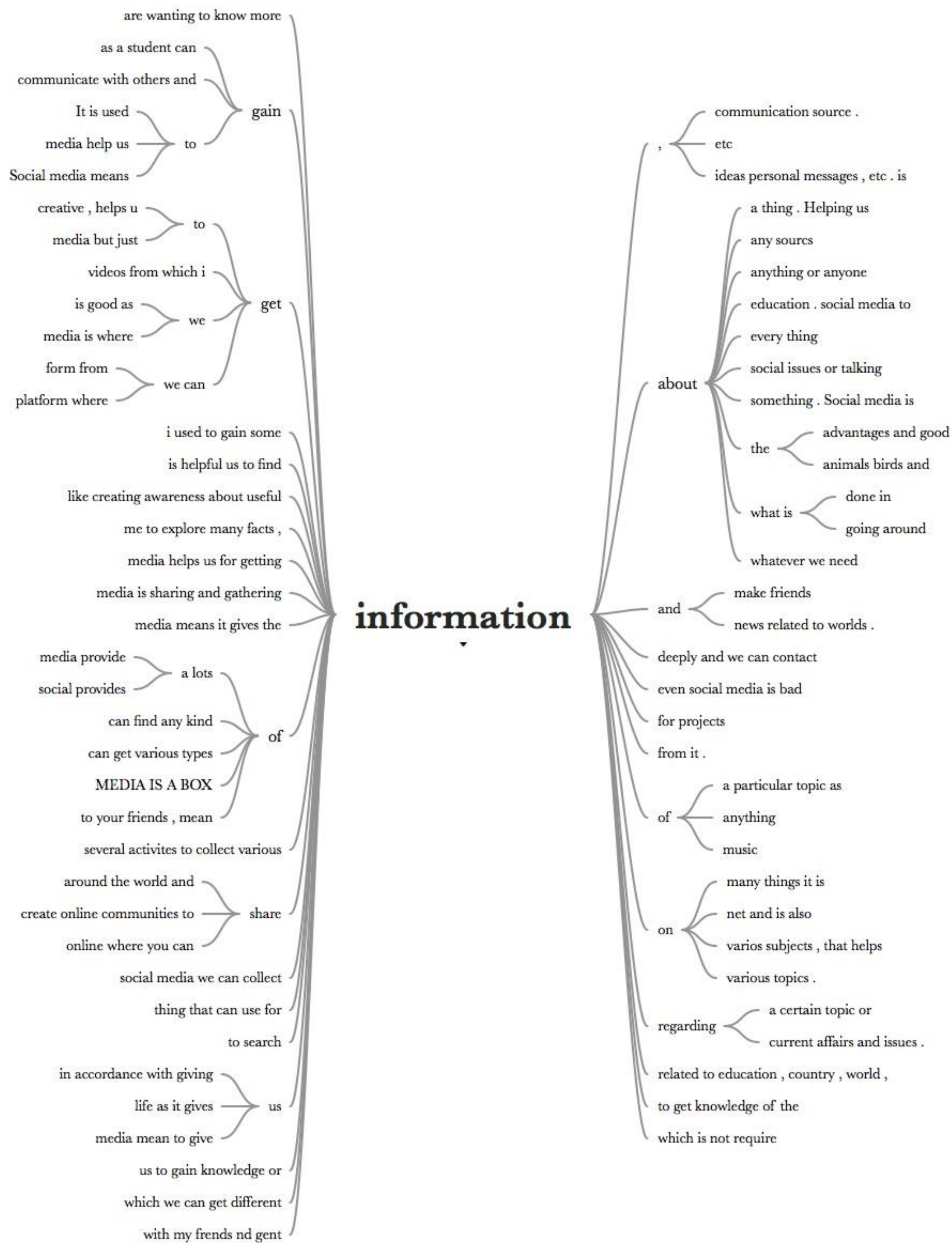


Figure 12: Word tree for "information"

Entertainment

For many of them social media mean entertainment, time-pass or a fun place. The code 'entertainment' received 31 references. It included time-pass, fun, watching

videos and playing games. They use expressions like “fascinating”, “having fun”, “never get bored”, “freshen up your mind”, “relief after coming from school”, and “where I can pass my time”. The use of social media for entertainment can be seen from the below examples from the data.

> “I use it for enjoyment or just for doing time pass”
>
> “It is a platform where I can pass my time. It is fascinating”
>
> “…we can play games , watch movies or serials…”
>
> “I use social media when I'm bored or just pass my time”
>
> “for me social media means a chat with friends and having fun”
>
> “a place where u can never get bored”
>
> “just to freshen up our mind”
>
> “it is something that makes me much relief after coming from school or after studying”

5.4.3 Effects

The theme “effects” were coded as “positive and negative effects” and “only negative attitude”. The code “positive and negative effects” represents those who viewed social media as both positive and negative/good and bad. The code “only negative attitude” represents those who viewed social media with a negative attitude and did not mention any positive aspect of social media.

Positive and Negative Effects

Some of the respondents described social media by looking at its positive and negative effects. The theme 'positive and negative effect' had 27 references. For these respondents, social media have both positive and negative effects. Except for one student, others who mentioned both positive and negative effects, did not express that they should stop using social media because of its negative elements. Instead, a few of them mentioned proper use or limited use of platforms. While many of them did not describe the negative effects, some of them specified them as, addiction, distraction, cyber-crime, unknown friends, and fake news. Five respondents mentioned that one of the negatives effect of social media is addiction. Seven other respondents felt, though social media is useful they are waste of time or distraction. The expressions like "social media is good also bad", "effects and ill effects", "bad intentions" "we use it properly or misuse it", "blessing and a threat", "risky", "dangerous" "also harmful for our life", "not so bad but not so good" were recorded in the data. The following are some of the responses covering this theme:

> "social media to me is a test for everyone that we use it properly or misuse it yes it is very useful and entertaining to me too i love to see new recipes on social media"

> "Social media is sometimes beneficial but this does not means that it is safe sometime on social many things happen which is not good thing for us. Therefore Social media is sometime beneficial and many times dangerous'"

> "it is quite interesting and fun part but at the same time risky too"

> "social media too has positive and negative effects; you are the one who has the right to choose."

One respondent in this category felt social media platforms are useful but had to delete his/her Instagram account because of addiction*:*

> "Social media actually gives everyone a platform to connect with each other but as it sometimes diverts you, so as a conclusion I really did delete my instagram account because I was way too much addicted to it. Though social media is not bad but there must be a proper sense and manner to handle it. :)".

Only negative attitude:

Seven respondents had negative attitude towards social media and therefore not motivated in using social media. Some of them felt that social media are a waste of time. For one social media are "a place where people are not their own self". For another the issue is of addiction: "social media is the addiction to everybody see if we use any app like Tik Tok or Instagram we want to be online every time and during exam it's a distraction so with my perspective have mobile phone but for a limited time in a day".

5.4.4 Discussion

The analysis of the responses reveals that the respondents experienced and perceived social media in different ways. Many of them viewed social media from the perspective of what they used social media for or on the positive and negative effects of social media. Among those who viewed social media based on their advantages, there are substantial differences in the way they used these platforms. While many of them viewed social media as a place to connect, interact and communicate with friends and other people, others regarded them as a source for getting information, news and knowledge easily; and for some others a source for entertainment. This shows that the

primary way they perceived social media is based on the benefits platforms provide. They felt positive and are happy to use the opportunities social media provide. Their use of opportunities that the social media provide were mostly limited to entry level such as connecting, interacting, information, learning and entertainment. These findings correspond to the findings from the closed-ended question 11 on practices.

A substantial number of respondents were aware that social media has both negative and positive effects. This did not deter them from using social media. They suggested responsible and proper use of social media platforms. Among those who viewed social media from the perspective of their positive and negative effects, only a handful have extremely negative sentiments towards social media. These negative effects include time-waste, disturbance, addiction and even dangerous.

Some of their responses demonstrate that they were able to express clearly what social media meant to them. Responses such as “social media is a place where you can connect socially to each other and it is a place where you can spend your free time and also it can be used to share your experience and knowledge and help motivate others too”; and “Social media to me is a way to connect with the world. To discover and interact. To me, social media is a platform to express myself; social media is a blessing and a threat, depending on how and who uses it” reveal this sentiment.

Responses such as “social media mean we can use any things”, “social media is life”, “everything” and “useful thing” show that some of them could not express properly what social media meant to them.

The responses of a few of them clearly indicate that they did not distinguish social media from the Internet or search engine websites. Two of them mentioned that they can use social media to check the spelling and the meaning of difficult words.

Overall, the respondents' approach to social media was positive. As they already used social media for entry level activities, my social media literacy toolkit will further motivate and help children to use these platforms for creativity and self-expression. The findings indicate that their knowledge of the platforms, who control them, and how they affect society are very limited. Although, many of them observed that social media have both positives and negatives, good and bad sides, they were not aware of the critical issues of social media. The negative aspects they viewed were mainly related to addiction, distraction, or safety issues or risks that can happen on social media. These findings also correspond to the findings from the closed-ended question 12 discussed in the preceding section. The issues related to data misuse, algorithm, visibility, surveillance, hate speech, corporate control, click bait, were not mentioned in their response. The social media toolkit will focus on enhancing children's knowledge of what social media are, and how they can make critical use of social media for creativity, self-expression, participation and learning.

5.5 Conclusion

The findings from the pilot study survey helped me to understand respondents' identity, access, practices, and critical knowledge of social media. These were useful information which helped me to make informed decisions while developing the social media literacy conceptual framework. The findings were also useful for planning the

main fieldwork – the social media literacy workshop – and for preparing the teaching and learning material for the same.

Among the three schools where the pilot study was conducted, I chose the *School A* (girls' school) and the *School B* (boys' school) for the main study. Although the participants of the main study were also year (grade) 9 students, they were new batches of students since I conducted the main study, after a gap, in the next academic year. Those who took the pilot survey had progressed to the year (grade) 10.

The next chapter on critical social media literacy framework and toolkit will further elaborate how I have applied insights from the survey findings to the main study.

Chapter 6: Social media literacy circuit and toolkit

This chapter visualises a critical social media literacy framework – social media literacy circuit – and proposes social media literacy programmes for classroom teaching and learning. This framework is particularly conceptualised with an aim of teaching secondary school students in Mumbai. As discussed in Chapter 3, social media literacy is not limited to helping children to maximise the opportunities that the platforms provide while managing risks. It is not to be seen as a quick-fix solution for managing the problems children encounter on the platforms. This framework takes a more comprehensive approach consisting of children's critical, creative, and agentic use of social media for their own benefit and of the society. It takes into consideration children's complex and diverse use of social media and focuses on enhancing their resilience and agency. This framework focuses on developing a social media literacy framework that suits the new media environment as recommended by many scholars reviewed in the literature (Prensky, 2001; Buckingham, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2009; Capello, Felini and Hobbs, 2011; Rheingold, 2012; Potter, 2013; Livingstone, 2014; Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2016; Meikle, 2016; Simanowski, 2016; McDougall, 2019; Banaji and Bhat, 2019).

The first part of this chapter – social media literacy circuit – discusses the application of the core concepts of media literacy to the contemporary media ecosystem and how children grow from ordinary users of technologies to critical, creative, and transformative users and the various components involved in it. Progressing in the social media literacy circuit involves developing critical social media

literacies and practices. The second part – social media literacy programmes in schools – discusses the means for children to grow on the social media literacy circuit.

6.1 Social media literacy circuit

For developing the social media literacy circuit, I have mapped the critical social media literacies and practices involved in social media literacy based on the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. It is also guided by my pilot study survey and other evidence-based studies (Livingstone and Helsper, 2007; Livingstone, et al., 2019). In this circuit there are seven inter-related elements (Figure 13, page 195). All these seven elements in the circuit are important for a meaningful and transformative use of social media. While the seven elements are interlinked to the traditional media literacy concepts, they are powered by critical thinking, ethics, objectivity, justice, welfare and agentic action.

The core concepts of media literacy which I have discussed in Chapter 2 – media language, representation, production, and audience – are still relevant to the contemporary social media environment. Drawing insights from Buckingham's (2019a) recent book, *The Media Education Manifesto,* I have tried to broaden, interpret and apply these core concepts in the social contexts of networked platforms. Understanding and applying these concepts are important in making meaning of what one reads and writes on the networked platforms. These core concepts are integral parts of the social media capabilities and practices presented in the social media literacy circuit. These core concepts are not presented as separate blocks; but they overlap and run through various social media capabilities and practices. For example, firstly, social media platforms *represent* content, users/audience and organisations in

a certain way. Secondly, individuals (audience) and organisations who produce content *represent* the reality from certain perspective using *media language*. Thirdly, the users who engage in creative expressions or share content self-represent using *media language*. Similarly, the concept of *production* is to be seen from those who produce content, the platforms that make available those content, and the particular user who uses the platform for creative expression.

Below is a description of the seven elements in the circuit and how children can be helped to develop various elements in the circuit.

6.1.1 Platform access and use

Platform access and use means skills to select social media platforms, download apps on the devices, create accounts or profile pages, create groups and join groups, and use the features available on these platforms. Most of the time, the use at this level is for connecting with friends and family members through chatting and messaging, liking and commenting on the posts on the timeline, sharing photos/selfies and watching videos for entertainment, playing games and listening to music. Today's children, in general, are very savvy in platform access and use which comes quite natural to them. They also seem to enjoy playing with social media and spending time on these platforms.

Platform access and use is also characterised by children's encounter of risks and opportunities. Here, risks and opportunities should not be viewed as opposing factors but as correlated factors (Livingstone and Helsper, 2010). Studies have found children who are more digitally skilled in accessing and using social media encounter more risks online in comparison to children with less social media skills. Because the

more competent they are in social media skills, the more they explore online. Digital skills do not guarantee avoidance of risks; instead they increase the chances of risks. Furthermore, children who engage in more risks related social media use – public profile, personal details, adding more contacts – encounter more risks online than children who are cautious about social media use. Thus, there is a correlation among digital skills, risky practices, and encountering online skills (Staksrud, Ólafsson and Livingstone, 2013). The possibility of encountering risks should not limit children's age-appropriate platform access and use (EU Kids Online, no date). Instead, what is needed at the level of children's platform access and use is parental support and guidance for their safe and productive social media use.

Many factors influence children's online access and use such as their age, gender, motivation, socio-economic status, the involvement of parents, school and peers and the country's regulation, and policies and cultural values (EU Kids Online, no date; Deursen and Dijk, 2015). In a study by Livingstone (2014) in the UK, Spain, Romania and Czech Republic with children aged 9 to 16, found that children's engagement with the social media takes new directions as they grow cognitively and socially.

The study found overlapping variation among different age groups – 9 to 11, 11 to 13, and 14 to 16 – in their perception, level of engagement and use of social media. The age group of 9 to 11 rely on their parents for their social media use. They are likely to consider online more risky than offline. They mostly use the Internet for playing games (single-player games) and watching videos. They do not tend to use the social media for finding friends or for social interactions (Livingstone, 2014). As they grow older (11 to 13), they get more active and try to be independent of their parents in

social media use and social interactions. They gradually begin to participate in social interactions and use social media for affirming identity among their friends. Though they face challenges regarding friendship, peer-pressure, and trust, they are likely to take risks online (Livingstone, 2014).

The study also found that the age group, 14 to 16, tend to be reflexive in their social media use. They prefer to be independent of parental and teacher control in social media use. They, apparently, are interested in meaningful social experiences. They are, increasingly, able to think for themselves, have views, engage with the wider online circle, and in some instances use social media platforms to participate in civic activities and for creative expressions (Livingstone, 2014).

Furthermore, a major challenge when it comes to access and use is the inequalities with regard to children's access to connected devices. In a country like India, which is characterised by digital and economic divide, many children are deprived of devices, and access to platforms and Internet. For them platform access and use are either limited or not possible due to their disadvantaged economic condition (Banaji, 2017). Children's access and use of social media also depend on parental control, parental support and social contexts.

6.1.2 Information access and learning

Information access and learning denotes children's use of platforms to look up information that they want to know. Children, in general, are savvy in accessing information and watching explanatory videos to learn new things through social media platforms. They use platforms for getting news and for educational purposes. Mostly the information consumption at this level is driven by the recommendations made by

algorithm of the platform. Children may not know how and why the information appears the way it does on their news feed, timeline or home page. This situation necessitates parents' support for their children's safe use of platforms to access information and learn. Children also need guidance to access reliable sources for information and learning. They need guidance to make constant decisions to select blogs for reading, how many comments to be read in forums, to refrain from watching toxic content, and what to share on social media platforms (Rheingold, 2012).

Similar to platform access and use, many factors influence children's information access and learning such as their age, gender, socio-economic status, the involvement of parents, school and peers and the country's regulation, and policies and cultural values.

6.1.3 Platform knowledge

Platform and information access, discussed above, does not mean that children possess the required knowledge of the platforms that they use. Platform knowledge does not come from mere use of the platforms. It does not mean studying in detail, the various technological features of the user interface of a particular platform such as Facebook, YouTube and Snapchat. Platform knowledge requires some form of education. Basically, it consists of empowering children to develop critical understanding of how platforms work, how content flows, the "economic logic" behind the design of platforms, the implications of algorithmic scoring and profiling of users, and the practice of "surveillance culture" and the social issues emerging from them. In other words, progressing from mere platform and information access to platform knowledge requires critical literacies for understanding these technological platforms as media: why do they exist as a media network, how they work, what are their

functions, how they can be used, what power they have, how and why they influence society and culture, and how society shapes them.

Social media, like other traditional media, communicate meaning, represent reality from a certain perspective, exert power, and mostly exist to make profit (Buckingham, 2019a). While social media allow users to access, communicate and consume content, at their convenience, regardless of which other users are online, the users' interactions are recorded, and their data is collected for commercial purposes (boyd, 2014; Carr and Hayes, 2015).

Social media are owned by powerful corporate companies. These companies do not represent themselves as media organisations as that would mean taking responsibility as publishers of the content on their platforms. Instead, they claim to be technology companies which only provide platforms for users to communicate, network and share content. In reality, they are neither neutral channels nor mere technological platforms. The platform owners, through the design of the platform interface and the instructions fed in its algorithms, collect user data and influence user engagements on these platforms. They influence the flow of content on their platforms, they control what content to be shown and to whom, and they decide who gets attention and who does not (Helberger, Konigslow and Noll, 2015; Collins, et al., 2018). Individuals and organisations with power can take advantage of these platforms and data for monetisation and for promoting their agenda and influencing public opinion.

The economic logic of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter is the trade of behavioural data (Zuboff, 2019). They transform user activities and communication into database of user data. This data is then processed and used for purposes like targeted advertising, marketing and publicity. Advertisers pay these

platforms based on the number of clicks and impressions. Platforms have economic advantage as clicks, shares and engagements grow. The platforms are designed to encourage users to click, share, and engage irrespective of the quality or the nature of the content. Therefore, the features of affordance, networking, sharing, participation and user-generated content which the platform interface makes available, are for their own economic advantage not for the users. (Meikle, 2016; Fuchs, 2017; Srnicek, 2017).

On the one hand, social media facilitate anyone to create, access and share content. They enable user participation, democratisation, connectivity, collaboration, sharing, and communication. Users not only consume content, but also create, distribute and respond to what they consume. On the other hand, all of these activities involve serious issues of surveillance, datafication, corporate ownership, unequal power, domination, privacy, free labour, information disorder, filter bubble, clickbait, and algorithmic culture. While these platforms facilitate ordinary individuals to create, communicate and collaborate, these take place on large networks involving corporates, advertisers, state bodies and other social actors (van Dijck, 2013; Carah and Louw, 2015; Meikle, 2016; Fuchs, 2017; Lyon, 2018).

Platform knowledge, therefore, means developing critical understanding of: how social media platforms work; how they represent reality; who own and control platforms; how the economics of social media work; how they make profit; why the interface is designed in a particular way to encourage user interaction and engagement; how user data is collected, assessed and sold for targeted advertising and marketing; how platforms engage in user surveillance; and how algorithms profile users and directs the flow of content and visibility.

Aside from the above-mentioned issues inherent in social media platforms, critical understanding also entails knowing how algorithmic profiling and commodification of user behaviours impact personal autonomy, citizenship, and democracy. Platform knowledge should translate into resisting platforms' treatment of users as a source of raw material in the supply chain of production and trade of behavioural data (Zuboff, 2019), and confronting the social, political, economic and religious discriminations (Cheney-Lippold, 2019) taking place on social media.

The curriculum for developing platform knowledge

The curriculum for developing platform knowledge can include topics and activities on: understanding platforms, datafication, algorithmic culture, economics of social media and corporate control. Inviting students to reflect on their social media habits would be a good step to initiate them to platform knowledge – what social media platforms they like most; what features they like in these platforms; and what do they use them for. Then they can be facilitated with learning material and activities to understand the critical aspects of platforms and surveillance.

6.1.4 Visibility and identity management

This component of the circuit means developing children's critical understanding of online visibility, aspects of representation, the issues involved in privacy and identity, and the implications of the surveillance culture.

Visibility, as the term implies, refers to users' engagements and self-expression on social media platforms for various reasons. What we do on social media is a self-representation of what we want to communicate. Social media platforms facilitate social practices and enable people to generate, share, and disseminate their self-

representation through connecting, communicating, sharing, and networking (Buckingham, 2017a). When users post, share, curate, comment, like, network, or collaborate, they engage in social practices using the platform *language*.

The images we choose, the music we share, the videos we post, the comments we make, the pages we like and the groups we are part of represent a significant part of our identity. The social media platforms we use, make visible our identity to the public. This self-representation of one's values, beliefs, habits, tastes, and interests to the public can have both positive and negative consequences (Buckingham, 2019a; Meikle, 2016).

The coming together of personal and public communication is central to social media. The personal communication on social media flows on multiple directions and contexts through user activity and algorithms' filtering and sorting. The consequence of visibility on social media platforms is uncertain. One loses control of what is shared on social media since others can edit, repurpose and further share it. It can be also used by anyone for purposes which one never imagined or intended (Meikle, 2016). For example, when one posts a selfie on Facebook, it is meant to communicate something to a particular audience such as friends and family. But, on social media anyone from any part of the world can become an audience for that particular piece of communication. The use and interpretation of it can also vary depending upon people and contexts (Buckingham, 2016). On social media, social contexts that used to be imagined "as separate co-exist as parts of the network" (Marwick and boyd, 2010p130); thus complicating the self-representation and its impact.

Similarly, what we see on our feeds, though looks real and natural, is a representation and involves performance. People choose to present what they want to

show and omit things they do not wish to reveal. Someone who regularly posts selfies capturing happy expressions need not be always happy in real life as represented. The representation and performance even in a selfie can be seen from their camera angle, pose, gestures, locations, expressions, dress, the use of editing tools, filters, and special effects. Images and videos that may look as part of normal life or natural can also be staged or managed for publicity and promotion. Celebrities, people who are popular and influential offline, major brands and institutions tend to get more visibility and attention on social media. The visibility is greatly controlled by the platform's algorithm and design and those with power.

On the one hand, the platform *language* for users' social practices is engineered for knowing user identity, for tracking and watching users, for collecting data, and for keeping users hooked to the platforms. While our engagements and self-representations form and make visible our identities on platforms, we are also being configured and reconfigured into categories of algorithmic identities (Cheney-Lippold, 2011) by platforms. Though the architecture of a platform like Facebook provides users with privacy settings so that users can have some control over who their identities are made visible to, when it comes to their algorithmic identities users are provided with neither information nor control. The algorithmic identities are hidden from users. Corporate owners then process, score and classify users and *represent* them according to the value they are scored into. For platforms, what matters is not who or what users are but to what categories they can be classified into. These algorithmic categories are also guided by user data for marketing and personalisation purposes. The classification and profiling of users enable platforms to track and trace them for economic benefits and for providing customised content (Cheney-Lippold, 2011; Cheney-Lippold, 2019). The datafied identities of users can also be used by the

governmental agencies, marketing firms and political parties for various purposes such as predictive policing, suppressing dissent, and targeted campaigns. Sometimes, these can also lead to discriminations based on class, gender, religion, and political affiliations.

On the other hand, users actively use the affordances and the *language* of social media to self-represent and to make themselves visible (Meikle 2016; Buckingham, 2017a; Lyon, 2018; Buckingham, 2019a). Users get involved in watching others by way of checking their profile, images, habits, and location. They also *represent* others on the platforms by their social practices. These activities on social media platforms facilitate surveillance by corporate, government bodies, and people. In today's platform-led and user-generated surveillance culture, corporate, government, and users participate in *representation*. All these have ethical and justice implications (Lyon, 2018).

Visibility and identity management, therefore, necessitates understanding the pros and cons of how self-representation is mediated in the networked platforms, and developing a capacity to manage mediated and surveillant visibility, privacy, identity and risks on networked platforms. It is about understanding not only ones' own visibility and self-representation, but also understanding how others represent themselves on social media. It means developing values of mutual care, respect and kindness when representing others. Moreover, visibility and identity management is not only about the issue of self-representation, but also how platform owners mould human behaviours and reinforce social discriminations through algorithmic profiling. The greater issue here is the implications of the surveillance culture (Lyon, 2018). Management of visibility and identity takes place when users are transformed from passive non-

participants to active participants – able to claim data ownership for justice and mutual care (Lyon, 2018).

To reiterate, visibility management means critical understanding of: how content travels on the platforms; how people represent themselves on social media; what language people use in a public group or a closed group; how privacy and identity are affected on social media; how to manage risks; what consequences uncertain visibility lead to; how social media represent the world; who gets attention, who controls visibility, how attention is sought on social media through multimodal communication; how discriminations take place based on datafied identities; and how citizens' agentic action is required for transforming the "surveillance culture".

The curriculum for visibility management

The curriculum for developing competency for visibility management should include topics and activities on: understanding convergence of public media and personal communication; understanding algorithmic profiling and surveillance; understanding visibility, representation and performance; building resilience to online risks; and responsible and ethical practices online.

Asking children to reflect on their self-representation on social media can be a good step to initiate them to understanding visibility on social media. They should be engaged in activities aimed at reflecting that their images, music, videos, comments, and the groups they are involved in represent a significant part of their identity. They are also be made aware how the platform companies, marketing agencies, and governments score and categorise users using their personal data and online engagements for various purposes. They are be able to perceive that such algorithmic

scoring and representation reinforces the inequalities and discriminations in society. They evaluate the "surveillance culture" in which they participate. They critically look into their networked habits to see how platforms mould their behaviour. They also notice performance in what they see. They understand the media language like camera angle, editing, use of filters and effects in representation. They understand social media as a public media and what they do on these platforms is permanent. They grow in making informed sharing, responsible interaction and ethical online practices; and build resilience to cyber bullying, and other issues they encounter. They begin to resist algorithmic discriminations, claim ownership of their data, seek accountability from corporate, and voice their opinion to transform the networked society with humane values.

6.1.5 Information management

In this component of the circuit, students are helped to develop critical literacies to understand the dynamics of contemporary information ecosystem constituted by the socio-political and media-technological factors.

The affordances of networked platforms and the extensive use of smart phones, and the development of user generated content have transformed the information ecosystem. People now increasingly consume, curate, and disseminate news online, social media and messaging applications. Although social media can potentially be used for citizen journalism, public debate, and social movements, various actors use the networked platforms to manipulate information, spread hatred, retaliate with revenge, and attempt to influence public opinion and political election (Collins et al., 2019). Social media platforms such as Facebook are designed to amplify content that engages users' strong emotions. Junk news, conspiracy theories, bigotry, gender

abuses, and hate speech spread fast on social media since such content generate strong reactions from users (Vaidhynathan, 2018).

The communication on social media is multimodal – texts, images, memes, gifs, emoticons, videos, and music which are easily combined to communicate messages. And also hypertextual – information is linked and made clickable so that users can easily access various pieces of connected information. The multimodal and hypertextual communication are vigorously used to seek attention, to connect, to navigate and to participate (Buckingham, 2019a). Though the information fast circulating on social media using multimodal and hypertextual format may look real and natural, it should always be perceived as a *representation.* It is a view from one perspective, presented in a particular way by including some aspects and excluding some other aspects of the reality (Buckingham, 2018b).

In social media information landscape, the source inclines to be less important, instead socially endorsed and algorithmically amplified news tend to get more attention. While reliable news sources have internal structures for publishing such as qualified human editors, trained journalists and subject experts who are expected to follow ethical standards, social media as new information gatekeepers do not have such editorial protocols (Messing and Westwood, 2012). Nevertheless, social media employ some form of editorial functions by way of selection, classification, presentation, ranking, repetition and exposure of content to users. Social media through its complex algorithm exert power over the way content is filtered, supplied and accessed by users. This has serious implications for media plurality, democracy and public opinion (Helberger, Konigslow and Noll, 2015; Tambini, 2015).

These platforms employ personalised information and news to cater to the users' tastes and interests. Platforms profile people to track their engagements on the platforms and on other websites and devices where these platforms have data collection tools. This identity/profiling informs the platforms who people are, their interests, likes and dislikes, tastes and habits. They are then targeted with personalised content based on these profiling. The search results, newsfeeds and the personalised recommendations on the platforms are largely informed by their profiling. This also enables the platforms to present ads based on one's interests and tastes. But this economically motivated corporate strategy limits the free flow of content, discussion and debate. This can have impact on diversity and plurality as people more and more engage with information that only confirms their thinking (Pariser, 2011).

Therefore, the contemporary news ecosystem demands critical literacies to enable citizens to understand the socio-political-economic contexts of the media landscape (Banaji and Bhat, 2019). Information management involves building resilience and agency to critically consume information, curate information, engage with information and produce news content. It means understanding: how news is constructed and shared on social media; what media languages and techniques are used to attract attention; the economics of social media; how does traditional news organisations use social media to promote content; in what ways, consuming news on social media is different from legitimate news sources. It also involves looking at one's news consumption habits, information sharing habits, the sources of news, the effects of 'filter bubble', and ones' own judgements of the experience of information ecosystem. It means looking at bias, objectivity and fairness in news stories. It means looking at how a story is framed, from what angle it is portrayed, what details are included and what are omitted. It means understanding institutional bias: the

inclinations of the media organisations, the values the organisations stand for and their beliefs (Buckingham, 2019).

It also means understanding: how information disorder affects democracy; what disinformation, misinformation, political propaganda, satire, and parody are; how they spread; why they amplify on social media? who operates behind them; and what techniques are used to amplify and escalate such content. It should also enable people to respect human rights when they exercise freedom of speech and sharing news content and also enable citizens to understand how the information landscape is influenced by corporate and political motives (Banaji and Bhat, 2019).

The curriculum for information management

The curriculum for developing competency in information management can include lessons and activities on these topics: understanding bias in news; understanding contemporary information ecosystem in the socio-political-economic contexts; understanding disinformation and propaganda as a social problem; and citizen journalism and news production. Children can be involved in maintaining a fact-checking website or channel. The social media literacy programmes should develop children's resilience and agency for consuming and engaging with information on social media. They reflect on their news consumption habits, their sources, confirmation bias, ''filter bubble'' and their engagement with news. While consuming news they are able to analyse the bias, objectivity, fairness, agenda setting and framing. Furthermore, students develop skills to curate news, report news, and share news for civic purposes.

6.1.6 Digital Storytelling

Using social media for creativity and self-expression is an important aspect of social media literacy circuit. This means children grow from mere users to producers. They use platforms to make and share content for various purposes – social justice, values and beliefs, democracy and self-representation. They learn to remix content; appropriate content; write blogs; make and share videos, music, memes, and podcasts. Using social media for Digital Storytelling means being part of *production*, creative use of media *language* and understanding *representation* in media.

As Gauntlett describes in his book, *Making is Connecting,* creativity is "a *process* and a *feeling*"—the inner experience one undergoes while making something new and different (2018, p24). The very *process* of creative making involved in Digital Storytelling is rewarding and fulfilling. Everyday creativity can lead to personal transformation of self and growth. The act of creative-making and sharing can impart happiness, pleasure, and a sense of accomplishment and enhance self-esteem.

Social media storytelling is associated to "uses and affordances in terms of creativity (saying and making), sharing and visibility" (Meikle, 2016, 120) made possible through platforms, database and networking. Storytelling in the networked digital environment is multimodal and hypertextual. It has to do with remixing, organising, creating, and sharing (Meikle, 2016).

Availability of digital tools for storytelling alone is not sufficient for children to produce media content. Children also need "the tools of empowerment – confidence, self-belief, and assistance with scriptwriting and skill acquisition" (Meadows, 2009, p116). Telling stories using digital tools is not easy but can be learned by anyone since

everyone has a story to tell (Meadows, 2003). It means developing skills to use social media for creative making and self-expression – remixing and sharing content, creating and sharing memes, videos, music and podcast, publishing blogs, and other ways of artistic expressions. Children can learn these tools of Digital Storytelling with some form of assistance from the school. Studies from the established Digital Storytelling practices have shown ample evidence in this regard (Meadows, 2009; Simondson, 2009).

The creative and critical skills required for Digital Storytelling should include, but not limited to: responsible creation and sharing of memes, remix videos, podcast, music, info graphics, news reports, debates, and blogs on public funded platforms; social skills for collaboration and networking; self-discovery in the context of offline and online space; and values of ethics, fairness, and objectivity.

The curriculum for Digital Storytelling

The curriculum for Digital Storytelling can include: understanding meme, podcast, and vlog genres; understanding remix culture; script writing, editing, and production techniques; legal and ethical aspects of Digital Storytelling on social media; and value of creative making.

Elements of the Digital Storytelling, discussed elaborately in the literature review, are proposed as a classroom method to engage students in creative self-expression. Students can be guided and facilitated to collaborate in small groups to make short videos, podcast, memes or news reports on relevant topics using Digital Storytelling techniques. Post the production, they can reflect and discuss on their self-representation, media language, production and audience. Digital Storytelling

applications in schools can bring about new ways of learning using digital tools which can lead to empowerment and citizenship (Erstad & Silseth, 2008). Digital Storytelling helps students to develop media literacy skills since they have to be involved in understanding the purpose of their story, searching and analysing reliable sources for content production. Students also learn the skills and aesthetics of video editing, sound recording and web tools (Warfield, 2016).

The exercise of creating digital stories can potentially make students of the 21st century more engaged and prepared to be an active participant. The process also develops their creativity, research skills, content analysis, collaboration, teamwork and communication skills. Thus, students' participation in Digital Storytelling initiates them into digital media literacy (Robins, 2006). The practice and research in this field have proven that Digital Storytelling is an effective tool for empowerment through self-discovery, collaboration, self-representation and identity.

6.1.7 Participation and citizenship

This component of the circuit deals with helping children with skills and capabilities to understand, judge, and manage participation on networked platforms and developing in them a new mindset to shape and transform the networked society for the good of the people through their agentic action. Their active participation is geared towards awareness of the various power structure controlling the platforms. They are guided to respond to the issues of datafication, data violence, algorithmic bias, "surveillance culture" and disinformation.

In the contemporary media ecology, users have the power to participate, network, collaborate, and voice opinion. Users can produce, remix, share, curate, and reposition

content. Users participate in repositioning and circulating media content for different reasons such as cultural, personal, political and economic. It helps to express their identity, their perspectives and in the process, they find a new meaning of what they communicate on daily basis. It can also enhance users' personal and professional relationships, and civic participation. It can open users to diverse cultures across borders and help to understand others' perspectives. Various groups of niche audiences reposition the content to suit their needs and agendas. The more the content spreads, the more it gets repositioned and recirculated via multiple remixing, sharing and conversations across platforms (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013). In reality, these aspects of participation in social media are embedded, enabled, and directed towards amassing capital. The power to control the flow of content, visibility and attention are mostly in the hands of corporates and those in power (Schafer, 2011; Meikle, 2016; Fuchs, 2017; Burgess and Green, 2018). The cultural uses of social media in the contemporary media landscape is fashioned on the principles of capitalism: competition and individualism (Fuchs, 2017). Furthermore, citizens' participation and behaviours on networked platforms are being moulded by corporate "economic logic" (Zuboff, 2019) and has been facilitating a "surveillance culture" (Lyon, 2018).

The user-participation is constrained and controlled by elements such as platform design, algorithmic sorting, economic logic, corporate ownership, socio-political contexts, and those with power and destructive intentions. A user generally engages with the content shown on the news feed, home page, or timeline of a platform. On the one hand, a user's participation by way of sharing, liking/disliking and commenting, to a great extent, is determined by the background functions of the algorithm which selects, sorts, and directs the content. On the other hand, user engagement feeds into

algorithm by way of user data and user profiling. Through this dynamic of user activity and algorithm, platforms customise and continually represent types of content and ads with which a user may be attracted to engage. Platforms are designed to stimulate user participation. This participation is presented as emotionally engaging and economically free. In the meantime, a platform's control and trade with behavioural data grow higher as the number of users and user activities grow (Zuboff, 2019). A critical understanding of these aspects is a solution to these issues, but it can, at least, contribute to informed participation and also to resist such issues.

Although social media platforms can potentially be used to expand diversity, make visible perspectives, creativity and self-representations beyond cultures and borders, what dominates the platforms are information disorder, hate speech, bigotry, gender abuse, and various other forms of discriminations.

Therefore, on the one hand, participation and citizenship demands developing skills and competencies to network and collaborate for creative self-expression and civic engagements. It means developing social skills – sharing, commenting, use of hashtags, connecting, following, interacting, discussing, civic engagements, citizen journalism and mentoring. It involves growing in capacity to collaborate with similar interest groups for creative making; understanding the natures of various groups, movements, campaigns on social media; developing resilience to manage unwanted threats while participating on such groups; growing in agency to navigate, organise, and join groups/forums especially for social justice, environment protection, and other civic purposes; and responsible sharing and diligently curating the content for creating an informed society.

On the other hand, the networked ecology calls for users critical and transformative participation and citizenship in shaping a democratic networked society. Citizens' critical and transformative participation is essential for embedding human rights, liberty, and welfare values in the networked society. It demands citizens' active and agentic role through a process of understanding the social problems within the socio-political and media-technology ecosystem. It involves enabling citizens to not only understand and adjust but also resist surveillance culture; not only to evaluate and judge false stories but also to perceive the social problem they cause and resist them. It includes but goes beyond empowering citizens to appropriate the affordances of the networked platforms for creating, remixing and sharing meaningful content to citizens' agentic participation in appropriating and embedding the welfare and justice logic into the networked society. Therefore, this framework views children as agents and collaborators of change.

The curriculum for participation and citizenship

The curriculum for developing competency for participation and citizenship can include topics and activities on: understanding critical "participatory culture", understanding power structures of participation; understanding online civic campaigns; understanding citizen journalism; and understanding transformative digital citizenship. Involving students in a civic campaign both online and offline and reflecting on their impact can give them practical experiences in this area.

A diagrammatic representation of the social media literacy circuit is given below (Figure 13):

Figure 13: The circuit of social media literacy

Two components in this circuit, platform access and information access, are entry level literacies which children develop when they are given access to devices and Internet. However, they need parental support and guidance at these levels. The other five elements are critical social media capabilities and practices required for navigating and participating in the datafied social media world. Children benefit more from the opportunities that the social media may provide when they grow in the circuit of critical social media practices and when they develop competencies for information management, identity management, collaboration, and participation. The seven

components of the circuit do not mean that users progress from one component to another one in succession or in tight sequence. All components are inter-related and mutually constituting – therefore, the circuit. A systematic educational programme is required for helping children to develop these capabilities and practices.

As the diagram shows, the seven components are interlinked to the traditional media literacy key concepts – language, representation, audience and production. These key concepts are grounded on critical thinking for analysing, evaluating and judging. Critical thinking is a reflexive process that involves asking questions, applying logic, analysing information, evaluating evidence and making judgement based on these. Critical thinking tries to look at information from various angles, questions basic assumptions of the claims and understands what is included and not included. Critical thinking is required to understand social media platforms, their development, forms, economics, and the social practices these make possible. Critical thinking is required to evaluate the claims people make through their representation on these platforms, to understand various actors operating on these platforms, to deconstruct the narratives, and to ask the right questions about information on social media (Buckingham, 2018a; Buckingham, 2019a).

Along with critical thinking, the framework, as discussed in Chapter 3, also emphasises the agentic action for transforming the existing networked landscape with justice, ethics, and welfare values. The guiding principle of this agentic action is that citizens who as users of the technologies should play an important role in shaping the networked society. Critical thinking and transformative action serve as the central elements in developing social media literacies. These aspects power the social media literacy circuit. While social media are powered by corporate designed algorithms, the

social media literacy circuit is powered by human values for personal empowerment and for shaping society's welfare. Therefore, this framework aims to develop young people's *skills and capabilities for critically analysing and engaging in the networked society, evaluating information, managing mediated visibility, participating in creative self-expression; and transformative participation and citizenship for developing a democratic networked society characterised by human rights, dignity, and welfare.*

The next section further discusses how children can be empowered to grow in the circuit through classroom learning of critical social media literacies and practices.

6.2 Social media literacy programmes in schools

A study by Livingstone and Helsper of how children, 9-19-year-olds, in UK progress in their take-up of online opportunities found that "going online is a staged process, with systematic differences between those who take up more and those who take up fewer opportunities" (2007, p683). They classified children, based on their take-up of online opportunities, into basic users, moderate users, broad users and all-round users. The basic group was categorised as "information seekers"; the moderate group additionally engaged in "online games" and "email"; the broad users, besides information seeking used the Internet for "instant messaging" and "downloading music"; the all-rounders used the Internet for "interactive and creative uses". They also found various factors contributing to the breadth of use such as demography, frequency of use, years of use, skills, and self-efficacy. While the study found increase in take-up of opportunities with growth in age, a broader take-up of online opportunities resulted from frequency of use, skills, and self-efficacy.

A recent cross-national, evidence-based study in Bulgaria, Chile and South Africa conducted by Livingstone, et al. (2019), as part of the *Global Kids Online* project suggests a “ladder of online participation” in children’s use of the Internet. The study tried to find out from children if they had engaged in a sequence of activities online in the past month. The activities are “based on measures of learning, creativity, community and civic participation, relationships, entertainment and personal benefits” (p1). The findings from the study demonstrate that most children across these countries enjoy entry-level activities such as social activities, gaming, and learning activities. But, the study shows, “most children do not reach the point where they commonly undertake many of the civic, informational and creative activities online that are heralded as the opportunities of the digital age” (p7). The study recommends identifying ways and means to help children climb the “ladder of online participation”. While the Internet provides an array of opportunities, the challenge is to help children to turn those opportunities into benefits.

As discussed in Chapter 5, my pilot study survey in Mumbai asked children a series of activities they undertook on social media during the past one year. The questions were adapted from *Global Kids Online* (no date) research toolkit. Though the survey was small in scale and not representative of Mumbai, the result suggests a “ladder” of online participation. The findings show that though there is high accessibility and social media use among the respondents, most of them do not climb the ladder in making use of the opportunities of social media for creative and civic purposes. Their use mostly stays at the phase of managing profiles, sharing photos and videos, accessing information and watching videos to learn. Only a handful of respondents noted that they remixed or created their own video, music or changed existing content and shared it on social media. Only a few respondents used social media for civic

purposes such as getting involved with a campaign on/through social media and discussing political or social issues with other people on social media.

Additionally, the findings strongly indicate that the children have a very limited critical understanding of platforms, algorithm, surveillance and data misuse. Most respondents did not know that what they do on social media is public and permanent. Because, they believed that they can easily delete information they have posted about themselves online if they don't want people to see it. They were not aware that social media companies such as Facebook and Instagram archive user activities, keep deleted data and build up a profile of users for advertisers. Majority of them did not know that what they see on social media platform is managed by its algorithm. The findings also reveal that most of them did not realise that governments, security agencies and platform owners watch users' online activities and collect their data.

While various factors may contribute to the growth in the circuit of social media literacy such as age, education, family, access, socio-economic situation and culture, the challenge is to assist the children with the skills, motivation and competencies to grow on the circuit. How children can be empowered to progress in their social media capabilities and practices in the context of their daily experience of social media? How they can be facilitated with an environment to progress from basic access and use of social media – communicating with friends and family, playing online games, watching videos, reading news to developing analytical skills – to critical and agentic users through creative self-expression and participation? How they can progress in harnessing their capabilities for making informed and ethical use of the platforms; evaluating, curating and using information; and managing their daily experiences on social media?

A recent project, *Media literacy versus fake news: critical thinking, resilience and civic engagement* (2019), led by the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice, Bournemouth University, recommends compulsory teaching of "critical media literacy" as a subject in schools in the context of information disorder. The study evaluated some of the existing online media literacy resources which the study called "testing the wheel". The study then identified "top ten" toolkits for imparting media literacy in the context of contemporary information ecosystem. The toolkits were identified based on their "more holistic, critical media literacy activities (Teaching to Fish) - a more effective and sustainable approach than 'giving a fish' through fact-checking tools or surface level media / information literacy competences" (McDougall, 2019). The 'top ten' toolkits listed are: *Student Reporting Labs, NewsWise, NewsGuard, IJ Net, BBC Young Reporter, National Literacy Trust, Team Human, Media Lens, Unesco: Fight Fake News, Mind over Media* (Centre for Excellence in Media Practice, 2019). Some of these toolkits, undertaken by media organisations, such as *Student Reporting Labs, BBC Young Reporter, and NewsWise,* give opportunities to young students to learn news production practices from experts and get hands on experience in news reporting. Other toolkits such as *my data and privacy online*, *digital civics toolkit*, *common sense*, *civic online reasoning*, *transmedia literacy*, *BBC academy* also have useful resources for imparting media literacy.

Online toolkits and resources are useful to some extent for teaching social media literacy. If social media literacy has to be imparted in a sustainable and extensive manner, then social media education has to become a part of the school curriculum and school programmes. Schools can play a significant role in helping children to develop critical social media capabilities and practices and thus grow on the social media ladder. Schools must develop a culture of integrating reflexive social media

practices in education, and organise initiatives to involve children to use the platform for creative expressions and thus reflect on the *representation* by engaging in representing.

Therefore, the main study will attempt to understand the impact of social media literacy programme in schools in helping participants to progress in the social media literacy circuit. The pedagogy for critical social media literacy learning integrates elements from the Digital Storytelling method. It includes discussions, personal reflections, group activities, short video lessons, digital citizenship campaigns, and creative making. The subsequent section presents a basic teaching material for social media literacy workshops in secondary schools. Although the teaching material is prepared for conducting social media literacy workshops as part of my fieldwork, the same can be adapted and further developed to suit different contexts in India.

6.3 Social media literacy workshops – a toolkit

Grounded on the critical social media literacy framework discussed in the preceding part, this section presents teaching materials for conducting social media workshop in secondary schools in Mumbai. The purpose of the social media literacy workshop in schools is to help children to develop critical social media literacies. The workshop will try to enable children to apply critical thinking while using the platforms and while managing information on social media. The workshop will try to motivate and initiate children to activities directed to creativity, self-expression and participation.

While developing the social media toolkit, I have adapted some elements from the lectures and seminar discussion activities of Social Media module in MA Social Media, Culture and Society at the University of Westminster. Professor Graham

Meikle, the course leader of Social Media module, gave me an opportunity to sit in his class and participate in the seminar discussion activities from September to November 2018. Participating in the lectures and various seminar discussion activities deepened my knowledge of social media, technology and the Internet. It helped me to reflect upon various key concepts as a student in a classroom as well as a researcher. The seminar discussion activities helped me further experience the impact of doing activities in small groups and the importance of active learning. Besides I also had the insider knowledge of what went on during group activities and how various participants assimilated, reflected and responded to the topics. Based on the lectures, I have adapted four topics for the social media literacy toolkit: understanding social media; understanding visibility and identity; managing online news; and remix, memes and Digital Storytelling. The activity for lesson 2 – understanding visibility, privacy and identity – is adapted from the class activity of social media module: *read individually two case study blogs/news items on sharing and visibility and make comments on an A3 size paper. Participants need to read, reflect and comment on a blog/news item. Followed by, the facilitator will curate a discussion/debate on their reflections on the case study.* The insight for the activity of lesson 4 – remix and meme – is also drawn from the social media seminar activity. The final assignment for the module included making a Digital Storytelling video. I have included Digital Storytelling as the final project for the workshop.

The learning goals of the social media toolkit are:

a) To help children harness critical social media capabilities and practices
b) To provide a realistic and practical foundation for media literacy that suits the contemporary social media environment (Buckingham, 2019a).

6.3.1 The Format of the workshop

The workshop will have 4 sessions, one session per week consisting of 90 minutes. After the fourth session, each participant will make a short Digital Storytelling video from home and in the fifth week there will be a screening and feedback session.

Session 1: Understanding social media

The objective of this session is to help children take a closer look at their social media use and to deepen their critical knowledge of social media platforms and various underlying elements of social media. The session will explore what are social media, why social media platforms exist, the role of algorithm and data, how content travel on social media, and positives and negatives of social media.

Session 2: Understanding visibility and identity

The objective of this session is to help children take a closer look at visibility, privacy and self-representation on social media. The session will explore how social media represent reality and how one loses control over what one shares on networked platforms and the unforeseen visibility and consequences of such sharing.

Session 3: Managing online news

The objective of this session is to help children take a closer look at news and information disorder in the contemporary information ecosystem. The session will explore social media languages, bias, objectivity and various forms of problematic information spreading on social media.

Session 4: Remix, memes and Digital Storytelling

The objective of this session is to help children develop interest and skills in creative making and to give them a hands-on experience of Digital Storytelling for self-expression. The session will explore how people use remix and memes for communication and creative expression and the elements of Digital Storytelling. The workshop will conclude with a final project – Digital Storytelling.

The workshop has the following elements:

a) Warm up (15 minutes)
b) Video lesson (five minutes)
c) Activity – centred around the video (60 minutes)

Warm up

The facilitator begins the session with a warm-up activity. The warm-up activity comprises of a Think-Pair-Share method. The facilitator will ask the participants a question pertaining to the topic of the session. Participants are given two minutes to think about it individually and then five minutes to discuss it in pairs. Then they are be invited to share with the class the points they discussed (Simon, no date).

Video lesson

Each session has a five-minute video explaining key concepts of the topic. Prior to screening the video lesson, students are instructed what they should look for in the video. They should also be told that the activity in which they will participate subsequently is based on the key topic presented in the video.

Activity (60 minutes)

After watching the video participants will engage in an activity. The aim of the activity is to help the participants to grasp the key concepts already presented in the video. The activities in each session are intended to help them reflect on some of the questions discussed in the video and connect them to their life experiences. The activities invite active involvement of participants by way of reflection, discussion, and doing things together. The activities will help each participant to present his/her point of view and also listen to others' perspectives and life experiences. During the activities, the facilitator (researcher) will observe student's participation, interest in the topic and the grasp of key concepts.

Digital Storytelling project

Social media literacy workshop concludes with a Digital Storytelling project. Creative making is an important aspect of social media literacy. The Digital Storytelling video project is aimed at providing the participants a practical experience of creative making. After learning and reflecting on "social media and society", participants individually or in self-formed group will be invited to make a short reflective video (2-3 minutes). The Digital Storytelling video project is expected to enhance participants' creativity and imagination and give creative expressions of their reflections on society and social media. It is also meant to deepen their digital as well as social media literacy. While working on this project, the participants are invited to reflect upon the various types of Digital Storytelling that they encounter on social media. It helps them to reflect upon representation and media language. Participants also collaborate with others in making the videos.

Participants can choose any topic related to social media and society for the video. The video production will be done using smartphones available to them. During the first session, the facilitator will explain to students the goals of the Digital Storytelling project. Participants will be asked to start thinking about the topic from the first day of the workshop.

They will be shown a video which will explain the Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling developed by the Center for Digital Storytelling as a guideline (Robin, 2006). The following are the seven Elements of Digital Storytelling:

1) Point of View – what is the perspective of the author?
2) A Dramatic Question – a question that will be answered by the end of the story.
3) Emotional Content – serious issues that speak to us in a personal and powerful way.
4) The Gift of your Voice – a way to personalise the story to help the audience understand the context.
5) The Power of the Soundtrack – music or other sounds that support the storyline.
6) Economy – simply put, using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer with too much information.
7) Pacing – related to Economy, but specifically deals with how slowly or quickly the story progresses.

The video is available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1f-_FXgJZM

Participants will be encouraged to make the video imbibing the seven elements of Digital Storytelling. They are expected to finalise the topic and prepare a story draft before the fourth session. During the fourth session, the participants will share their

topic, the storyline and various elements of the video with the group. Each one will then make the video from home during the week.

Screening the participants' videos and feedback

In the fifth week, there will be a screening of participants' Digital Storytelling videos. Prior to the screening each participant will have the opportunity to briefly introduce the video and share their experience of making the video. After the screening, participants will be requested to sign a feedback form. The feedback form will cover usefulness of the workshop, their learning experience and what changes they would like to suggest for improving the workshop.

6.3.2 Workshop breakdown

Lesson 1: Understanding social media

Warm up - 15 minutes

The facilitator initiates a discussion by asking the participants questions such as: What social media platforms do you like most? What features do you like in these platforms? What do you use them for? Participants in random are invited to answer these questions.

After the discussion, the facilitator asks the participants to think for two minutes five positives and five negatives of using social media. After two minutes, they discuss the answers in pairs for 3 minutes and then share with the class. The facilitator then makes a list on the screen/white board, of what the students have written. The following points will be added to the list if they are missing (Table 6):

Positives	Negatives
Communication	Cyber bullying
Information access	Bigotry, racism, and hate speech
Entertainment	Privacy
Learning	Stalking
Connecting	Information disorder
Creativity/production	Addiction
Self-expression	Data misuse
Participation	Corporate control
Networking	Surveillance
Business	Gender abuse
Collaboration	Exploitation of children
Collective intelligence	Neglecting offline/interpersonal communication
Inspiration	Poor self-esteem
Motivation	Digital footprint
Sharing	Miss-representation of reality
Visibility	Seeking continuous validation from others
Help	Terrorism

Table 6: Positives and negatives of using social media – warm up activity

Video lesson – 5 minutes

After the warm activity participants are invited to watch a 5-minute video lesson. The video focuses on the following questions: What are social media? What do you understand by algorithm, database, platform?

(The video is available on this link: http://socialmedialit.org/understanding-social-media/)

Activity 1 (15 minutes)

This short role-play activity is aimed to further demonstrate the working of the platform and how user data is collected and used. Six placards are needed for the following: Instagram, Algorithm, Database, Advertiser, User 1, User 2. Additionally, a printed sheet of a dog image and a dog food image (advertisement) are required.

After the video lesson, the facilitator will invite six volunteers from the workshop for a short role-play. Volunteer A will act as *user 1,* volunteer B represents a platform *Instagram*, volunteer C represents *algorithm*, volunteer D represents *database*, volunteer E acts as an *advertiser,* and volunteer F acts as *user 2*. Each of them will hold a placard representing the assigned role.

User 1 post (passed on) an image of a cute dog on *Instagram*. The post then goes (given) to the *database*. The *algorithm* takes the post from the *database* and gives to *user 2* and *user 2* 'likes' dog post. Meanwhile, *algorithm* passes the information about *user 1* and *user 2* to the *advertiser* who sells dog food. *User 1* and *User 2* are then shown the dog food post.

Activity 2 (45 minutes)

This activity is aimed at helping participants take a closer look at the social media platforms they use. They reflect how content travels on these platforms and why content appears the way it does on their home page/timeline – the role of algorithms and database. In the light of their reflection and discussion, participants are expected to gain some proficiency in understanding how their engagements on social media – searching, viewing, clicking, sharing, liking, tagging, commenting, are part of the core design of building a database for these platforms. Overall, this activity is expected to provide them with a basic idea of platform, database, and algorithm.

For this activity participants are divided into groups of five or six. Each group should choose one of the following topics and make a chart in 30 minutes. They require A3 size paper and colour pens.

a) Create a map (or a social media tree) of how an image or video you post gets shared on social media? You may choose to draw a map, poster or chart to explain the points.

b) Explain on a paper how does YouTube work and how does YouTube provide you with unique/personalised videos? You may choose to draw a map, poster or chart to explain the points. By mapping what I mean is why does the content show differently on each individual's homepage?

c) Choose a social media platform. Create a map (or a social media tree) of important elements of that platform? How does the platform work?

After the poster/map creation, each group will present the poster/map for everyone and explain it. (15 minutes)

Lesson 2: Understanding visibility, privacy and identity

Warm up: 15 minutes

The facilitator initiates a discussion by asking the participants questions such as: Can you delete permanently what you post on social media? Is what you share on social media private or public? Participants in random are invited to answer these questions.

After the discussion, the facilitator asks the participants to think for two minutes**:** *Who are we making ourselves visible to when we use social media?* In other words, can you categorise the types of people, groups, organisations, or companies that may/can see your posts on social media?

The following slide will be projected:

People	Groups/ Organisations	Companies	Any other

Table 7: Who are we making ourselves visible to when we use social media? – warm up activity

After two minutes, they discuss the answers in pairs for 3 minutes and write them down on a paper and then share them with the class. The facilitator then makes a list on the screen/white board, of what the students have written. The facilitator then includes the following points in the list and explains the aspect of uncertain visibility on social media (Table 8). The facilitator then concludes the warm-up activity discussion by saying content on social media is public and content on social media is permanent.

People	**Groups/ Organisation**	**Companies**	**Any other**
Friends, Family, Neighbours Friends of those in the contact list Teachers, People who I know but never met, People who I don't know, People in my city People in my state/country People anywhere in the world	School Clubs Sports Neighbourhood People who share my hobbies Political parties Religious groups Police	Social media companies, Brands, Advertisers,	Government *It is possible that my posts can be seen/shared by anybody in the world?* *Is content on social media public?* *Is content on social media permanent?*

Table 8: Who are we making ourselves visible to when we use social media? — warm up activity

Video lesson – 5 minutes

After the warm activity participants are invited to watch a video lesson. The video focuses on the following questions: To whom are we visible on social media? Do we notice performance in social media? What is staged and not staged? What are your responsibilities to self and others when using social media?

(The video is available on this link: http://socialmedialit.org/understanding-visibility-privacy-and-identity/)

Activity 2 (30 minutes)

This activity is aimed at introducing participants to aspects of visibility and privacy. Participants become more aware of how one loses control over what one shares on networked platforms and the unforeseen visibility and consequences of such sharing. Participants are asked to imagine reading and commenting on an online blog while doing this exercise. They need to apply critical thinking while making comments.

For this activity the participants are invited to read individually two case study blogs/news items on sharing and visibility and make comments and hashtags on an A3 size paper. Participants need to read, reflect and comment on a blog/news item. Followed by, the facilitator will curate a discussion/debate on their reflections on the case study.

Case study blogs/news items are:

- *a)* Viral RCB girl shares the traumatizing experience of being an overnight sensation! Available from https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/health-fitness/de-stress/viral-rcb-girl-shares-the-traumatizing-experience-of-being-an-overnight-sensation/articleshow/69322504.cms
- **b)** These teenagers are making social media safe by fighting bullying, body shaming. Available from https://yourstory.com/2018/02/teenagers-social-media-instagram

c) Mumbai, stop those dangerous train selfies, now! Available from https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/mumbai-stop-those-dangerous-train-selfies-now/articleshow/68953411.cms

Activity 2 (30 minutes)

This activity is a continuation from activity 1. It is aimed at helping participants to reflect, discuss and come up with a plan for resilient and informed use of social media.

For this activity participants are divided into groups of five or six. Each group is invited to make a chart or poster that can be displayed on a school noticeboard showing how social media can be used positively, creatively, safely, and intelligently in the context of uncertain visibility and other related issues.

Participants are given some tips for the poster-making:

a) Campaigns and hashtags for online safety, respecting others, promoting kindness on social media
b) Campaigns and hashtags for countering violence and hatred on social media
c) Campaigns and hashtags for body positivity, self-care, and well-being

After the poster/chart creation, each group will present the poster/chart for everyone and explain it. (10 minutes)

Lesson 3: The why and how of managing news on social media

Warm up: 15 minutes

The facilitator asks the participants to discuss with a partner next to him/her: *When you see a news story on social media how do you know if it's true or not?* After 5 minutes, students are invited to share the points. The facilitator, then makes a list, on the screen/white board, of what students have shared. The following points will be added to the list if they are missing:

- Check dates
- Check contexts
- Check sources
- Who posted?
- Where is the evidence?
- Is the evidence verifiable?
- Reverse image search

Video lesson – 5 minutes

After the warm activity participants are invited to watch a video lesson. The video explains: Difference between news in traditional media and social media. What are misinformation, disinformation and propaganda?

(The video is available on this link: http://socialmedialit.org/managing-online-news/)

Activity 1 (15 minutes)

This activity is aimed at helping the participants to reflect on what propaganda, disinformation, and misinformation are and how to fact check and distinguish them.

For this activity, the facilitator makes a presentation of examples of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda from Indian contexts. As the facilitator presents an image or video, the participants have to identify whether it is fact or misinformation, disinformation or propaganda. The facilitator then takes them through fact checking those examples.

*Activity 2 (*45 minutes)

This hands-on activity will help the participants to improve their news literacy. They will reflect on difference between fact and opinion and also the issue of information disorder

on social media. As an introduction to the activity, facilitator will make a presentation on the difference between fact and opinion; and the elements of a news article: What? Who? Where? When? Why? How?

For this activity, the participants are divided into groups of five or six. Each group is invited to make a school newspaper page on an A1 paper given to them. They need to make a school newspaper page with the following news items:

a) A news article of an event or award or any other incident took place in your school. The news article should include: What? Who? Where? When? Why? How?

b) An opinion article explaining the issues of fake news in India and how to respond to fake news.

Each group is also instructed to divide the work to different members in the group. For example: one person writes the headline, two prepare the news article, two write the opinion article, one draws the images.

Lesson 4: Digital Storytelling – Remix and memes

This session has two parts. The first part will introduce the participants to creative making and memes. In the second part the participants will work on their Digital Storytelling project.

Warm up: 15 minutes

For the warm activity, the participants are shown the following two videos of remix. Facilitator also can select any other videos of remix:

19-yr-old Aurangabad girl Vishnupriya Nair is India's new TikTok star. Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLhzqfQMv8c

What if The Avengers Were From South India? Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=lv47pjVkTck

After showing the videos ask the questions: What do you like in remix? Do you use memes? Why do you use them?

Video lesson – 5 minutes

After the warm activity participants are invited to watch a video lesson. The video explains creative making, remix and memes.

(The video is available on this link: http://socialmedialit.org/creative-making-remix-and-memes/)

Activity 1 (20 minutes)

This activity is aimed at introducing participants to use an existing content to communicate a new meaning. They will learn to apply creativity while communicating messages through memes. Computers or mobile phones are needed for this activity.

The facilitator shows the participants how to make memes using a free online meme generator website called *imgflip* (https://imgflip.com/memegenerator).

Image generator allows users to easily create memes by adding captions to their collection of established meme images or by uploading images from other sources. Users can customise a text by changing the size and colour of the font. After introducing participants to meme making, they are asked to make memes in pair. They are prompted to make memes on social media, or any aspects related to their lives and society.

Activity 2 (40 minutes)

This activity is meant for participants to discuss the video making plans in a small group. Participants are expected to finalise the topic and prepare a story draft before this session in consultation with the facilitator either individually or in self-formed groups. *During this activity, the participants will share their topic, the storyline and various elements of the video with the group.*

For this activity, the participants who plan to make the video individually are divided into groups of three or four. Each participant can, in three minutes, share his/her story for the Digital Storytelling project and the production plans. Other group members can give their feedback. Others who have self-formed groups for making the video can discuss in their groups.

Participants will then make the video individually or in self-formed groups during the week.

Screening the digital stories and feedback will take place after a week.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter detailed a critical social media literacy framework – social media literacy circuit – for developing teens' social media capabilities and practices in Mumbai. The framework elaborated the application of the core concepts of media literacy to the contemporary media ecosystem and presented the means for helping children to grow from ordinary users of technologies to critical, creative, and transformative users. Progressing in the social media literacy circuit involves developing critical social media literacies and practices.

Based on the framework, the chapter subsequently presented teaching material – social media literacy toolkit – for conducting participatory social media literacy workshop in secondary schools in Mumbai.

Based on the framework and teaching material presented in this chapter, I conducted a workshop on social media literacy in two secondary schools in Mumbai. The next three chapters – Chapters 7, 8, and 9 – analyse the impact of the workshop. In the analysis of fieldwork data, I question to what extent the critical social media literacy framework is useful in developing participants' social media literacies. The findings from the analysis answer my research questions.

Chapter 7: Critical understanding of social media platforms and visibility, and responding to issues of privacy

This and the next two chapters analyse and discuss the field work data. This chapter begins with an introduction to the data analysis, in which the different data sets available for analysis, the methods of analysing data, and the six key themes that are generated from the data, are presented. After that the chapter analyses two key themes: 1) Critical understanding of social media platforms; and 2) Understanding visibility and responding to issues of interpersonal privacy. The remaining four themes will be analysed in Chapters 8 and 9.

7.1 Introduction to the data analysis

For the fieldwork of this study, as discussed in Chapter 4, a workshop on social media literacy was conducted separately, in two schools in Mumbai – *School A* (girls' school) and *School B* (boys' school). A total of 32 participants in *School A*, and 29 participants in *School B*, participated in the workshop. Both groups were from Year 9. The majority of participants in *School A,* 71.8% (23) were 14-year-old; others were 13-year-old. The majority of participants in *School B,* 69.6% (24) were 14-year-old; others were 13-year-old.

After the workshop and interviews in Schools A and B, I was left with a diverse collection of data sets for analysis: 1) material created by participants during the workshop activities, 2) interview responses, 3) pre- and post-workshop survey data, 4) feedback form responses, and 5) researcher field notes and observations.

The material from the workshop activities consisted of diagrams, comments on news articles, news and opinion articles, memes, and warmup activity sheets. I had collected the original activity papers from the workshop for analysis. Additionally, there were 6 short videos made by 13 students from *School A* as part of the video assignments. The semi-structured interviews, with nine participants each from both schools, were conducted after four weeks of completing the workshop. This gap was intended to give them time for reflection and assimilation of workshop learning.

The material from activities and data from interviews formed two major data sets for this qualitative analysis. Along with these, the open-ended responses in the pre- and post-workshop survey and feedback form, my field notes which I took during the workshop days, and my reflexive reflections of conducting the workshop, were considered in the qualitative analysis.

Though the topic of the workshop was the same in both schools, there were some differences in the execution. In *School A*, I had 1 hour and 45 minutes for all four days of the workshop. In *School B*, 1 hour and 20 minutes each were scheduled for two days and only 50 minutes each were available for the remaining two days. I had to customise the workshop for two sessions due to lack of time in *School B*. In *School A,* the workshop was conducted in the morning hours. In *School B*, two sessions were conducted in the morning hours, and the remaining two in the afternoon. Attendance in the workshop was less in *School B* during the afternoon sessions since some students had to go for sports practice or other extracurricular activities. Due to this they missed attending one or two sessions.

In *School A,* the workshop was conducted in a spacious computer lab with projector facilities. In *School B*, the workshop was conducted in large auditorium with

projector facilities. A teacher was assigned to coordinate the workshop and to assist me during the workshop in *School A*. The presence of the coordinator during all the sessions was very helpful. In *School B*, for each session a separate teacher was present in the auditorium. Overall, in *School B,* students' interest, participation, and involvement in the workshop were perceived to be less in comparison to participants of *School A*.

The interviews in *School A* were audio recorded. However, in *School B*, I typed the interview responses manually into a laptop since the school had a policy of not allowing any audio or video recording of students by outsiders. I tried to type down the responses as accurately as possible, capturing their expressions. But it affected the flow of the interviews as compared to the audio recorded interviews in *School A*. Most participants in *School A* were descriptive during the interviews. Except for two, other interviewees in *School B* were less descriptive and they gave their response in two or three sentences.

Thus, the differences in *School A* and *School B* were mainly three types – differences in gender, differences in the execution of the workshop, and differences in the recording of the interviews. My personal experience in conducting the workshop was substantially different between *School A* and *School B*. The data from *School A* and *School B* revealed significant differences in their learning, understanding, and judgement. All these factors gave me initial challenges in organising, analysing, interpreting, and presenting the data.

To analyse the data, I chose a reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019). Thematic analysis is a method to "identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to the research question being addressed"

(Braun and Clarke, no date). Reflexive thematic analysis approach involves six stages (Braun and Clarke, no date):

1. Familiarisation with the data
2. Coding
3. Generating initial themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Writing up

First, I went through multiple data sets for analysis. I then transcribed all the interviews from *School A*. The interviews from *School B* were already typed in a document during the interview. I then entered and organised in a spreadsheet the open-ended survey response from pre- and post-workshop survey. After that, I went through the whole data set several times. I looked for patterns in the data. I also went back to the conceptual framework and literature review to look for connections and associations.

To analyse the interviews, I took a printout of the interview documents and marked codes as I read them. After reading and marking the initial codes on paper, I entered interview documents in NVivo. I then went through the interview documents in NVivo and reviewed the codes I had initially made on paper and further coded them in NVivo by assigning interview extracts. The codes were created keeping in mind my research questions (Braun and Clarke, no date):

RQ1: What impact does social media literacy have on high school children?

RQ2: Does social media literacy empower high school children with new literacy skills for reading, writing, and interacting in the networked digital setting?

After that, I went through the open-ended survey responses in the spreadsheet and prepared a summary under each question. Then, I went through the charts, memes, and video lessons. I tried to see what stood out in them, what comparisons or contradictions they had, and what underpinning themes and patterns could be found across the data set. My major concern was how to present the analysis as I noticed a substantial difference in the learning, understanding, and perception of participants between *School A* and *School B*. However, my search in the data revealed that the major themes in both schools were similar, though there was significant variation between them.

Through a process of generating initial themes, and reviewing them, I generated six themes. The six themes, formed through a reflexive thematic analysis of multiple data sets, are analysed and discussed in this chapter and in the next two chapters. As I had noted previously, the reflexive analysis was also guided by the conceptual framework of social media literacy discussed in the previous chapter. These themes are:

1. Critical understanding of social media platforms
2. Understanding visibility and responding to issues of interpersonal privacy
3. Digital Storytelling: "a *process* and a *feeling*"; a means for learning and citizenship
4. Understanding news and responding to "fake news" on social media
5. Capabilities and skills for participation and citizenship
6. The core elements and the impact of participatory learning

The difference between *School A* and *School B* is an important element and I have tried to highlight it under each theme. Though the data show some gender-based differences in the practice, perception and reflection of social media, I have not included it as a major theme for two reasons. Firstly, such comparisons may not be appropriate since the workshop and interviews were not executed similarly. Secondly, that was not the objective of this study. However, I feel gender differences in social media practices and for developing social media literacy are important aspects that may require a separate study.

Though I have tried to be objective, I admit the subjectivity involved in my reflections and interpretations, since I am a strong supporter of the need for providing social media education in schools. The chances of subjectivity can be higher since I conducted the workshop using teaching materials which I had developed based on the conceptual framework. Being aware of my subjectivity, I have included a range of material from the workshop activities in this analysis, with my reflections and interpretations. Since this material is the work of participants, I argue that they represent their collective reflections, understanding, and judgements. Therefore, they form a valid resource for analysis. This material is multimodal – images, text, memes, and videos. Some of this material – memes, and videos – is Digital Storytelling by participants. I have tried to interpret them reflexively based on the capabilities which the workshop tried to develop in participants and by applying the core principles of traditional media literacy – representation, language, audience, and production. I have also tried to represent what took place during the workshop by way of narrating the key topics, activities, and my observations. I have selected a wide range of responses from the interviews and included them in the analysis.

The capacity to learn, assimilate, and participate in the classroom may vary from student to student. In group activities, not all members contribute and learn equally. Various factors such as participants' demography, economic and social backgrounds, and social media practices may contribute to their learning, understanding, and judgment. Higher learning and understanding were observed in those who were more active during the sessions and workshop activities.

7.1.1 Participants' access to devices and Internet

School A

In the pre-workshop survey, 84% of participants mentioned that they personally have a smart phone; 37% indicated they personally have a tablet; and 25% mentioned they personally have a laptop/desktop computer. However, except 1, all other participants mentioned that they access the Internet using mobile phones. Among them 28% access the Internet using a mobile phone "daily or almost daily", 40% 'several times each day' and 6% 'almost all the time. The use of television to go online was also quite high, 68%. Similarly, 53% use game console to access the Internet. But, participants' use of a desktop computer or a laptop to access the Internet was minimal. Majority of them never or hardly ever used a desktop computer, a laptop, or a tablet to access the Internet.

School B

Only, 64% of participants in *School B* mentioned that they personally have a smart phone; 24% indicated they personally have a tablet; and 20% mentioned they personally have a laptop/desktop computer. However, except 2, all other participants mentioned that they access the Internet using mobile phones. Among them 31%

access the Internet using a mobile phone 'daily or almost daily', 44% 'several times each day' and 6% 'almost all the time. The use of television to go online was also quite high, 75%. Similarly, 58% use game console to access the Internet. But, participants' use of a desktop computer or a laptop to access the Internet was minimal. Majority of them never or hardly ever used a desktop computer, a laptop, or a tablet to access the Internet.

7.1.2 Participants' use of social media platforms

School A

90% participants used WhatsApp and 93% used YouTube "daily" or "several times a day". While 46% participants used WhatsApp "several times a day" 12% participants indicated using WhatsApp "almost all the time". Similarly, 43% respondents noted that they used YouTube "several times a day" and 28% "almost all the time". Among other social media platforms, 59% actively used Instagram, 56% actively used Snapchat, and 43% actively used TikTok, and 40% actively used Pinterest. Most of them "never" or "hardly ever" used Facebook, Twitter, Hike, ShareChat, and Reddit.

School B

82% participants used WhatsApp and 79% used YouTube "daily" or "several times a day". While 37% participants used WhatsApp "several times a day" 34% participants indicated using WhatsApp "almost all the time". Similarly, 28% participants mentioned that they used YouTube "several times a day" and 31% "almost all the time". Among other social media platforms, 65% used Instagram, 44% used Snapchat and 28% actively used TikTok. Most of them "never" or "hardly ever" used Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Hike, ShareChat, and Reddit.

Overall, the pre-workshop survey showed that most participants in *School A* and majority of the participants in *School B* had a smart phone, which they used as their primary means to go online. Across the social media platforms, YouTube and WhatsApp were the most popular platforms for the participants; most of them accessed these two platforms daily or several times a day. Instagram and Snapchat were also the preferred social media platforms with nearly half of the participants using these two platforms daily or several times a day.

7.2 Critical understanding of social media platforms

This section focuses on participants' perception and understanding of what social media are, how platforms work, how user data is collected, stored, and used for targeting users with personalised recommendations and ads.

The main topics covered in the first session of the workshop were: defining social media; understanding algorithm, user data, and economic implications; and how platform owners use the users as they use the platforms (Buckingham, 2019). This session tried to introduce the participants to critical analysis of social media platforms.

The session in *School A* was conducted in a spacious school computer lab from 11 am to 12.40 pm. The computer teacher was present in the computer lab during the session. She rendered technical assistance for showing the video lesson and for dividing the students for group activity and for distributing colour pens and papers.

> Overall, the students were very participative. They actively responded to the questions and activities. They had had a debate recently in the school on the advantages and disadvantages of social media. However, they found difficulty in defining social media. When I asked for a definition, only

> a few raised hands to answer. Their answers were related to social media use and connectivity. The class could not answer, for instance, what YouTube was selling. (Researcher field note, session 1, *School A*)

The session in *School B* was conducted in the school auditorium from 10.20 am to 11.40 am. The venue was too large for the workshop as the students tended to move around. A teacher was present in the auditorium during the workshop. The participants in *School A* were more participative and involved in the session compared to participants in *School B*.

7.2.1 Reflecting about the positives and negatives of using social media

At the beginning of the workshop, the participants were paired up and involved in a 10-minute warm-up activity to reflect the positives and negatives of using social media. They then wrote down the positives and negatives of social media on a sheet of paper that was provided.

School A (girls' school)

Among the list of negatives of using social media, cyberbullying/cybercrime, and addiction/distraction were mentioned across 10 pairs. Eight pairs mentioned stalking, and privacy issues. Seven pairs wrote fake news or rumours. Five pairs wrote the use of fake profiles or fake identities. Terms such as hack, troll, judging were mentioned 4 times across pairs. Three pairs mentioned that social media can affect interpersonal/family relationship. Though three pairs mentioned body shaming, there was no mention of gender abuse or misogyny.

Many of them labelled what they thought of as negative issues and also interpreted the risks in terms of how they can affect personal life or social life. For example, as Figure 14 (below) shows, the pair used the label hack and explained what harm it can do: “People can hack into your phone and steal your personal information.” Similarly, they mentioned how strangers can create fake IDs and pretend to be someone else. Figure 14 presents an example of a warm-up activity sheet that was done by a pair about the negatives of using social media.

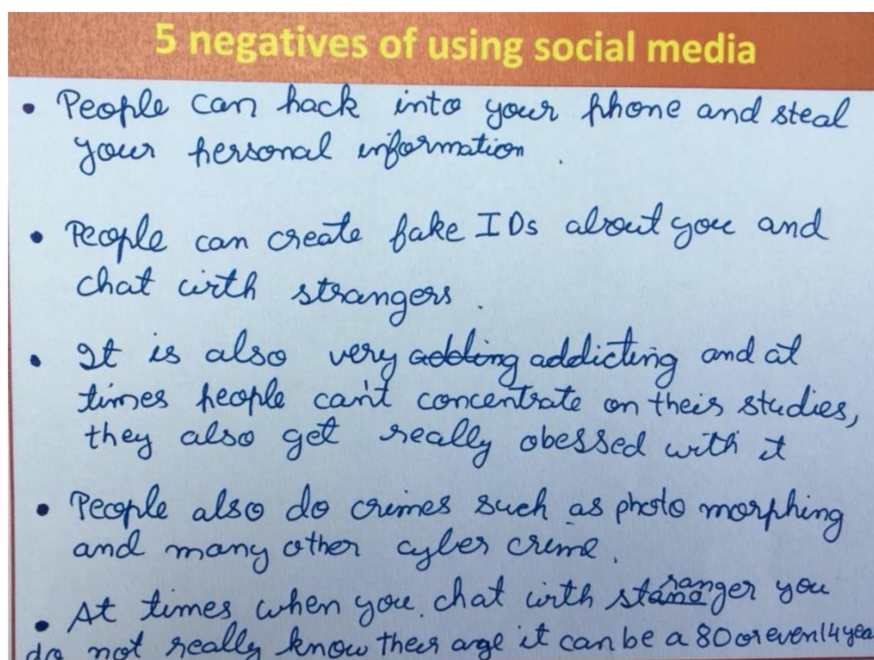


Figure 14: Warm up activity by a pair, first session, School A

Some expressions showed their judgement of the issues they were presenting.

> “More personal information is let out which helps kidnappers and hackers.”
>
> “People post fake news and it may disturb the social harmony of the society.”
>
> “People feel depressed when the post they post get bad comments or people criticizes them.”

Some of their responses were issues affecting their age group – hacking, cyberbullying, and addiction.

> "Young people get involved in criminal activity."
>
> "Many young people are cyberbullied."
>
> "Teenagers get addicted and this affect their studies."
>
> "Excessive use can affect our studies and make us lazy."

Prior to the workshop, the participants had attended a debate in their school on the advantages and disadvantages of social media. The awareness gained from the debate might have reflected in their answers.

In response to the positive aspects of using social media, most of them mentioned connecting with others, getting information, learning, and entertainment. Fourteen pairs mentioned the use of social media for information. Eleven pairs wrote the word communication. Nine pairs mentioned social media are useful for learning. While seven pairs wrote that social media are useful for connecting with people, six pairs mentioned making friends as positive use. Notably, only four pairs mentioned entertainment. While six pairs wrote social media are useful for creativity and self-expression, three pairs mentioned business as a positive use.

Figure 15 presents an example of a warm-up activity sheet that was done by a pair about the positives of using social media.

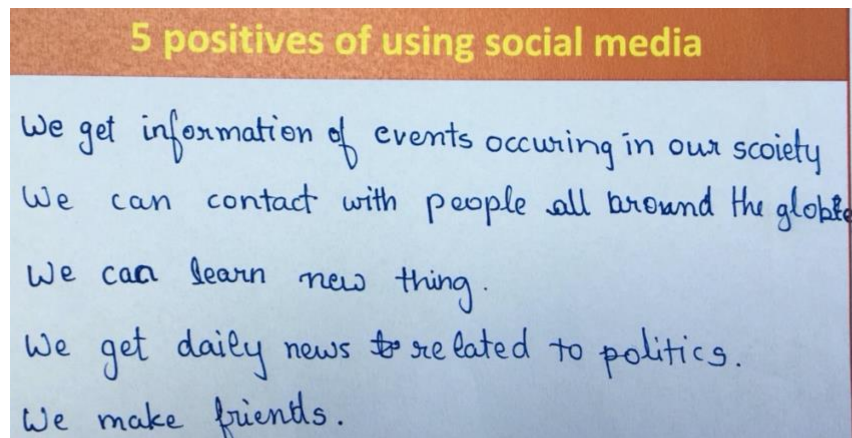


Figure 15: Warm up activity by a pair, first session, School A

School B (boys' school)

For the negative uses of social media, the term hack was mentioned by eleven pairs. Ten pairs stated fake news and cyberbullying/online bullying. Notably, nine pairs wrote pornography or watching porn videos; in *School A* (girls' school) only one pair had written pornography. Six pairs wrote addiction or wasting time. Three of them also mentioned eye-related problems due to excessive use of social media. The term stalk was mentioned only by one pair; in *School A,* eight pairs had mentioned it.

The participants were asked to write 5 positives and 5 negatives of using social media. Six pairs wrote only 3 or 4 in both categories. Among them, three pairs did not write anything for the negatives.

Figure 16 presents an example of a warm-up activity sheet that was done by a pair about negatives of using social media.

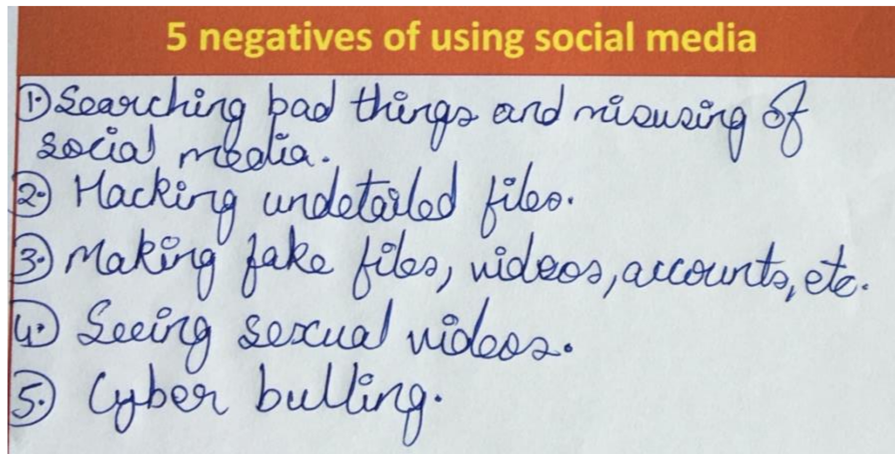

5 negatives of using social media
1. Searching bad things and misusing of social media.
2. Hacking undetailed files.
3. Making fake files, videos, accounts, etc.
4. Seeing sexual videos.
5. Cyber bulling.

Figure 16: Warm up activity by a pair, first session, School B

On the positives of using social media, all pairs mentioned information. Eleven pairs mentioned social media are useful for learning or doing projects. While six of them cited social media as useful for making new friends, five of them wrote their use for communication. Surprisingly, only four pairs wrote entertainment as a positive use of social media. While just one pair wrote social media are useful to earn money, none of them used terms such as creativity or self-expression. Figure 17 presents an example of a warmup activity sheet that was done by a pair about positives of using social media in *School B.*

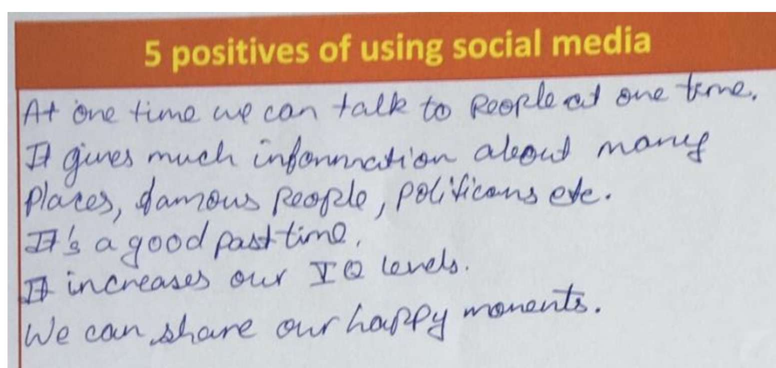

5 positives of using social media
At one time we can talk to people at one time.
It gives much information about many places, famous people, politicans etc.
It's a good past time.
It increases our IQ levels.
We can share our happy moments.

Figure 17: Warm up activity by a pair, first session, School B

Girl-participants showed more awareness and concern about issues related to "interpersonal privacy" and visibility

The warm-up activity, discussed above, gave some insights into how participants perceived positives and negatives of using social media. There appears to be a considerable difference in the way boys and girls, who took part in the study, perceived the negative use of social media. The perception of negative uses for both groups seems to be guided by risk-related issues, moral judgement, and personal habits. Many in both groups considered fake news and cyberbullying as serious problems on social media. Many of them also viewed social media addiction as a problem. Girl participants seemed to have a higher perception of risk-related issues compared to boys. They showed more awareness and concern about issues related to "interpersonal privacy" and visibility. Boys were less critical in explaining risk and harm compared to girls. Many boys just wrote terms such as "online bullying" "fake news" and "hackers" and did not describe the risks or harm associated with these. While many boys mentioned pornography in the negative use category, only one girl participant mentioned the term.

Follow up discussion with participants probing why they did not mention terms like gender abuse and misogyny and how they perceived these issues would have been useful. Such talk would have helped in interpreting how boys and girls view these gendered issues.

This activity showed gender differences in perceiving the risks on social media and demonstrated the importance of discussing with students how gendered identities and experiences affect one's perception and attitudes. As part of this activity, discussions with the participants, especially with boys, were needed to help them self-

reflect on what they missed out on the risks due to their gendered identities and how their everyday practices reproduce, resist or challenge gender discriminations.

Importance of discussing with children terminologies related to online crimes, data misuse, surveillance and their implications

What stood out from the activity was that none of the participants from both schools mentioned issues such as data collection, profiling, commercial use of data, surveillance, discrimination, and corporate control. The pilot study also had revealed that respondents had limited awareness of such issues. These topics were discussed and analysed during the workshop to some extent.

Secondly, terminologies such as terrorism, gender abuse, racism, hate speech, and harassment were not mentioned across any groups. Towards the end of the warm-up activity, I made a slide show that included these issues. But I did not have a detailed discussion on these topics since they were not part of the main topics of the session. After the workshop, as I was analysing the data, I felt the importance of creating awareness among children of the terminologies related to online crimes. In a study conducted by Holly (2018) suggests, children should be made aware of the legal and criminal implications and consequences of social media-related crimes. They should also be knowledgeable of the laws that govern their rights and responsibilities in this area.

A full-fledged session on the positives and negatives of social media will be useful to go through the main themes emerging from their prior knowledge and reflections regarding the advantages and disadvantages of social media. Discussion can also include how positives and negatives can be interrelated and can have unwanted

consequences. For example, the connectivity, which is seen as a positive result of social media, has also resulted in problems in families and society (Couldry, 2020).

7.2.2 Knowledge and understanding of why social media platforms exist and how they work

After the warm-up activity, discussed above, a video lesson was showed to them explaining what social media are and the dynamics of users, platforms, algorithm, and user data in the functioning of social media.

In my field note I had noted that, after watching the video lesson, participants of *School B* clapped in appreciation of the video. However, they were not very clear of the term algorithm:

> After the video lesson, I further explained to them the meaning of algorithm. (Researcher field note, session 1, *School B*)

After the video lesson, six participants were invited to volunteer for a short role-play to further demonstrate the dynamics of platforms and how user data is collected and used. Volunteer A was told to act as *user 1*, volunteer B represented a platform *Instagram*, volunteer C represented *algorithm*, volunteer D represented *database*, volunteer E acted as an *advertiser* and volunteer F acted as *user 2*. Each of them held a placard representing the assigned role.

User 1 posted (passed on) an image of a cute dog on *Instagram*. The post then goes (given) to the *database.* The *algorithm* takes the post from the *database* and forwards it to *user 2* and *user 2* “likes” the dog post. Meanwhile, *algorithm* passes the

information about *user 1* and *user 2* to the advertiser who sells dog food. *User 1* and *User 2* are then shown the dog food post.

> The role-play seemed to have brought more clarity about the term. (Researcher field note, session 1, *School B*)

Group Activity

For the main activity, participants were divided into five groups. Each group was given an A1 chart paper and colour pens. They were given the following three topics to choose from for the activity.

1. Explain on a paper how YouTube works and how YouTube provides you with unique/personalised videos?
2. Create a map (or a social media tree) of how an image or video you post gets shared on social media?
3. Choose a social media platform. Create a map (or a social media tree) of important elements of that platform? How does the platform work?

School A

Group 1

This group (Figure 18) illustrated through a diagram the functions of users, platform (YouTube), database, and algorithm in a cyclic format. In this cycle, users are the starting point. User activity consists of watching, liking, commenting, and subscribing. These user activities help the platforms. They explain the database as the place where users' interests are stored. Then the algorithm recommends videos to the users based on their interests. The cycle continues, "the same process is repeated by many other

users". The diagram does not mention the aspect of users as creators of content and the role of advertisers and economic dimensions. However, they seem to have implied the economic dimension by mentioning, "we, the users, watch the videos on YouTube and like, comment, share and subscribe which helps the platform in many ways". The diagram demonstrates their understanding and reflections of some important aspects of platforms discussed in the video lesson and the role play. The diagram partly captures the application of two core concepts of media literacy – *audience* and *production* – to the social media environment. The diagram shows a creative visual representation of YouTube.

Figure 18: Main activity, group 1, session 1, School A

Group 2

This group (Figure 19) showed the working of YouTube in a linear format, but towards the end, they mentioned the cyclic dimension as "advertisers use the user data to sell

their products back to the users". What stands out in this diagram is that they point out how user data is used for the economic benefit of YouTube. The user data is used both for showing related content as well as for selling products by advertisers. They have also highlighted corporate control: "stores user data and sells it to the advertisers…" They did not include the aspects of user activities such as commenting, liking, and sharing which the earlier group had mentioned. Overall, the diagram demonstrates a critical understanding of platforms. This diagram also captures the application of two core concepts of media literacy – *audience* and *production* – to the social media environment.

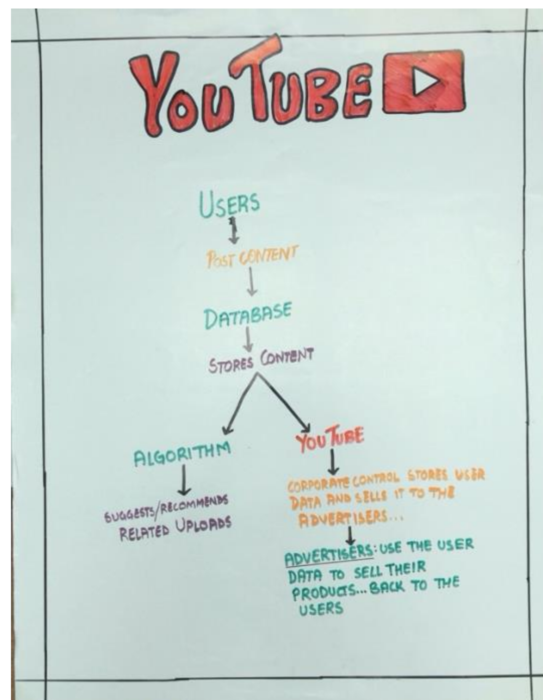


Figure 19: Main activity, group 2, session 1, School A

Group 3

This group (Figure 20) chose two platforms—YouTube and Google—and a realistic example to explain the algorithm, user data, and ads. The chart shows, in a story format, how user data is collected and used and its economic implications. The story

has a female character, Riya, who represents them. Riya is interested in craft videos which she watches on YouTube. After watching a craft video, she visits Google to search for material for her project. The example shows their habit of using YouTube and Google for learning and for material for doing school projects. The pilot study, pre-workshop survey and interviews had revealed that many respondents use YouTube and Google for learning and doing their school projects.

On Google, Riya finds attractive ads with a 50% offer from Amazon.com. The ads were related to crafts such as scissors, paper, and glue. The chart shows their critical reflection in applying and illustrating the aspects of algorithm, user data, and targeted advertising. They have also applied imagination to illustrate the topic based on their real-life media experiences. The chart has given attention to details. On the YouTube page, they include subscribers, video title (5-minute crafts), views, likes, search bar, and related videos. Similarly, on the Google page, they add a search bar, website names – www.brainly.com, a website for student projects, and www.amazon.com showing ads.

The chart reveals their use of social media especially for learning and for enhancing their creativity. But they understand that, as users of social media, they are also used by social media. When they use social media, they also give out data to the companies to make a profit. The companies target them with personalised products based on their interests. Thus, the implications of *audience* and *production* in the online environment are captured in this chart.

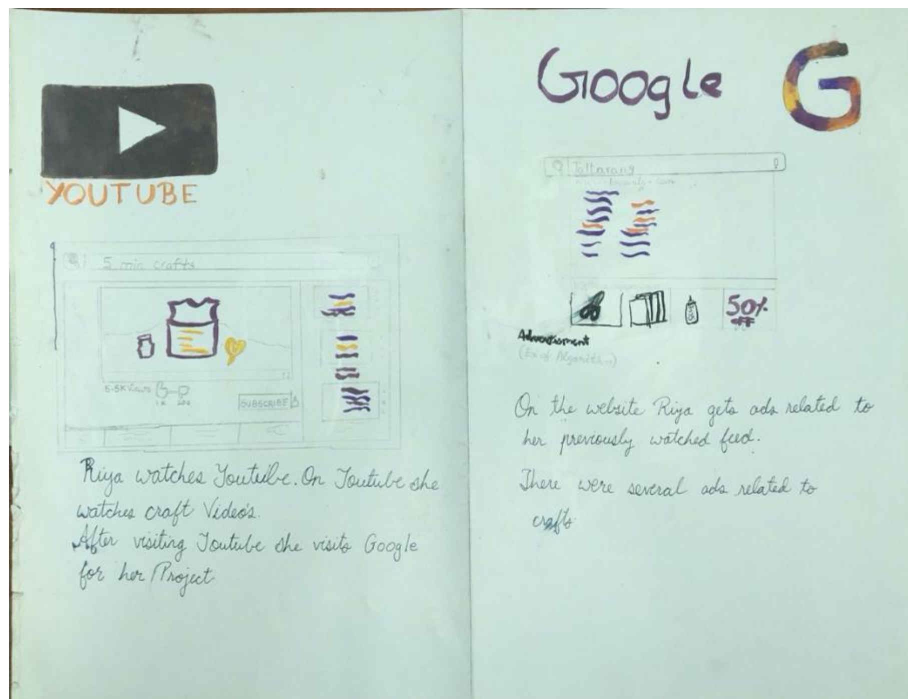


Figure 20: Main activity, group 3, session 1, School A

The charts prepared by groups 3 and 4 are shown in Appendix H. Their charts also demonstrate the functioning of algorithm by YouTube and how content and ads are shown to users based on their activities on the platform.

School B

During the activity, some participants in *School B* were playful and distracted. Some of them moved around the auditorium and tried to disturb other group members. I found it difficult to manage them.

Group 1

This group (Figure 21) divided the chart into two sections. In the main section, they presented the working of the platform in a linear format, through a diagram. In the other section, they explained how user data is collected, stored, and shared with the

advertisers. They mentioned the *first user* and *second user*, the terms that were used to explain the dynamics of social media during the role play. While they have familiarised themselves with the terminologies such as user data, database, algorithm, and advertiser, they seem to be unclear about the role of the algorithm. In the commentary they cited, “the people at the database share our information to the advertising company.” Overall, they showed a critical understanding that YouTube collects information based on search history to target users with advertising. They were also aware that the company and advertisers get benefits. A smiling face and a heart symbol which they drew in the chart give a sense of their happy acceptance of YouTube.

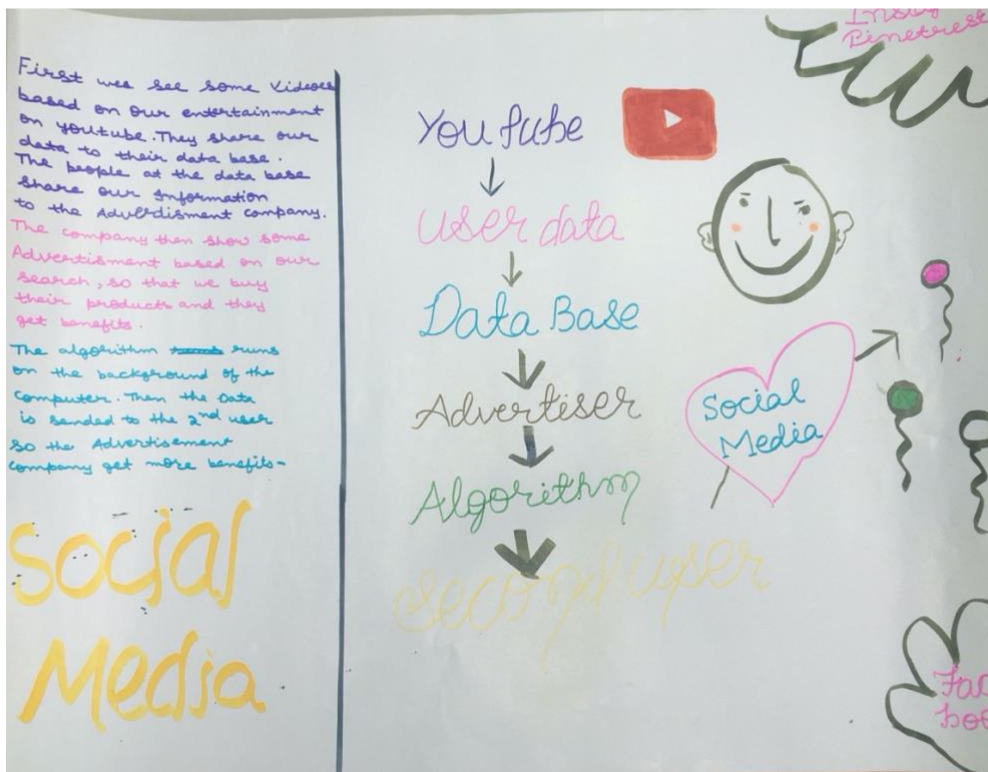


Figure 21: Main activity, group 1, session 1, School B

Group 2

This group (Figure 22) chose the task of preparing a social media tree demonstrating the main elements of social media. Their chart of a social media tree

was very creative. They presented the elements of social media in a cyclic format – algorithm, database, company, user, and advertiser. They did not explain what each element stood for. They included Google on the list of social media. They conveyed, through a caption, the two sides of social media and asked users to take personal responsibility with the remark, “Social media is useful and harmful… it depends on your use.” The chart is an artistic visual representation of the elements of social media.

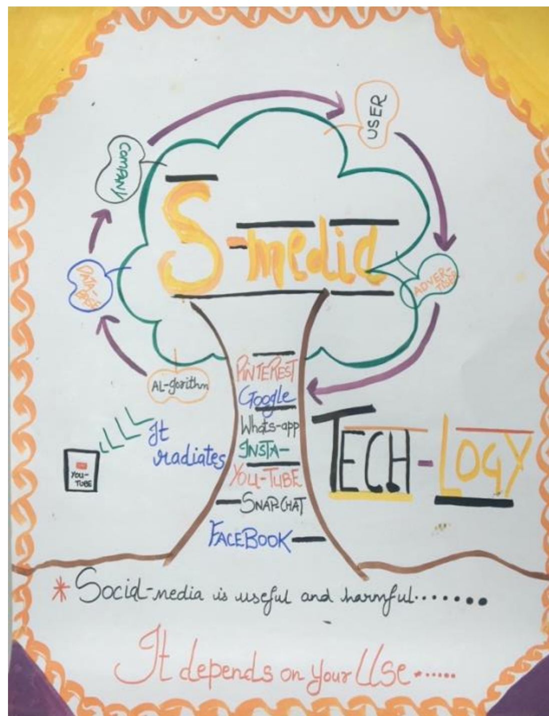


Figure 22: Main activity, group 2, session 1, School B

Group 3

This group (Figure 23) prepared a diagram of social media with six blocks – user, database, YouTube, video, advertiser, and social media. Algorithm was not mentioned in the diagram which lacked clarity.

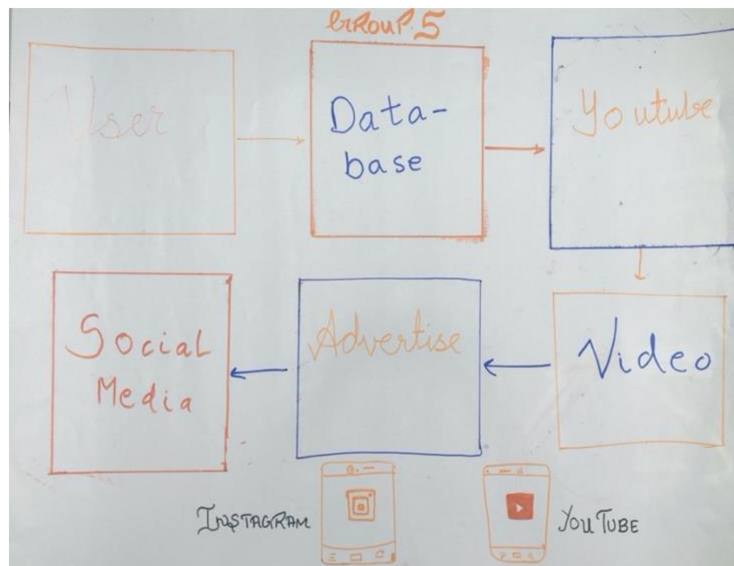


Figure 23: Main activity, group 3, session 1, School B

The charts prepared by other two groups are given in Appendix I. These groups did not apply what was discussed in the video lesson and the role play in their charts. The terms user data, algorithm, advertiser, were not mentioned in their charts.

In *School A,* all five groups came up with charts which demonstrate a fair understanding of how platforms work and the functioning of users, database, algorithm, and advertisers on a platform. The charts each group prepared showed their fundamental grasp of how platforms collect user data and why it is stored in a database and how the algorithm plays a role in showing personalised content.

In *School B*, three groups showed evidence of a fair grasp of the working of social media platforms in their charts. Some students were too playful and didn’t focus on the activities.

The pre-workshop survey responses showed that the majority of the participants were not aware of what is user data and how and why platforms collect user data. This was also noted during the workshop. Notably, this activity seemed to have facilitated

participants' reflection and deepening of the knowledge they gained from the video lesson and the role-play to a great extent.

Understanding how and why platforms collect user data

During the interview, most participants described how the content and the ads that they see on a platform are personalised based on their interests and search history. Some of them, especially from *School A*, explained the working of platforms by using examples from their social media practices. For example, Alisha described how she can be targeted with ads based on her online shopping habits.

> [Alisha, F] They can be different sometimes; it usually depends on what you are searching [for]. So now, if I have gone to like Flipkart or something and if I have searched about some shoes or something like that, or if I've gone to some grocery like big bazaar or something online, so they will show me ads related to that. So they will show me like a *Puma* ad or something like that.

Navya, who was an active participant in the workshop, described how YouTube targets her with personalised suggestions and ads based on the kind of videos she watched.

> [Navya, F] Yeah, algorithm is again, something like you see something. And then you continue seeing in that category, like simple example, on YouTube, you watch funny videos, I watch funny videos on YouTube. I got many suggestions like that. Then I was like, I watched life hacks for a few days. I got many suggestions like it, the company sees what kind of, the company uses your user data and your search data and everything and it uses; it kind of tells the YouTuber or the advertiser that you're using this data that this person is using this data, I can sell this data to that person. So, and then the advertiser also agrees that it's my profit Why would I disagree? So, then the YouTuber or whatever that person sells

kind of not exactly selling, but its kind of goes and then it comes back to us only. So, it's like a cycle. (IN/A20)

Roshan from *School B* explained how user data is collected by platforms and then shared with advertisers and how advertisers then target users with their products. He mentioned an example that I had used for the role-play activity to explain how users are targeted with personalised content and ads.

> [Roshan, M] I get some ad about based on my last visit. If I visited about dogs, then they get ads about dog food. Similarly, if my friends visited some sites, then they get ad based on their search. Platforms we use share our data to advertising companies. And advertising companies use these data to show us ads. These happen through algorithm. It is after the workshop I learned these. (IN/B21)

During the interview, all, except one from *School B*, mentioned that platforms collect user data for economic benefit. Most of them also showed awareness that platforms keep deleted data. Participants from *School A* showed more awareness of user data, algorithm, and recommendations. Some more examples of what participants said, regarding how platforms use user data for commercial gain, are given below:

> [Adhirsha, F] User data is us. We see and they recommend us then they sell their products; it's like they are just using us. (IN/A13)

> [Sneha, F] So social media is a platform where you can express yourself. Then you can share things that you want to share what you're comfortable with. If you don't want to share it, do not share it. And then if you delete something, it's not deleted forever. It's still there. That's what I learned from this workshop. I thought it was completely deleted. It's there. Then they can use it, they can give you suggestions for what products you like, what videos you watch on social media they know. Such as videos similar to that. And usually on Instagram or some posts like I watch celebrities

> on Instagram so then they gave me on my search tab they give me celebrities options. So like, on based on accounts you have interacted with right over there and then given to them they know that what accounts I watch or see or visit. (IN/A24)

> [Nirav, M] They send us ads. As you told us they use algorithm to take our information and send it to companies. That companies give us ads. What we use they see and make a report and send it to advertising companies. They give that money to YouTube and they get profit when we see ads. I see ads about the games that I play. I see many videos of gaming and technology; they send ads about buying ads about game CD. YouTube sends reports to advertisers, that these boys are watching these, and they send ads. (IN/B16)

Fascinated by algorithm and interested in learning how platform works

Participants, in general, demonstrated more interest in learning how social media platforms work compared to other topics in the workshop. Many of them seemed to have developed a basic understanding of content flow on platforms, the dynamics of algorithm and user data in showing recommendations, and how social media companies collect and sell user data to advertisers for making money. Their grasp of platform-related knowledge was quite high compared to their grasp of concepts of *visibility* and *representation*.

Social media are part of children's lives. Though they are technically savvy and spend time exploring social media, the participants were not familiar with how platforms work. They were fascinated to learn how platforms work, how they show recommendations, and how they make money.

During the pre-survey, some participants asked me for the meaning of the term algorithm. When I asked if anybody knew the meaning of the term, they said they were

not aware of the term. An important element in the video lesson, the role play, and the chart making for the first session, was how social media companies have embedded algorithms in the backend of a platform for showing content to users based on their interests. Their curiosity to learn the meaning of the term, algorithm, and how the platforms work was evident during the workshop.

The data from group work, post-survey responses, and the interviews reveal that the term algorithm had caught their attention. All interviewees in *School A* mentioned the term algorithm during the interview. They demonstrated a fair understanding that algorithm does the work of showing personalised recommendations based on user data. Most participants, during the interview, mentioned that they learned the term algorithm from the workshop. Four interviewees in *School B* mentioned the term algorithm and explained its role in showing recommendations.

> [Rebecca, F] Workshop was very nice, I learned something about algorithm and then on what happens on internet... and how the data users and everything I understood from that. (IN/A21)

> [Alisha, F] It's called algorithms. Which is all interlinked it gives information about one thing and passes on to the other. (IN/A05)

> [Sneha, F] I used to remember algorithm. This is a different word. Yeah. I never knew the meaning of it. I learnt something new. (IN/A24)

> [Kevin, M] I knew something before, but the workshop helped. Especially about Algorithm. How my personal info make money for them. (IN/B15)

Sneha mentioned the steps involved in data collection and recommendations which she seemed to have recollected from the role-play and the chart making activity.

> [Sneha, F] Yeah, there are steps I remember., there was one user and then their data goes to something and then it goes to algorithm; then it passes to the platform itself. And it suggests a friend or two because she's following you. So it suggests to them. (IN/A24)

She also knew the reason why the recommendations and ads shown to her and her friend would be different.

> [Sneha, F] Because her interest and my interests are different. That's why because I interact with different accounts than she uses, then they gave according to what you like, a lot of references. (IN/A24)

Some interviewees explained the term algorithm in different ways based on its function – tracking user activities, user interests or user purchases to give recommendations:

> [Amoli, F] It's like, if you post something, for example, on Instagram, and if someone likes any message related to that, then there's this algorithm which will recommend your image to that person and many others who have liked that picture. So that's what companies do. And that's how they work on social media. They make a lot of money on it. (IN/A15)

> [Tanvi, F] Because they see what we're actually interested in and then they give us recommendations based on what we see, so it's like algorithm. (IN/A27)

> [Taara, F] Algorithm, when we bought something continuously that's they store it in their information and then they show us what we what like, that is algorithm. (IN/A26)

Though many participants seemed to have grasped a basic knowledge of the function of the algorithm in relation to social media, they should be given more sessions to discuss and reflect the deeper implications of the algorithmic systems in society. As Gillespie (2016) points out, algorithm is a complex term. For the computer engineers

who design and embed algorithms in an application, the term signifies a step-by-step instruction "for organising and acting on a body of data to quickly achieve a desired outcome" (p19) based on a predefined model. In this sense algorithms are codes for operationalisation of tasks through measuring, mixing, and matching on a body of data. Today, the developers of algorithms use machine-learning to "train" algorithms on specific set of data to recognise correlations within it. For instance, algorithms can be "trained" through machine-learning to analyse user interaction on a social media platform and predict their engagement metrics such as who would engage with a particular type of post or ad. And then based on the predictions, algorithms calibrate and tailor user's news feed or homepage and show them posts and ads that they are likely to engage with. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, generate many machine-learning models to test their performance in achieving the goal. Such fine-grained models of algorithms are then deployed within an application to make automated decisions (Hao, 2021).

Nevertheless, Gillespie (2016) argues that algorithm should be understood in the broader sociotechnical context of "algorithmic systems – which include not just algorithms themselves, but also the computational networks in which they function, the people who design and operate them, the data and users on which they act, and the institutions that provide these services" (p25). When analysing algorithms, it is important to explore the ways platforms function algorithmically for achieving platform owners' goals and the resultant social impacts such as "algorithmic identity" (Cheny-Lippold, 2011), algorithmic representation (Noble, 2018), and algorithmically amplified disinformation and outrageous content, as discussed in Chapter 2. Discussions on algorithmic system should include how the platforms algorithmically score, sort, and classify users and how such practices reinforce the inequalities and discriminations in

the society. Reflecting on the workshop, as I analyse the data, I feel, I should have planned an additional session for algorithmic systems, data misuse and surveillance.

Furthermore, analysis and critical reflection of algorithms and how content travel on platforms must include their interconnection to the cultural, social and political context. Discussions and activities aimed at analysing the impact of discriminatory posts related to gender, caste or religion on platforms, and what drives various groups to share and engage with them, and how algorithms amplify their visibility and engagement and how they affect various groups are suggested. However, critical reflection and tackling of the issues of caste, gender and religious bias and discrimination is crucial, and learning sessions towards these should precede algorithmic bias sessions. It remains to be seen how young people respond to such learning material and what would be its impact on them. It is also uncertain whether schools welcome this kind of topic in their classrooms.

7.2.3 Conclusion

The findings from the pre-workshop survey undertaken by participants who took part in the social media literacy workshop show that their prior knowledge of social media platforms was mostly based on their social media practices – mainly for connecting, communicating, learning and entertainment. Their prior knowledge of how platforms work, why they exist, the economic implications, and the use and misuse of user data was very limited. The findings from the pilot study, discussed in Chapter 5, also show a similar result. In this context, the first session of the workshop, aimed at improving participants knowledge and understanding of platforms, show positive impact. What stands out is that the workshop seems to have helped many participants to gain a basic understanding of how platforms work, how user data is collected, stored, and

used for targeting users with personalised content and ads. The awareness of how user interactions are controlled and used by platform owners for commercial interest, partly reflects their understanding of the power dynamics involved in social media. Several of them were able to associate the knowledge they gained to their own social media experiences. Many seem to appreciate the new *platform knowledge* they gained. Many of them understood and were fascinated by the functions of algorithm and database, which are not externally visible but work in the backend, for showing personalised recommendations and ads.

The video lesson, the role play, and the chart making activity seem to have helped many participants to familiarise themselves with important terminologies such as users, user data, database, algorithm, platform, and advertiser. A critical understanding of these terms is an important aspect for social media literacy. Understanding how content travels on platforms and how users are targeted with personalised recommendations and ads are helpful for informed use of social media. Personalisation on the platform is connected to *representation*. To show unique content to users, a platform's algorithm decides what to show and what not to show to individuals. The algorithm selects, sorts and places content and ads on the platform which are guided by users' unique data.

The chart-making group activity, post-workshop survey, and the interviews moderately reveal the reflection of the knowledge they gained during the workshop about user data and how platforms make money.

Since the workshop dedicated only one session for *platform knowledge*, topics related to understanding deeper issues of tracking, surveillance, algorithmic culture, digital capitalism, and data harvesting were not included. Social media companies,

corporations, and governments, more and more, exert power and control through seamless tracking and monitoring for economic or political gain. Similarly, reflecting how governments take advantage of platforms both for governance and for persuasion, control, and surveillance (Couldry, 2020) is important in digital era. Participants of the workshop did not show concern or worry about commodification of their interactions and collection of personal data. A two-hour session on platform knowledge is not sufficient to discuss the impact of a society that is “imagined” by patterns and models developed through algorithmic segregation, judgement and predictions. What is at stake here is that, very often, such modelling and patterns are developed for the interest of those who exercise power and control (Couldry, 2020). Furthermore, pointing out a paradox, in the shift in media’s functions, which traditionally tried to make sense of the complex world to the audience, Couldry says:

> But today the newly unleashed imaginative power of algorithmic processes, working deep within businesses, is increasing the social world’s opacity, at least to the human beings on the receiving end of algorithmic decision-making (2020, p79).

The challenge, however, is in how society responds to this growing shift in media culture. Couldry suggests, “Perhaps we need a new form of imaginative media – whether film, novel, or computer game – to help us imagine better the consequences of this emerging data-driven world” (p79). In this context, I suggest, social media literacy in schools can play a vital role in uncovering the complex patterns of “algorithmic processes” so that children can grow up making meaning of what is happening. This may further help them to critically reflect and respond to the algorithmic data culture. These are crucial issues that everyone, including children, should be aware of. It is only when they are aware of the shift towards a datacentric

algorithmic culture for commercial gain and control that they may begin to ask critical questions. More sessions which include discussion, case studies, and activities related to these issues are suggested for children's deeper understanding and reflection. Such understanding is expected to help them move to higher judgement and ask critical questions related to platform, user data, surveillance, and algorithmic culture. I suggest that teaching *algorithmic bias*, just like news bias, should become part of media literacy in the contemporary media ecology. Children should be taught how to recognise, analyse and respond to algorithmic bias. When society depends more and more on machines to quantify human beings and their behaviours, to generalise and segregate patterns and models, then there can be serious consequences related to race, gender, religion, economy, politics, and culture.

7.3 Understanding visibility and responding to issues of interpersonal privacy

This section will focus on the second theme generated from the fieldwork data: participants' understanding of the consequences of uncertain visibility and their perception of responding to issues of interpersonal privacy on social media. It is based on the second session of the workshop – *managing visibility*.

In *School A*, the session was conducted from 11 am to 12.40 pm in the computer lab. In *School B*, the session was conducted from 2.50 pm to 3.40 pm in the auditorium.

The main topics discussed during this session were uncertain visibility, privacy, representation, self-representation, and spreading positivity. The participants were unaware of the term *representation*.

> I began the session by asking a few questions. When I asked whether media present reality, many said no. But, when asked what the right word would be, no one mentioned the word represent. (Researcher field note, session 2, *School A*)

> I began the session by asking a few questions. When I asked whether media present reality, 12 of them said yes. Some others' responses included half-truth and fake news. But, when I asked what the right word would be, no one mentioned the term *represent*. (Researcher field note, session 2, *School B*)

7.3.1 Reflecting on the uncertainty of who we make visible on social media

For the warm-up activity, participants were asked to discuss in pairs who they were making themselves visible to when they use social media? Each pair was given a sheet which had four columns for different categories – people, groups/organisation, companies, and any other. They then had to write down types of people, groups, organisations, or companies that might or could see their posts on social media.

School A

Under the category, *people*, all of them wrote friends, family, and relatives. Two pairs wrote the names of some people. Five sheets had the word strangers written either under the category *people* or *any other*. Three other sheets had the word stalkers. Except for two, all other pairs mentioned the names of platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and some Google either under the category *groups/organisation* or *companies*. Four pairs mentioned advertisers in their sheets. On three sheets the word 'government' was written. Three pairs mentioned cybercrime department or detectives or police agencies. Five pairs wrote only family, friends, and names of some

social media platforms; they left the last two categories empty or wrote “no”. Figure 24 presents a sample of the warm-up activity sheet prepared by a pair in *School A.*

Who are we making ourselves visible to when we use social media?

In other words, can you categories the types of people, groups, organisations, or companies that r

posts on social media?

People	Groups/ Organisation	Companies	Any other
Family	Criminals	Google	No
Friends	Police agents	Facebook	
Stalkers	Detectives	Twitter	
Neighbours	Government	Instagram	
		Youtube	
		Pinterest	

Figure 24: Warmup activity, session 2, School A

School B

Under the category *people*, seven pairs mentioned friends, family, and neighbours; four pairs mentioned actors, cricketers, and football players. Under the category *groups/organisation* or *companies*, names of brands such as Nike, Adidas; names of mobile companies such as Redme, Mi, Oppo, and Vivo; and names of social media platforms such as Snapchat, and TikTok were mentioned by a few pairs. Three pairs wrote “no idea” under the categories. The responses of three pairs showed that they did not understand the question. Unlike participants of *School A,* nobody wrote the words strangers, stalkers, and government. One pair mentioned advertiser and another hacker and cybercrime. As the figure below shows, just one pair gave a comprehensive response as they wrote server holders, users of the network, owners of platforms, companies that are partners with the owners. Figure 25 presents a sample of the warm-up activity sheet prepared by a pair in *School A.*

Who are we making ourselves visible to when we use social media?

In other words, can you categories the types of people, groups, organisations, or companies that may/can see you posts on social media?

People	Groups/ Organisation	Companies	Any other
+To other people that use social media. + Parents etc.	+ groups of friends + organisations that have id or present on media.	+owners of the platforms + Even the Companies that are partners with the owners.	+ Server holders + Users of network.

Figure 25: Warm up activity, session 2, School B

Overall, this exercise was meant to introduce the participants to the topics of uncertain visibility and surveillance on social media. Many of them found it difficult to categorise the types of groups and companies that can or may access their posts. This activity required reflection and critical thinking of their own social media practices. They had to identify what should be written under a category since each category could have diverse points. Some answers suggest that participants did not understand the question well. There was diversity in the responses among the participants. There was also considerable diversity in the responses between participants of two schools. The responses of participants in *School A* showed more awareness of uncertain visibility compared to participants in *School B*. I concluded the exercise by presenting a slideshow of a list of items on all the categories.

7.3.2 Reflecting uncertain visibility, toxic online behaviours, and well being

After the warm-up activity participants were showed the video lesson which explained the consequences of uncertain visibility on social media, and how to understand representation. This was followed by the second activity – the participants were asked

to read individually three news articles and write comments on them. All three articles represented the social media experiences of young people in Indian contexts.

School A

For this activity, in *School A*, copies of three news articles were placed in three sections in the computer lab. Participants had to go to each section and read the news article individually and then make a comment on an A1 paper placed in the respective section.

Article 1

This article was titled “Viral RCB girl shares the traumatising experience of being an overnight sensation!” It was the story of Deepika Ghose, a girl who shared her experience of facing trolls and judgement online when her video of watching *The Indian Premier League* match went viral. The article was a suitable representation of the consequences of uncertain visibility and it also discussed how society has to respond to such menace.

This article received 10 comments from 10 participants (Figure 26). Participants’ comments show evidence of reflection and critical thinking. Comments such as “people should start accepting a human being as they are, as a real person not with all that fame and all”; “…Instead, being a girl I will support her and I truly believe in her thinking of BRIGHT SIDE” show their concern for the toxic culture in the society and their sense of citizenship. One of them wrote, “True if we all act responsibly on social [media] it can be a better place”. In general, they were upset with online trolls and bullying. The main sentiments in the comments were respect, kindness, acceptance, and support. They also used hashtags to their comments such as #liveAndLetLive; #support the RCB girl; #Stop Judging; #Inner Beauty; #Stop Body Shaming.

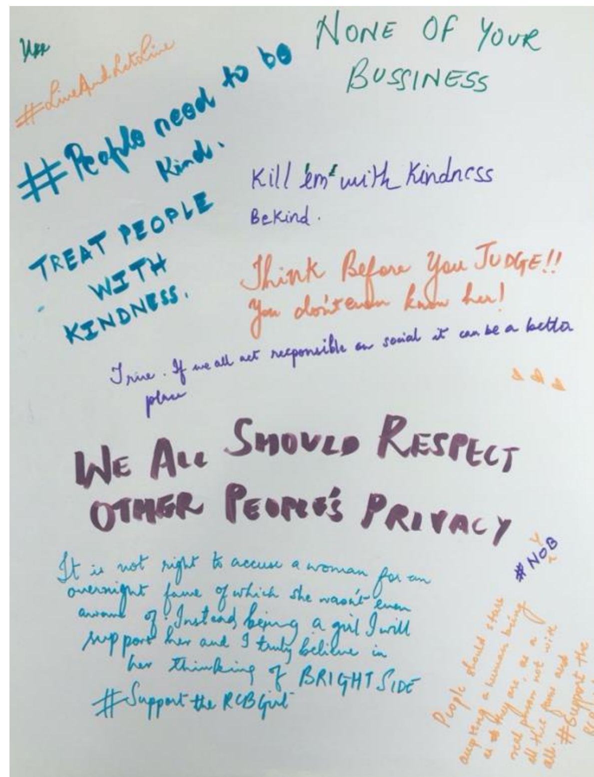


Figure 26: 2nd activity, session 2, School A

Article 2

The second article was an account of how fifty teenagers who experienced cyberbullying and trolls came together and led campaigns on Instagram for promoting body positivity, mental wellbeing, safe spaces online, and countering violent extremism.

Eleven participants commented on this article (Figure 27). Some comments were related to building self-confidence and resilience – “you are beautiful in your own way”, “inner beauty”, “believe in yourself”. Other comments showed their fight against social issues – “stop harassing”, “respect every1”, “stop judging”, “stop criticizing”.

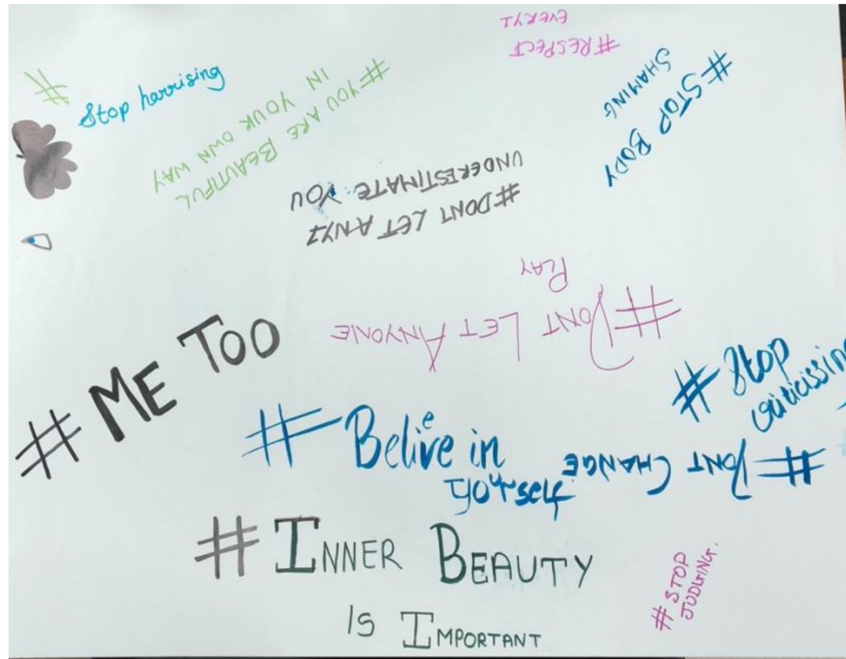


Figure 27: 2nd activity, session 2, School A

Article 3

The third article portrayed the addictive and risky selfie habits of youngsters for seeking attention on social media. The article narrates the story of a teenage boy who endangered his life by climbing on the roof of the train to take a selfie. There have been several incidents of accidents and deaths recorded in India resulting from addictive and risky selfie culture. The article also discussed the consequences of such culture and why youngsters resort to such risky behaviours.

This article had nine comments (Figure 28). Participants' comments indicate that they did not support taking selfies which can risk people's lives. They understood that this type of selfie culture to get attention from people on social media is wrong and should be stopped. They emphasised that the government should take measures to curb such behaviours. Comments included a call to action such as "this needs to be stopped", "government should take strict action"; "should be reported". The comments revealed that participants engaged with the article.

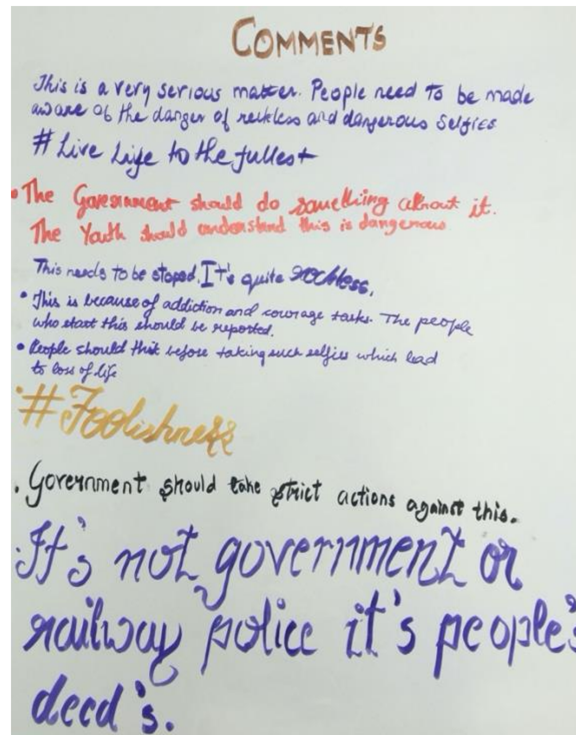


Figure 28: 2nd activity, session 2, School A

The above-discussed activity was aimed at making participants critically reflect the implications of uncertain visibility, and self-representation in the context of their daily experiences. Since the news articles they read were real stories affecting young people, the participants were more involved in reading them. Their comments showed that the articles provoked some of them. The activity called for self-reflection and social reflection as they made comments on social issues that were part of the lived experiences of many youngsters. The activity also gave them an experience of critically reflecting and commenting on stories of social issues that they encounter in their daily lives. Participants' remarks showed their self-confidence and resilience. In my field note, I had written that students actively participated in this activity, and "some of them asked me if they could keep the articles I had circulated for the activity". (Researcher field note, session 2, *School A*)

School B

In *School B*, we had only 50 minutes for the whole session. Due to lack of time, this activity was organised differently. News articles, presented above, were distributed to participants on their seats. They read the articles individually; most of them read at least two articles. The part, making comments on paper, was avoided to save time.

7.3.3 Reflecting to use social media positively and intelligently

After the second activity discussed above, participants were asked to make a poster, in four groups, showing how social media can be used positively, creatively, safely, and intelligently in the context of uncertain visibility and other related issues. They were told to make the poster for their school noticeboard. This activity was connected to the previous activity. Having read and reflected individually on some of the issues related to uncertain visibility, self-representation, and interpersonal privacy, they were invited to discuss, reflect and present their responses for positive and safe use of social media.

School A

Group 1

This group's poster (Figure 29) shows their reflection that "positivity is not so common" on social media. Trolling, body shame, and abuse are some of the negative experiences people go through on social media. But their response is not a passive indifference to what is happening on social media. Instead, they aspire for a better world by spreading positivity and an awareness of inner beauty and inner strength. They rephrased lines from a song, *Flames,* and creatively used it in a new context in their poster: "when your heart can't take it light it up in #flames!"

The title of the poster #Fightcyberbullying and the caption “we can start campaigns and hashtags on social media to support and stand for people who need us…” indicate their agency in taking action. They do not seem to consider the issue of the negativity on social media as the fault of the platforms. They believe that the problem lies in the misuse of platforms. They envisage people fighting negativity by promoting the importance of kindness, and inner beauty. #Chubby is cute #Inner beauty is important. The poster displays, the group’s self-confidence, and citizenship.

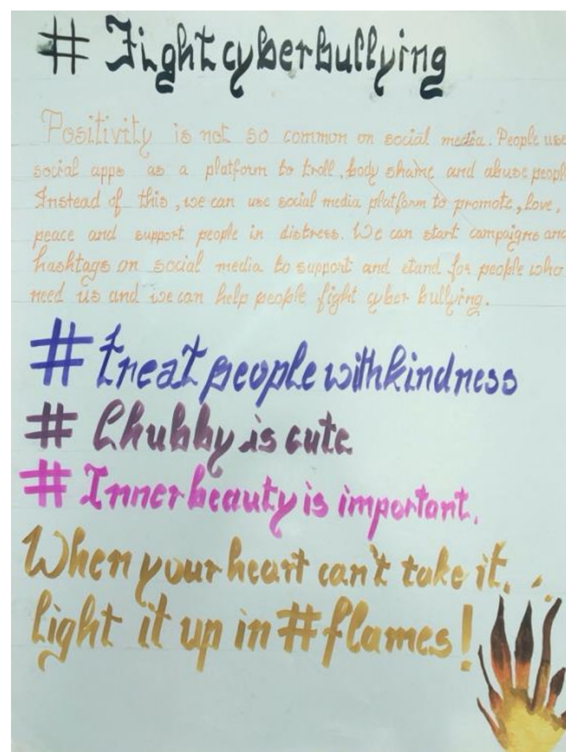


Figure 29: 3rd activity, group 1, session 2, School A

Group 2

This group’s poster (Figure 30) portrays a strong appeal for developing inner strength and resilience to face challenges in life. They seem to believe that empowerment should begin with oneself. They manifest awareness of the negative impact of trolling and online abuse. Their approach is not passive indifference but active engagement

for a change. They urge people not to be affected by negativity on social media. While they feel people should appreciate their self-worth, they want them to realise that a person who bullies is a weak person – “A person who bullies you is always ‘BELOW’ you”. They use a metaphor to communicate the importance of resilience – “Just as a ship sinks in the water as it ‘ALLOWS’ the water to enter it, similarly, if we get affected by the negativity of the world, we’ll sink in it”. This poster reveals their critical thinking and reflection. They manifest self-confidence, citizenship, and agency.

They use 16 hashtags in the poster, showing that they value tolerance, respect, aspirations, and self-confidence.

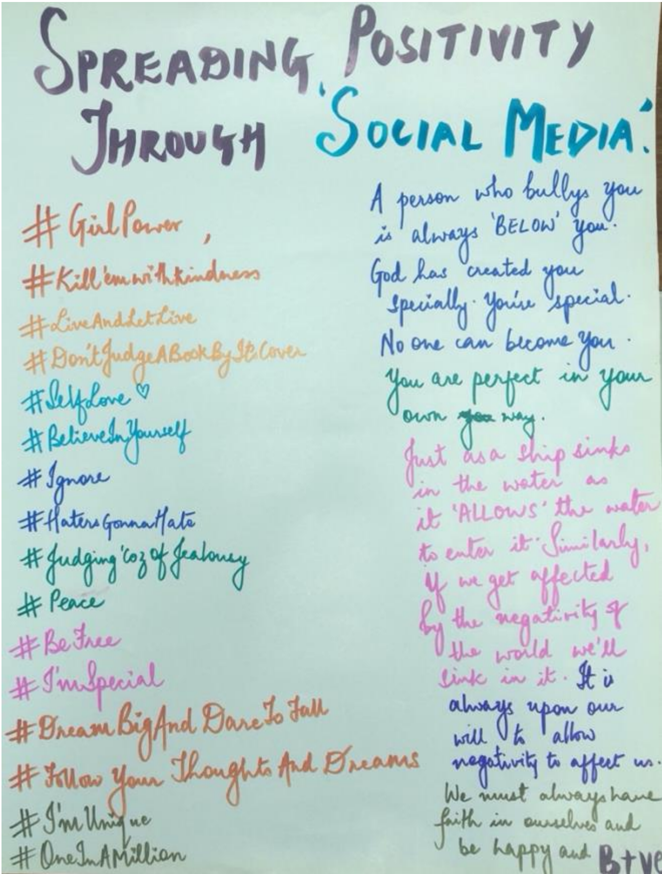


Figure 30: 3rd activity, group 2, session 2, School A

Group 3

This group made a poster (Figure 31) on self-representation to portray the difference between what is reality and what is represented. This topic was discussed in the video lesson. The poster displays imagination, creativity, reflection, and awareness. They chose a teenage character to show the aspect of self-representation on social media. The social media identity is quite different from the real identity. The character presents himself as very happy and joyful on social media. He tries to seek others' attention by way of likes, comments, and shares. But in reality, he is sad. The group feels he is wasting his time on social media. They advise him to move on from social media happiness to other important aspects of life.

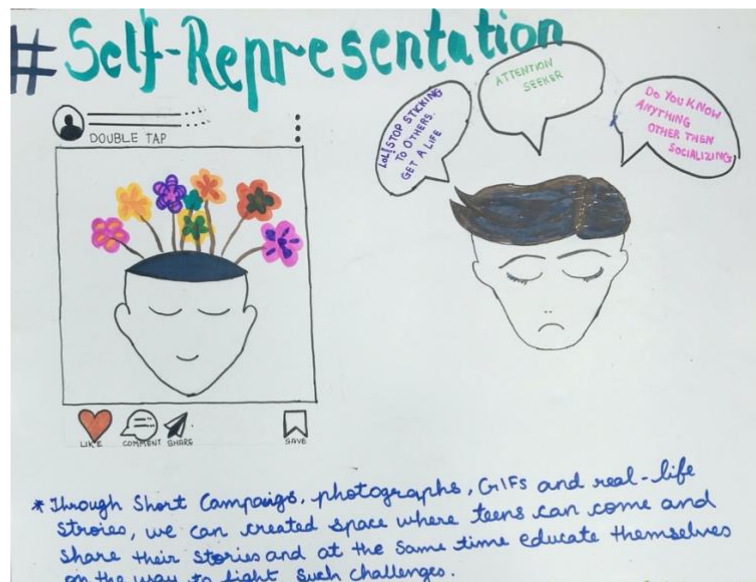


Figure 31: 3rd activity, group 3, session 2, School A

The poster made by group 4 is given in the Appendix J.

School B

In School B, participants had only 15 minutes for the group activity.

Group 1

The poster (Figure 32) this group created has two sections. In the first section, they illustrated how hackers try to take account details through chats. In the second section, they made five hashtags on three themes: being alert, fight hackers, and not bullying.

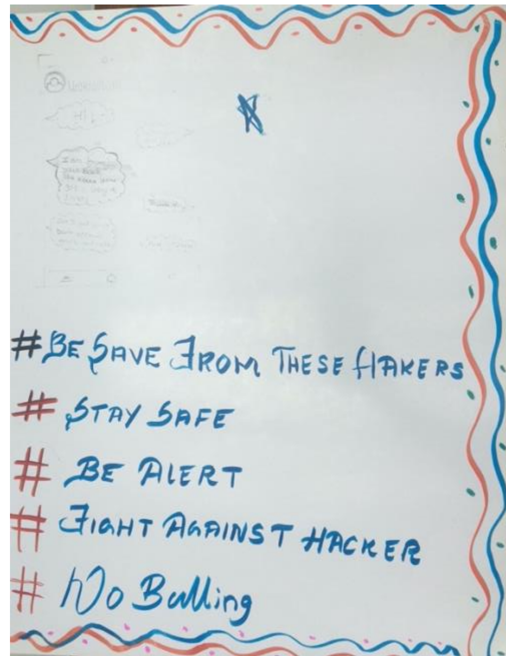


Figure 32: 3rd activity, group 1, session 2, School B

Group 2

This group gave two captions in their poster (Figure 33): “use social media wisely” and “use social media to create awareness about any social issues”. They also wrote hashtags such as no body-shaming, no violence, no bad touch to girls, no nudes.

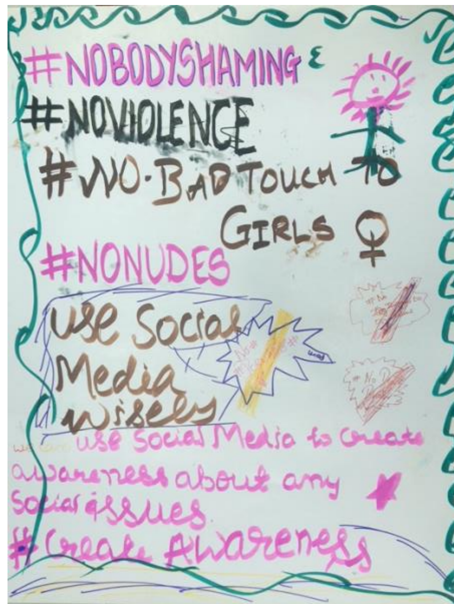


Figure 33: 3rd activity, group 2, session 2, School B

Group 3

This group (Figure 34) wrote hashtags on promoting peace and showing respect on social media – "#promote peace", "#respect: show and help". They wrote that their school supports peace.

Figure 34: 3rd activity, group 3, session 2, School B

The poster made by group 4 is given in the Appendix K.

Overall, the activity seems to have facilitated participants' reflection on countering the negativity on social media by promoting respect, kindness, awareness, and by building resilience. It also gave them an experience of writing hashtags related to social responsibility, respect, and positive online behaviour. The participants of *School A* showed more interest and were more involved in the activity. In making the posters, they seemed to have reflected and engaged with the topics discussed in the video lesson or materials they read in the news articles for the second activity. Some participants in *School B* were not interested in the activity. The time was too short.

Boys were less involved and less reflective of gender violence and gender discrimination on social media. The difference in the way boys and girls responded to this activity shows the gendered citizenship. In any future use of the social media toolkit, this topic and activities should be revised to include young people's understanding and lived experience of gender and critical reflection on gendered citizenship in India. It must include discussions and activities on how citizenship is experienced unequally in their social relations depending on intersecting categories of difference; how girls/women are excluded and discriminated against through gendered norms embedded in their everyday life; how their everyday practices create, maintain or challenge discriminations. Activities that focus on why some citizens, based on gender, enjoy privileges and others face discrimination, and why through gendered violence, girls/women's bodies are controlled, and how this has been perpetuated and reinforced through patriarchal norms must be included (Behl, 2019). In addition, planning strategic measures that they can take collectively to challenge the gender and other discriminatory norms in their communities and the challenges must be included in the programme.

7.3.4 Importance of taking personal responsibility in managing privacy

Most participants during the interviews expressed that people have to be careful while posting stuff on social media. They felt users have to take personal responsibility in managing their visibility and privacy since what they share on social media can be seen by anyone or misused by people. They explained how to be responsible and take care of online privacy. To some, personal responsibility included not posting any rubbish, decent dressing, being sensible while posting, and being aware of the consequences.

> [Anushka, F] Like it is going to be public, so we to have to post accordingly, you have to dress accordingly like, you know, and whatever you're posting, it should be sensible and not like anything you want just for publicity or something. (IN/A06)

> [Tanvi, F] …I mean people misuse the photograph sometimes, most of the time but yeah, you need to be careful about it. (IN/A27)

Another participant, Adhira, mentioned responsible sharing in the context of surveillance but without using the term.

> [Adhira, F] Before posting you should think that the things you are posting, like, the whole world, like the government, they are seeing it. So, we should think before you post anything. They come to know what's going on in our lives. So, they can be many cases like kidnapping all, so we must be careful. (IN/A13)

For Roshan, personal responsibility means, sharing positive things but not things that can cause risk. He gave the example of posting a photo of himself wearing a gold ring that could then invite theft:

> [Roshan, M] If we post some photos, they can create a lot of problems. If I post a gold ring, thief can track me. Share photos that cannot harm you. Share photos of positive things, like if I help someone, share that and that is helpful for others. (IN/B24)

Another participant, Kevin, gave the example of his brother's irresponsible post on Instagram. His brother posted on Instagram that he fought with his wife and divorced. Kevin was upset with his brother's post. He said that was something personal and should not have been posted.

> [Kevin, M] My brother is on Instagram. Once I was using his phone. I saw a picture he posted: I fought with my wife and I gave divorce. Why should he post it on Instagram? This is personal. If I got a job, then I can post. When I post I am visible to people. Based on the post, people can contact me. Everything has advantages and disadvantages. Similarly, about the divorce post, Instagram can show him post about lawyers. (IN/B15)

I was surprised to note his comment that Instagram could show his brother a related post about lawyers since he posted about divorce. He had a good grasp of data collection and personalised recommendations. When I asked him if he learned that in the workshop, he said, "I knew something before, but the workshop helped. Especially about algorithm. How my personal info makes money for them."

Apparently, he had only in mind his brother and his privacy. He did not mention about the implication of the post to his ex-sister-in-law's privacy. Further probes would

have helped in eliciting the way he perceived his brother's post affecting his ex-sister-in-law's privacy and the harm his brother would have done to her.

For another participant, Taara, being responsible while posting personal information and respecting others when commenting were important aspects to be taken care of.

> [Taara, F] We should keep in mind that we don't insult someone, or we should say to her that our posts are always based on true information and not something about what we think, so that no one is disrespected or anything. (IN/A26)

She was conscious of hackers who can access personal posts even if the privacy setting is in place.

> [Taara, F] No, because anytime people can hack your account, and they can also get those pictures and they can put it public so it's not safe. So, you should always think before you post something on social media or share it with someone. (IN/A26)

The majority of interviewees expressed that people should set their privacy and accept in their account only friends and people whom they know.

> [Amoli, F] I feel that if you have social media accounts, they should be private. Because you don't know the minds of some people. They can troll you; they can give you bad comments. So, it's better if you have your own friends on social media. Because you know them you accept their follow requests, and then you can chat with them. (IN/A15)

Ranbir gave a list of things not to do on social media for staying safe.

> [Ranbir, M] Not to provide private information, no tagging location. Don't access the request of someone whom you do not know. Don't reply, ask

> who they are. With whom we are not familiar, don’t say. Don’t post everything that happens. Because Some people can track, stalk us, something can happen. (IN/B27)

Navya spoke in detail about managing privacy options specific to different platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. She felt people should be aware of the option of choosing who can see their posts while posting. Personal information or what is going on in people’s private life should be shared only to those whom they trust and want to share.

> [Navya, F] Like in many platforms and when I use, Facebook, I had an option where I can, I can share a post, and everybody can see it. Everybody on Facebook can see it. Then I had a post or rather options where I can choose the people who can actually see it. And I could choose the people. Even on WhatsApp nowadays we have that. on every platform, we have that option, but many people don't even know about it. And they share this stuff like random. Like they share the pictures and they're in personal information. The worst thing is people share their, you know, their worst phase of life, WhatsApp is still privacy. There is a little privacy but Instagram and Facebook, on WhatsApp, you can't just search for one person's name and you get that person's full information. It's not like that you add the person that's when you are connected on WhatsApp. But Instagram and Facebook and Snapchat is not like that. You search for a person you find 10 people like that. And one people you click you get all the information you want. And if somebody knows hacking and stuff, that person is like you can find every situation that person is facing or everything that person is doing literally everything. (IN/A20)

When asked to speak about privacy on social media, Sneha stated that setting privacy options do not completely ensure privacy. She distinguished privacy between what the platform keeps private and what people can view.

> [Sneha, F] Privacy, like, it's not completely transparent. You can keep some things private, but you can't keep some things private because the platforms know what you're keeping private, only the ones who follow you or like the users of that platform don't know what you keep, but platforms always know what private things you have. (IN/A24)

She said she is careful in sharing pictures on social media since "on social media anybody can take your picture and make anything out of it whatever they like. So, you have to be careful while sharing pictures." She said that she shares personal pictures very rarely, instead she posts artworks, "So I like art. So, I just share my art pictures and if I want just with my face or something if I go out."

Continuing to comment on privacy, she gave her opinion that one should not make posts on politics and religion as that can lead to conflict.

> [Sneha, F] It doesn't have to be related to politics, because it can lead to conflicts between everyone, then about religion because there's a lot of fights and riots happening because of religion in our country as well. (IN/A24)

7.3.5 Understanding representation and self-representation in the context of visibility

As described above, many interviewees had expressed their views on what should and should not be shared on social media, and how to be responsible while making personal posts. However, when I asked the interviewees if they can explain the term representation or self-representation, many were not able to explain the terms.

Navya, who was very involved in the workshop, explained self-representation descriptively.

[Navya, F] It's like on your Instagram and stuff people click photos, it’s okay people click photos. I myself like lots of selfies, but that doesn't mean that it represents your life. It's not exactly showing your life as it is. People see what you want to see. Like you have showed us a video, where the girl is just taking a picture just for her to upload on the social media. And then there was a couple where I had seen this video in your session only, I think that this couple, they were actually having a lot of problems in their relationship. And they were in a live-in relationship, which is not bad either. But not to be judgmental, but there are a lot of problem but just to show other people that we are so happy together, they click, that is being fake. That is being fake, and social media because you get so many likes and stuff on putting pictures….. showing yourself good or rich, or whatever you want to call it. You get good comments and likes and stuff that makes people that, like not in real life. But I can have a great personality on social media, so people tend to be fake. That is human psychology. Its human brain, it's nice even I was like that for some time. Because I used to be like ha now, in my real life I can't do anything but on social media I'm getting so much importance that the importance people give bad comments when you upload sad photos or bad photos or when you don't look good when people put so much makeup and stuff to click for that one photo and you make up makeup is not bad. I'm not saying makeup is bad. But if you're doing that makeup just to click a photo and put it on Instagram so that you get good likes, that is wrong because that is being fake. Of course social media is very good, because social media is the only way I connect to my people because I am far away from them. But it is it again, depends on us. (IN/A 20)

Another participant, Tanvi, explained self-representation in terms of posts that are different from actual reality.

[Tanvi, F] Yeah, because some people like are different in your life and post different stuff. So, people think that their life is very magical, but it's different, just it's like normal. Yeah. Because like it's like what they post to us is a reality. So it's just different. (IN/A27)

When I asked what her approach should be on representation, she spoke of being critical of posts made by people who you do not know or trust.

> [Tanvi, F] It's not necessarily like if they like if that person has a sister or a brother or whoever that portion has gone there with but if it was the same thing, then it's it can be real but if only that portion is posting That thing that cannot be real sometimes… because if you can, they can put it on location and be like, I'm in Venice or something. (IN/A27)

I then asked her to speak about her self-representation on social media. She answered, "Yeah. Because you don't post everything that is happening. So, it's like, yeah, only part of it."

Four interviewees, two from *School A* and two from *School B* explained self-representation from the perspective of positive and impressive behaviours on social media.

> [Roshan, M] You can represent in a good way or bad way. Like how the teacher remembers you if you behave well in the class. Similarly, how we represent to others is important. (IN/B24)

> [Kevin, M] People recognize you the way you speak, with your posts; if you post, I am speaking of bad things, people will think, he is involved in bad habits. If I post about degrees, my study, then it is a good character presentation in front of others. (IN/B15)

Overall, participants seem to have a poor grasp of the term *representation* and *self-representation*.

7.3.6 Conclusion

The warmup activity of the first session, discussed in the beginning of this chapter, showed many participants were aware and concerned about issues related to privacy such as hacking, cyberbullying, and stalking. The interviewees stated that they never experienced cyberbullying or hacking personally. But they were aware and cautious of such things taking place online. A couple of them mentioned that one of their friends' account was hacked. Overall, participants of *School A* were perceived to be more interested in the topics of visibility and privacy. Many of them seem to have identified to themselves the issues of uncertain visibility reflected during the activities.

The data from the activities and interviewees seem to suggest that the participants do not hold technology accountable for fixing the issues of visibility and privacy on social media. Instead, they place the responsibility on people to care for their privacy and also take measures to collectively address the issues. For the participants, people who use technologies create problems for other users. None of them spoke from the perspective of making changes to the interface of platforms or regulating the platforms. But they believe that change can happen through spreading awareness of positive use of social media. To take participants' reflections further, discussions on the importance of making platforms accountable for spreading hate content and body shaming posts are required. Platform regulation, an important topic, was not discussed in the workshop.

The term surveillance was just mentioned but not discussed in detail in the workshop. More teaching and learning activities are required to help participants understand how corporate, government and users engage in surveillance and the implications of surveillance culture (Lyon, 2018). During the discussion on privacy and

visibility, two interviewees, without being prompted, expressed their concern that the government can access their information on social media. But Alisha was unsure how the government can get personal information. She asked me whether the government can access the data by hacking one's phone.

> [Alisha, F] Like, government has access now. The government has access to your information. Yeah. So, your phone can get hacked and they can get all the information? (IN/A05)

Adhira asked whether it was possible for the government to access her accounts in Snapchat and Instagram in spite of keeping them private.

> [Adhira , F]…if our ID is private then can they see? they can see our stories also? (IN/A13)

When participants speak about privacy on social media, what they generally understand is managing the privacy settings on the platforms so that they control to whom their posts can be made visible. While the workshop tried to create some awareness of the uncertain visibilities and privacy issues on social media, an area that was not covered was the formation algorithmic identities of users and the surrounding social issues. Understanding algorithmic identities through ubiquitous surveillance and datafication is an important aspect of privacy and identity in contemporary society (Cheney-Lippold, 2019). I propose more detailed discussions and activities on how sharing is closely interlinked to surveillance, and how and why algorithmic identities are deployed.

As Livingstone (2020) argues, learning to understand how platforms work and how and why they collect user data, and how to manage privacy are not a comprehensive solution for addressing issues related to privacy. Privacy and personal

data in the contemporary digital ecology involve interpersonal, institutional, and commercial use of personal data. With regard to institutional and commercial use of personal data, individuals have hardly any control. Companies should change their policies with regard to taking children's data and using it:

> When a service's Terms and Conditions state that users' data will be shared with hundreds of data brokers and other third parties, yet no realistic alternatives to the use of the service are provided, we must conclude that the burden of privacy protection has shifted from the user to the service provider (Livingstone, 2020).

Helping children to critically reflect on issues of interpersonal privacy and equipping them with resilience to manage online visibility are important. They should also be made aware of issues related to organisational and institutional privacy. Meanwhile, government and platform owners have a serious role to play in regulating the use of children's data. Participatory social media literacy education is important for helping children become aware of the social problems associated with datafication, surveillance, and uncertain visibility and to develop their agentic selves to transform the networked landscape.

The data analysis of this chapter highlights the importance of helping children critically reflect on gendered citizenship and their individual and collective actions for challenging gender discriminatory norms and gender violence. Learning lessons with material on how gender inflect their everyday practices and experiences both offline and online are necessary. Critical self-reflection of one's prejudices, bias, and gendered citizenship and how they are ingrained in the contexts of family, community, school, and media and how they are reproduced and reinforced in their everyday relations are important aspects that are not explored in this study but must be included.

The sessions on platform knowledge and visibility and identity must also include critical reflection on the interconnectedness of class, caste, religion, gender and sexuality in identity formation and how the offline social structures manifest online.

Many participants, particularly girls, expressed the importance of countering negativity on social media, but this does not mean that they as student-group would take collective actions for challenging discriminations on and offline.

Chapter 8: Digital Storytelling: “a process and a feeling”; and a method for enhancing classroom learning, media literacy and citizenship

As stated in Chapter 7, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 analyse and discuss the fieldwork data. In continuation with the analysis of the impact of the social media literacy workshop, discussed in Chapter 7, this chapter presents the third theme: how Digital Storytelling such as creating memes and videos can be useful for self-expression, learning, reflection, and social action.

8.1 Experience of making the first meme

School A

The fourth session of the workshop was on creative making, memes, and self-expression. The video lesson of the fourth session provided a general introduction to topics such as using social media for creative self-expression; positive outcomes of creative making; what are memes; why people and organisations make and share memes; and what you should keep in mind when you make and share memes. After the video lesson, the participants were given the experience of making memes. In *School A* (girls’ school), participants were divided into pairs and assigned a computer with internet connectivity. I then showed them how to make memes using a free online meme generator website called *imgflip* (https://imgflip.com/memegenerator).

The website *imgflip* allows users to easily create memes by adding captions to their collection of established meme images or by uploading images from other sources. Users can customise a text by changing the size and colour of the font.

The participants showed huge interest in learning how to make memes. They figured out quickly the meme-making features of the website and began making memes. The instruction for the activity was to make at least two memes – one on any theme and the other one related to a social media topic. But each pair made around three to five memes. They went on creating memes for about 30 minutes until they were asked to stop. They made several memes about their exams, study, identity, and social media.

> They picked up fast and were very enthusiastic about this activity. They were mostly interested in making funny memes about their exam, study, etc. Some did make interesting memes on social media. (Researcher field note, session 4, *School A*)

After making a meme, the participants would call out to me to take a look. They would then ask for my feedback. They had so much joy on their faces. As students made memes, I went around and clicked photos of the memes they created using my mobile phone. I asked for their permission each time I clicked a photo of the meme they created. I clicked over 50 memes though they had made many more.

> I took photos of their memes with their permission on my phone. They were so excited to make memes and they used to call out for me to show the memes they created. Some of them asked me if I can send the memes to them. (Researcher field note, session 4, school A)

To analyse and present the memes that I had clicked, I first went through them a few times and then categorised them. In the following pages I present a selection of

memes. To understand their origin and meaning, I referred to the website, *Know Your Meme* (https://knowyourmeme.com).

8.1.1 Facilitating learning and reflection through meme-making

The reason why I instructed them to make at least one meme related to a social media topic was to facilitate their reflection on social media experiences or issues discussed in the workshop. Some of them made memes that showed their reflection or reaction to aspects related to social media. A selection of memes on social media are presented below:

A few pairs created memes using "Drakeposting" – two gestures of reaction from Drake's music video – liking and disliking. One pair (Figure 35) used it to advocate using social media for awareness and not to insult.

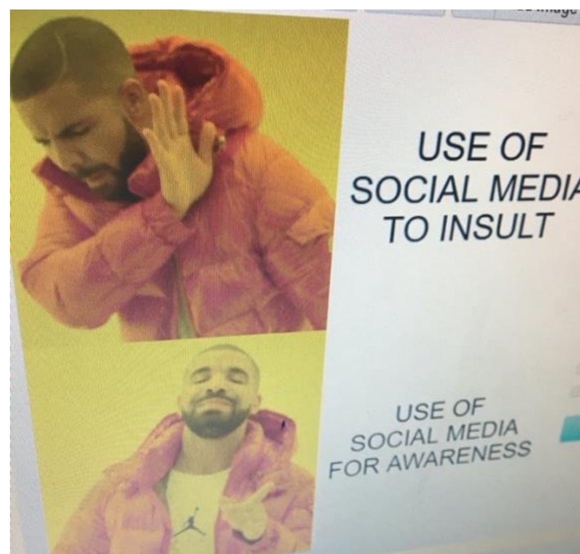


Figure 35: Meme-making activity, School A

Another pair (Figure 36) used the "boardroom suggestion" meme image to represent a discussion on what are social media, a topic that was discussed during the workshop. The one who considered social media "a place to bully" is flung out through the window.

Figure 36: Meme-making activity, School A

Similar to the theme of this meme, another pair (Figure 37) appropriated the "Batman Slapping Robin" illustration to represent their disapproval of trolls. Reactions against trolls were also seen in the chart the participants prepared for the session on *visibility* and during the interviews.

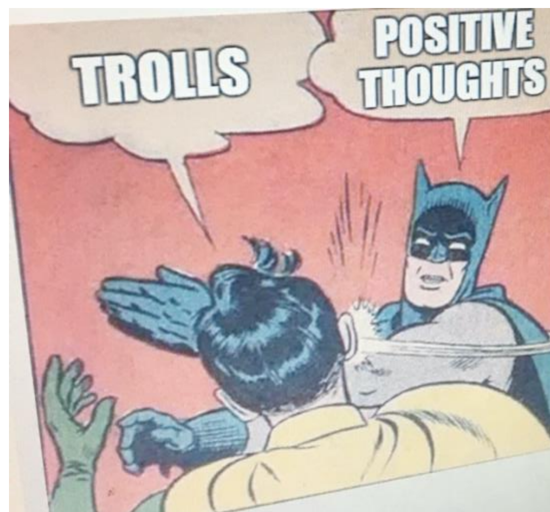


Figure 37: Meme-making activity, School A

Another pair (Figure 38) made a meme showing a person's reaction to "fake news". It seems to represent that news can be emotionally attractive and one can easily believe in false news.

Figure 38: Meme-making activity, School A

Another pair (Figure 39) chose "X, X Everywhere" image to make a meme on a person's reaction to the algorithm while his friend was explaining it to him.

Figure 39: Meme-making activity, School A

Another pair (Figure 40) made memes using "Expanding Brain", a multipanel image of various brain sizes. One pair used "studies" in an ironic sense for the least developed brain and "music" and "social media" for the higher expansion of the brain.

Figure 40: Meme-making activity, School A

Another pair (Figure 41) , using the same meme panel, showed a person who makes memes has the most expanded brain. Interesingly, they call the person who makes memes a “memer”.

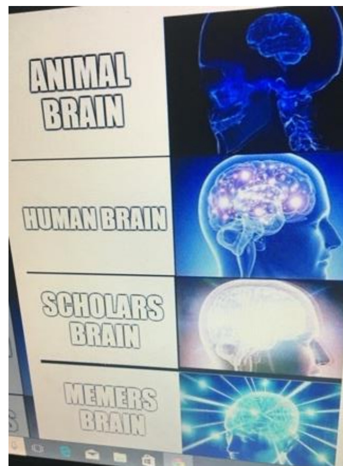


Figure 41: Meme-making activity, School A

Another pair (Figure 42) used a “Drakeposting” image to show a person’s reaction when using social media and when studying.

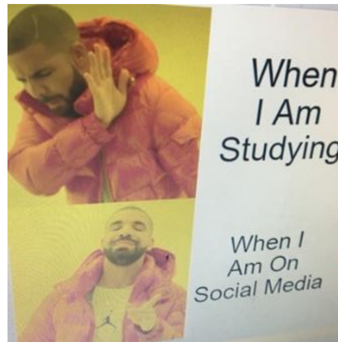


Figure 42: Meme-making activity, School A

8.1.2 Memes representing resentment towards stressful and exam-centred education system

When participants made their first memes, the main subject matter was school, class, exam, and the educational system. While they have had fun by making such memes, these memes seem to convey their dislike towards the stressful and rote learning educational system in India. They immediately connected popular meme images with their homework, exam, and dislike for class. They also found memes a means to represent and express their private conversations or feelings.

A pair (Figure 43) made a meme representing their resentment towards the overloaded educational programmes. Through the meme, they expressed that they do not get time for sufficient sleep because of the pressure from the educational system. The main caption given in the meme is – "scientists: students need 9 to 10 hours of sleep”. This is their principal statement. Then to convey their message, they wrote on an angry Bugs Bunny’s image, “education system”. By wording the captions, placing them appropriately, and choosing an angry Bugs Bunny image, they conveyed the message. It shows their agency to reflect and react to the system.

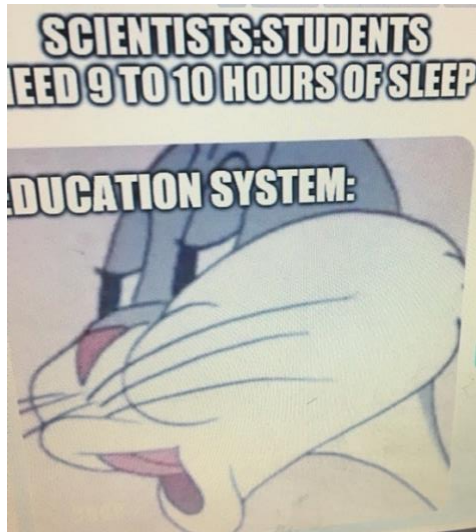


Figure 43: Meme-making activity, School A

Similar to the above meme, another pair (Figure 44) showed their grievance against increasing the portion in the syllabus, using a meme image, “First World Problems”.

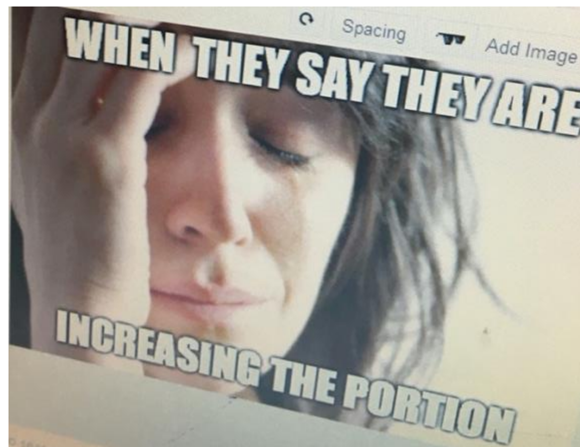


Figure 44: Meme-making activity, School A

Two more pairs (Figures 45 and 46) used the “First World Problems” image to represent sadness at the thought that holidays or weekends were getting over.

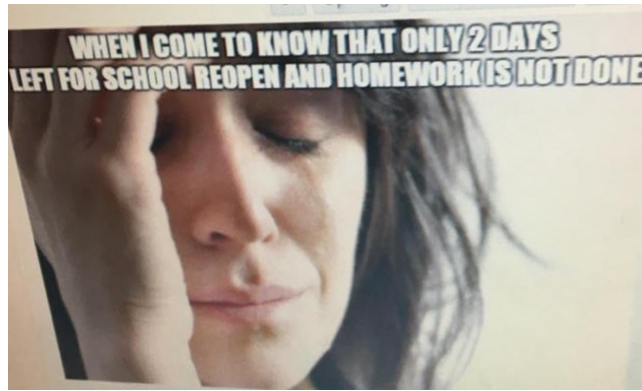


Figure 45: Meme-making activity, School A

Figure 46: Meme-making activity, School A

Figure 47 shows how the pair appropriated a popular “Disaster Girl” meme image to convey a student’s dislike for class. The character in the meme is left undisclosed. The character can either represent the pair who made the meme, or it can be the feeling of any other students. They used just two words “class” and “me” to change the context and make the meme meaningful.

Figure 47: Meme-making activity, School A

Another pair (Figure 48) used a stick figure character, "Y U NO" to represent their rage when they fail in a maths exam by one mark. By writing the word "experienced" below the character, they highlight their personal experience.

Figure 48: Meme-making activity, School A

This pair (Figure 49) used the image "Oprah You Get a Car" from the show *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, to represent the satisfaction of someone who passed an exam after "a long duration".

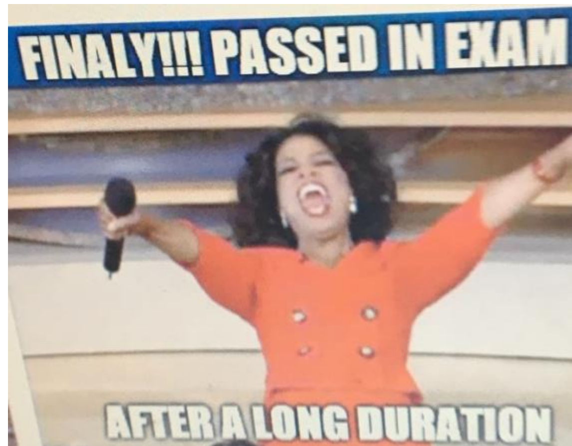


Figure 49: Meme-making activity, School A

The meanings these memes communicate correspond to the findings of Mujumdar and Mooiji (2011) discussed in Chapter 1. Their empirical study had highlighted the state of teaching and learning in Indian education system that in many ways continues to practice "chalk, talk and memorise". They used terms such as "de-learning", "brain drain", "passive learning", and "parrot-learning" to communicate what they observed in their fieldwork. The Indian education policy established in 1986 is now revised and the New Education Policy 2020 has been approved by the government of India. Among the many changes, the policy stresses the need towards reducing the content, making learning experiential, and orienting the education towards developing children's autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, and social and emotional capacities:

> Education thus, must move towards less content, and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable (New Education Policy, 2020, p3).

Although the actualisation of the changes prescribed in the new policy is a distant reality, it gives a vision and impetus for a better education system that focuses on student-centred teaching and learning.

8.1.3 Memes representing identity

Participants made some memes related to identities such as origin, friendship, and relationship.

This pair (Figure 50) chose a three-panel image from the movie, “Finding Neverland”, depicting a conversation between two characters. They represent an emotional conversation on the subject of adoption in this meme.

Figure 50: Meme-making activity, School A

Another pair (Figure 51) used reaction image “Unsettled Tom” to portray the shock of a parent when his child asked him, “Where did I come from?”

Figure 51: Meme-making activity, School A

This pair (Figure 52) used an image from the TV show called Futurama where the character Fry is squinting his eyes. They paired the character with the caption, “when you catch your girlfriend”, then added “with your best friend”.

Figure 52: Meme-making activity, School A

This pair (Figure 53) chose the image “Distracted Boyfriend” to show the disapproving reaction of a girlfriend when her partner stares at another woman.

Figure 53: Meme-making activity, School A

8.1.4 Experience of making the first meme with paper and pen

School B

For the workshop in *School B* (boys' school), the computer lab was unavailable. Therefore, for their meme activity, I prepared four sets of A4 sheets with images of some popular memes. Against each meme image, a space was provided for adding a caption. Each sheet contained three or four meme images.

The participants were divided into six groups. Each group was given four sheets. They were given 20 minutes to write the text against each meme image. Compared to other activities, participants showed much more interest and involvement in the meme-making activity. All groups completed the activity – a total of 24 meme sheets were created during this activity. They seemed to have pleasure and fun while making memes. They would also call me to look at their memes and ask for my comments. As in *School A*, a sense of happiness was noticed while they were making memes.

8.1.5 Memes about social media, games, friendship, and bad habits

Topics such as video games, sports, alcohol and drugs were mentioned in the memes made by boys. These topics did not come up in the memes created by girls in *School A*. I have selected some of the memes they made for the discussion below:

For the multi-panel “Drakeposting” meme sheet – two gestures of reaction from Drake’s music video – one group (Figure 54) chose comparisons of PUBG addiction with social media; and computers with mobile. While they disliked the addictive PUBG (Player Unknown's Battlegrounds), an online multiplayer video game, they prefered social media. They liked mobile to computers.

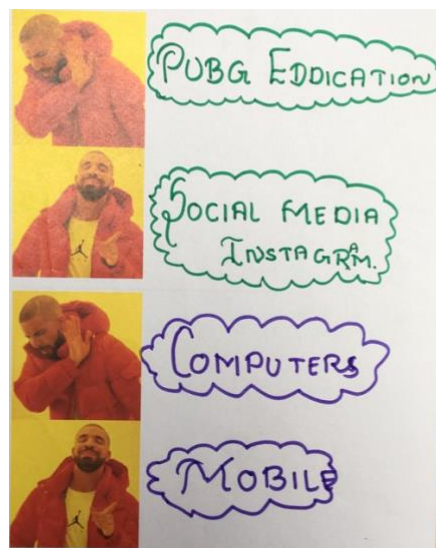


Figure 54: Meme-making activity, School B

Another group (Figure 55) showed, in the first panel, their liking towards an Indian YouTube comedy channel called *BB Ki Vines*. In the second panel, they promoted cloth bags instead of plastic bags. They drew pictures of a plastic bag and a cloth bag.

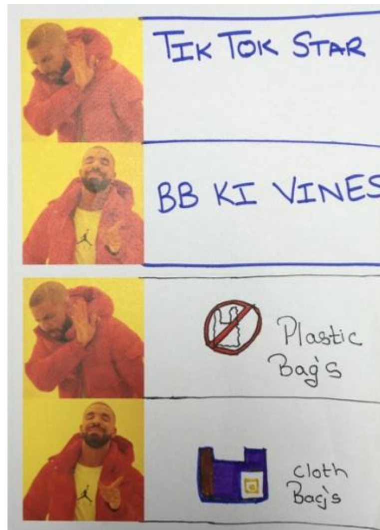


Figure 55: Meme-making activity, School B

Another group (Figure 56) created a meme against “fake news”. They drew an image of a wide-open eye and wrote the caption “don’t fake news”.

Figure 56: Meme-making activity, School B

The first two panels of another meme sheet had reaction images of two popular Bollywood actors. The third panel had the image of the Success Kid, a reaction image of a baby. One group (Figure 57) related the emotions these images represent to convey reactions to drugs and alcohol, negative behaviour on social media, and winning a match. They wrote a caption “social media is to good”.

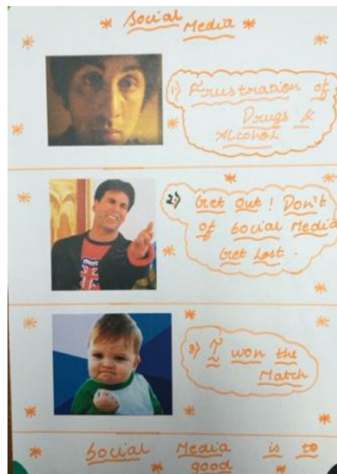


Figure 57: Meme-making activity, School B

Another group (Figure 58) connected them to show reactions to banning one's Tik Tok ID and slow Wi-Fi connection.

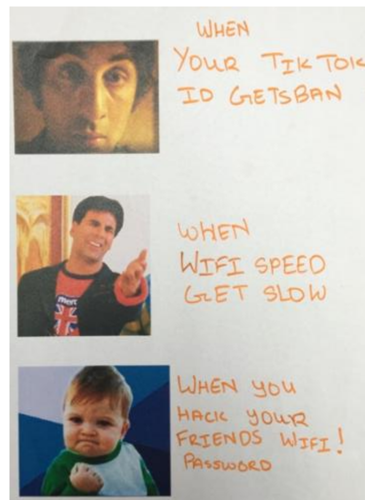


Figure 58: Meme-making activity, School B

One group (Figure 59) used the characters to show reactions on friendship and relationship. Against each image, they wrote "me".

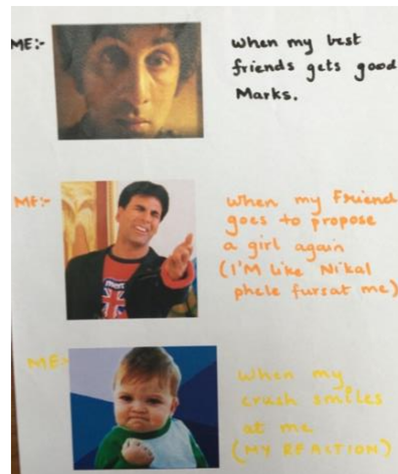


Figure 59: Meme-making activity, School B

Another meme sheet had two Pepe the Frog reaction characters and one about a child's frightened reaction. One group (Figure 60) used it to show reaction to negativity and privacy on social media.

Figure 60: Meme-making activity, School B

Another group (Figure 61) connected it to relationships and fear of ghosts.

Figure 61: Meme-making activity, School B

Another group (Figure 62) made their meme on social media, exam, and thinking about two popular Indian rappers – Emiway or Raftaar.

Figure 62: Meme-making activity, School B

Another meme sheet had two variations of Pepe Frog images – Feels Good Man, and Sad Frog. One group (Figure 63) used it to show positive and negative aspects of social media.

Figure 63: Meme-making activity, School B

While the meme-making activity in the computer lab provided participants with an experience of making a meme online, the meme-making activity with paper and pens also gave the participants an experience of making memes.

Overall, participants enjoyed the meme-making activity done with paper and colour pens. Since the meme images were already printed on the sheets, participants had no option to choose or mix and match images. But, many of them tried to make their memes more interesting by drawing chat symbols and borders, and adding colours and symbols. They applied creativity and reflection. Some participants who had not shown interest or were distracted during other chart making activities showed interest in the meme-making activity.

The meme-making online in *School A* was perceived to have had much more play, fascination, and engagement compared to the meme-making on paper in *School B*.

8.1.6 Meme-making democratises creativity

Memes are created by taking material from one context and then altering it to present it in another context. Memes are usually created combining images, text, and ideas. They can easily be edited or remixed to change the meaning, to communicate an idea, or to express feelings. Creating memes using images from popular television shows or movies and quotes from politicians or celebrities is easy and can be done by anyone. What is involved in making such memes is choosing an image and applying ideas to it to convey a message or a point of view. The meaning is created by adding texts. When suitable captions are given to fitting images, they can convey powerful messages. Memes circulate and spread quickly on social media and are easily relatable. Users make a point or express emotions while editing and posting a meme. As memes travel on social media, users give new expressions to them. People not only look at them but also edit and add meaning to them while sharing. Memes get new expressions and new meaning when people make changes to the text, image, idea or the context (Meikle, 2016; Denisova, 2019).

Making memes does not involve special skills that are otherwise required for drawing, painting, or designing. Anyone can easily create memes using websites that facilitate meme-making by adding images and customised text. Though making memes is easy, the process seems to awaken creativity and imagination. This was exhibited during the workshop wherein everyone was involved in making memes.

8.1.7 Meme-making in classroom – a new form of Digital Storytelling

Making memes can be fun and exciting. Anyone can easily create memes. Children seem to *like* the meme language. When they are motivated and when they are given

some form of mentorship, they enjoy making memes. Meme as a visual narrative can communicate a message powerfully and make meaning. Making memes in the classroom does not involve much preparation and additional facilities. It is not a time-consuming activity. In my view, teachers can easily incorporate memes in the learning experience of children. It is a form of Digital Storytelling.

Meme-making for teaching representation, language, audience, and production

Meme-making can be used to teach children aspects of *representation, language, audience,* and *production*. Meme-making involves making choices, reflecting, deciding what values, feelings, viewpoints and beliefs to include or omit and what perspectives to show. By making a representation of themselves and others through their memes, children can learn the concept of *representation*. For example, (Figure 64) participants in *School A* made a meme showing the difference between positive and negative self-representation with and without using the Snapchat-filter.

Figure 64: Meme-making activity, School A

Creating memes also involves learning to do captions that suit the images and the message. Figure 65 shows a meme from *School A* which they captioned, “me dancing when I am alone.”

Figure 65: Meme-making activity, School B

Meme-making for learning, reflection and citizenship

Children easily connect to memes. The Meme genre interests them. They like to play around with images, texts, and colours. To make memes, they need to understand the emotions particular meme images convey. They need to appropriate their message or point of view to the meme image. Meme-making can be used as an activity for teaching and reflection. If teachers give them topics related to the class discussions, then children can make memes applying their reflections on those topics. Such activities will help children to deepen their learning while having fun. Teachers can use meme-making as an activity for social reflection. Children can be encouraged and motivated to make memes on issues that are affecting society or on themes related to well-being and positivity. Such activities can help children develop citizenship. If schools can have a forum where such memes can be shared, then the meme-making may become motivational. This way learning becomes more participatory and student centred.

Importance of teaching children meme culture

Memes circulate and spread quickly on social media because they are easily relatable. They can easily be edited or remixed to change the meaning, to communicate an idea, or to express feelings. Editing and sharing memes involve active participation of users and as they travel on social media, others give new expressions to them. People not only look at memes but also edit and add meaning while sharing. A meme can have a particular meaning in one context and an opposite meaning in another context. Based on the trends, context and culture, memes can gain both meaning and popularity. People react to the memes by agreeing to an idea or opposing it. For example, something which symbolises peace can turn into a symbol of hate, should one choose to change its context or use it to underline a cultural difference (Meikle, 2016; Denisova, 2019).

Memes are now popularly used for political communications, election campaign, propaganda, advertising, and marketing campaigns. They are also great for social movements and awareness campaigns. Memes are used to persuade people, to get support and form an opinion. On the flip side, they are used to depict extremely biased ideas, to take revenge, to spread hatred, and to ridicule people based on caste, religion, gender, and ideology. Memes are used to promote drugs, self-harm, and violence. The spread of toxic memes on social media can harm people, organisations, and affect social harmony (Denisova, 2019). Therefore, it is paramount to make children aware of today's meme culture so that they can evaluate and deconstruct memes and also protect them from getting into trouble for unwittingly offending someone or setting off a community. Furthermore, motivating children to make and share positive and creative memes are useful for self-expression and civic

participation. They can also inform others, entertain, fight injustice, and engage in addressing social, political, and civic issues. By making memes, children participate in the production of an important genre in the social media environment.

8.2 Experience of making the first video

School A

Participants were given the assignment to make a video individually or in a self-formed group. They were instructed to make a video on any topic related to social media. They were given a week's duration to make the video. They had regular classes in those days. The school was also preparing for the sports day. Some of them asked me if they could make the video after the sports day.

I had not planned a dedicated session on teaching them how to make a video. During the fourth session, I showed them a short video from the YouTube on 7 elements of Digital Storytelling. I noticed that participants were not very attentive to the video. They were more interested in knowing how and what application to use for editing a video. None of them had prior knowledge in making videos.

Thirteen participants of *School A* took part in the video-making assignment. They created 6 videos – 3 individually, 2 in groups of four, and 1 in a group of 2. Nobody from *School B* took part in making a video.

8.2.1 Self-learning to make videos

Since participants were not given training for making videos, they had to figure out, on their own, how to make a video and what to put in it. While the participants had the

capacity to self-learn, their experiences, and the videos they made reveal that initial training would have helped them in making videos. Except for one video, in all other videos, they used excessive text. The speed of the frames was too fast in some videos.

During the interviews, participants who had made a video spoke about how they learned to make their first video, either individually or in group, through trial and error and the challenges they experienced while making the video. For example, Sneha learned to add music to her presentation taking help from online resources.

> [Sneha, F] And yeah, this was my first time, so I didn't know how to add music or something to our videos. And then I had to Google it and I did it. It was like I learned something new how to make a video and how to transform a presentation into a video; because I didn't know it. (A24)

One of the participants suggested in the feedback form to include video making as a workshop activity. The videos participants made, presented below, and their experiences reveal the importance of giving them an initial video making training. Since they were inexperienced in making videos, they had to figure out what software to use for editing, and how to add images, text and music to make a video. Through some training, participants can be initiated into preparing a script, doing an interview, shooting footages, doing a voiceover and the aesthetics of editing.

In both schools, the management did not allow participants to bring mobile phones for the workshop. The schools have a policy of not allowing students to carry personal phones in the school.

8.2.2 Video making is helpful both to the one who makes and others who view them

Amoli, who made the video individually, felt the video-making experience helped her to learn the techniques of making a video. It also helped to deepen her knowledge of social media through using it as the subject of her video.

> [Amoli, F] Yeah, first video. Of course, it helped me to be more creative and add like texts and edit things. So that and it really helped me to reveal what I have inside me. And it helped me to know that what actually I know about social media, what I'm aware of, and so whatever I knew about social media, I just put that in my video. (A15)

Thus, Amoli felt video-making is helpful both to the one who makes and others who view them. She showed self-reflection and citizenship during the interview.

> [Amoli, F] So if I have time, I will surely be interested in all these things because they help you to be more like creative and reveal what is there inside you. They help you to be more bold, and it helps you to be strong and face problems. And it helps you to help others overcome the problems you've been through. Because, like, if I'm with a teenager, like a teenager has a lot of problems, of course. So I can, if I've been through that stage, I can tell that person that you have to deal with in that in such a way and in that way. It will help them to grow and build themselves so that they become better person in future. (A15)

In her video, she presented what is social media and how people use and misuse social media. She then explained the term “fake news” as misinformation and disinformation based on the workshop discussions. She concluded the video by asking viewers to take personal responsibility to make positive use of social media.

Of all 6 videos made, Amoli's video was the best in terms of creativity and the presentation. She used voiceover, images, and short text to present her points. The video was edited well. In the video, her voice can be heard in a dark background. Animated images, icons, and emojis keep appearing as the commentary progresses. Her aesthetic sense and editing skills are evident in the video.

Amoli's video can be viewed using this link: https://youtu.be/fEGybmcvIMA

Figure 66: A screen shot from Amoli's video

8.2.3 Making video for social awareness

Another participant, Navya, who made the video individually, narrated her video making experience. She told me that she was determined to make her first video even though she had faced challenges.

> [Navya, F] Yeah. It was, actually I was completely confused about what to do. I had no clue about what to do. I had no software or no such stuff. I didn't have a PowerPoint thing. So, I was like, what should I do now? And in the night, I made it after finishing my whole day stuff. I was completely sleepy. I was in half sleep asleep. And I was like what to do. Now it was not like you forced me or somebody forced me it was like I

want to make it I had taken the decision that I want to make it for my team. So, I have to do it anyhow… (A20)

Navya explained to me how she used materials from the workshop and added her reflection to make the video. She was actively involved during the workshop activities. She also used to take permission from me to take home some of the activity handouts. She referred to those materials for making the videos.

> [Navya, F] I want whatever information I collected from the seminar, whatever information I had in those papers or the files are collected from you. That and my own thinking, all my own opinions, which I had on based on the seminar. I took up everything. I blended everything. I did the best I could in the night. I did best what I could, and I made it into a video, and I sent it to teachers. So it was like it. I didn't. I didn't think that it should be a great thing, either. Made it from my heart. I wanted to make it I wanted to do it. And I it was read like I applied a lot of brains. I just took the points; I just used a little of my opinion thing you can say. And I made it and it turned out to be good. (A20)

Navya also spoke about the objective of her video and the happiness that she derived from it. The objective of her video was not merely to give information but to create awareness for social change. Her agency, social reflection, and sense of citizenship were evident during the interview as well as in her video.

> [Navya, F] Yeah, I feel happy about in what sense that not because yeah, the other group did awesome, because they actually had stuff in there. So this video was not exactly to give information because information you get from anywhere, you Google it, you get all the information. But the thing is social awareness. If you see my video, there is more about social awareness. That is what lacks that is what lacks. So that is what I wanted. And I did it. (A20)

Her video was a presentation on being safe on social media, how to recognize false news stories, being kind on social media, good and bad social media habits, and developing resilience to trolls and cyberbullying. As she mentioned during the interview, she was trying to create social awareness to make social media a better place for positivity and well-being.

Figure 67 shows Navya's opening frame in the video. She was asking viewers to reflect on their social media habits.

Figure 67: A screen shot from Navya's video

In her concluding frame (Figure 68), Navya advises on being resilient to social media negativity. She wants users to take active steps to keep their social media accounts with positive things. These require taking action to unfollow or block those who try to spread negativity. For her, the social media feed is very important, it is one's "virtual home". One should own it and not allow others to mess with it. Therefore, one should take personal responsibility to keep the virtual home clean, decorated, and free from unwanted people visiting.

YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FEED IS
YOUR SPACE YOUR VIRTUAL
HOME. MAKE SURE IT IS MADE
UP OF ACCOUNTS THAT FILL YOU
WITH GOOD FEELINGS. ONES
THAT BRING OUT YOUR STRENGTH
AND POSITIVITY. IF ANYONE MAKES
YOU FEEL INADEQUATE FOR SIMPLY
BEING YOUR TRUEST SELF,
UNFOLLOW THEM. BLOCK THEM
CLOSE THE VIRTUAL DOOR ON
THEM. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO
LET THOSE PEOPLE INTO YOUR
LIFE, VIRTUAL OR OTHERWISE.

Figure 68: A screen shot from Navya's video

Navya's video can be viewed using the link: https://youtu.be/2H_6-FltWYY

8.2.4 Learning, collaboration and fun

Four participants formed themselves into a group for making a video. Their video covered five aspects of social media: what are social media, algorithm, user data, bullying, positivity, and fake news. These were topics discussed during the workshop. In the video, they explained misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda based on the handout I had given for the workshop activity. They also tried to give an example for each. For misinformation they gave the example, "printing error, etc."; for disinformation, "there was a website spreading news about the death of an actor, while the actor denied it later"; for propaganda the example was, "spreading rumours about the fight between two political parties".

Figure 69: A screen shot of a video made by four participants

The focus of the video was presenting information. The video was more textual. The format was similar to a slideshow presentation for a class. It lacked the aesthetic qualities of a video.

Three of them from this group took part in the interviews – Adhira, Tanvi, and Taara – and all three described their video making experience as fun.

> [Adhira, F] It was fun, we enjoyed a lot. (A13)

Tanvi explained that they had fun since they spent time together.

> [Tanvi, F] It was really fun because we actually took nine hours to make one video. It was really fun because we all were together the whole day. We had fun in making the video. (A27)

They also narrated the challenges they faced while making the video, but they managed to overcome them. For instance, they tried doing voice over, but it did not come out well; so, they made different plans. They also divided the work among themselves. It shows how video making activities can help participants to work in a team and collaborate with others.

> [Tanvi, F] We actually did voiceover but then it got ruined. So we wrote about it. Different people wrote about different things. Then we did voiceover but eventually we just put music. (A27)

When asked what she learned from making the video, Tanvi mentioned about misinformation and disinformation. She also mentioned that her awareness had increased.

> [Tanvi, F] Yeah, I remember. I remember like misinformation and disinformation. You'll be more careful when you learn about it. So nowadays I be more careful about it. (A27)

Another participant in the group, Taara, told me that by making the video they learned many things; and also, those who watch the video would benefit from it.

> [Taara, F] It is helpful because we learn a lot of things and even those who see the video, even they are benefited from it because even they learn new things. (A26)

Taara's sense of social responsibility was noted during the interview as she spoke about countering bad with good.

> [Taara, F] It's good because it helps other people and when you post something on social media it helps to avoid fake news and bad blogs and stuff which people pose to insult other people or spread rumours about them. So, it helps people. (A26)

Their video can be viewed using the link: https://youtu.be/R-fo8XV3kNY

8.2.5 Explaining "fake news"

Another participant, Anushka, wanted to make the video along with her friends, but she could not join them due to her class schedule, which made her sad. But she didn't give

up; she sought the help of her brother to make a presentation using a PowerPoint and converted it into a video.

> [Anushka, F] Yeah, I was very grateful that I got to make a PPT for the first time. And my brother helped me because I was completely blank. And my friends made it previously, means I couldn't go with them because I had my other classes. So I had to make it alone. So I was very sad for the first time but then I was happy and grateful that I got to make a video. Like not only grateful with my brother, but I got to learn something. (A06)

For her presentation, she used more texts and a few images to explain various aspects of social media such as what are social media, positive and negative aspects of social media, body positivity, and what are algorithms and user data. In the concluding part of her presentation, the term fake news was explained. She explained the meaning of misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. The presentation shows that Anushka remembered the topics discussed during the workshop. It also reveals her ability to search online and use relevant material for her projects.

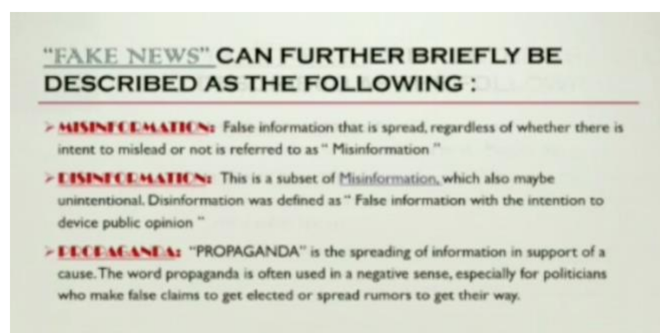


Figure 70: A screen shot from Anushka's video

Anushka's video reflected a good grasp of some of the topics discussed in the workshop. It was great in terms of content. But it lacked editing, aesthetics, and presentation skills. She provided background music to the presentation but did not do

a voiceover. Each slide was overcrowded with texts and the slides moved too fast. She could have prepared a better version had she been given some mentorship or training during the workshop.

Her video can be viewed by clicking this link: https://youtu.be/x4SW5UwWf00

8.2.6 "Social media is what you make of it"

Two participants together made a video on the positive and negative aspects of social media. The video was edited well, using infographics, and suitable background music. The video was prepared using an application called *Kapwing*.

In the video, they presented the good and bad uses of social media. For the good uses they mentioned connecting people, learning, getting new ideas, spreading awareness, entertainment, and to earn money. For the negative aspects, they named depression and anxiety, cyberbullying, FOMO, unrealistic expectations, negative body image, and unhealthy sleep patterns. They did not include "fake news".

They used material from Wikipedia and other online sources for the presentation. They also added their own critical reflections such as "things are not the way [they] appear to be", "is it real or virtual?", and "every coin has two sides". After presenting two sides of social media, they concluded the video by saying "social media is what you make of it. Like so many other things in life, both online and off, you get what you put into it". The video reveals that they were able to search online and choose relevant materials for the video. It also shows the knowledge they gained by collecting the resources and reflecting on them. Their self-reflection and social responsibility are also evident in the video. Their video can be viewed by clicking this link: https://youtu.be/zoLuh3IMcUM

8.2.7 Memes are the best

Another four participants formed a group to make a video of memes. They seem to have searched online and selected some humorous memes for their video. Though the memes they chose for the video did not have a particular theme, they mostly chose memes representing children's reactions. They ended the video with a personalised meme of "Boardroom Suggestion". The topic of the boardroom discussion was "memes are the best". In the discussion, one member said, "most definitely" and the second one "absolutely" the third one, "yeah right, whatever". The third one was thrown out for his disinterest in memes.

Figure 71: A screen shot of the video made by four participants

Their video can be viewed by clicking this link: https://youtu.be/kTo8Kj6p22o

8.2.8 Digital Storytelling: a means for developing learning, media literacy and citizenship

As discussed above, video making exercise seems to have helped, those who took part, to reflect and assimilate some of the topics discussed during the workshop. Some

of them used materials from the workshop activities for the video. They also searched online to find relevant information for their videos. Some of the videos they made showed their social responsibility as they tried to create awareness of social issues.

> [Taara, F] Yeah, a lot of fun and we learned a lot of things while putting things in the video from Wikipedia and all. It took nine hours for us to make the video. We started at 11 and we finished at nine. (A26)

Video-making involves making choices, reflecting, and deciding what values, feelings, viewpoints and beliefs to include or omit and what perspectives to show. Video-making involves understanding media *languages* that suit the platforms and the audience. It also involves reflecting on *audience*, the people for whom the content is made and shared and how to get their attention.

8.2.9 Digital Storytelling – "a *process* and a *feeling*"

As mentioned in the literature review, Chapter 3, Professor David Gauntlett argues in his book, *Making is Connecting*, the very *process* of creative-making is rewarding and fulfilling. Everyday creativity can lead to personal transformation of self and growth. The act of creative making and sharing can impart happiness, pleasure, and a sense of accomplishment and enhance self-esteem. Gauntlett describes creativity in terms of "a *process* and a *feeling*" – the inner experience one undergoes while making something new and different (2018, p24). During the meme-making and chart-making activities, I perceived in many participants the effect of the *process* and *feeling*. Gauntlett defines creativity as:

> Everyday creativity refers to a process which brings together at least one active human mind, and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something. The activity has not been done in this way by this

person (or these people) before. The process may arouse various emotions, such as excitement and frustration, but most especially a feeling of joy. When witnessing and appreciating the output, people may sense the presence of the maker, and recognize those feeling (2018, p87).

Gauntlett's definition of creativity was perceived in participants while they were engaged in making memes. There was a sense of fun and pleasure. The atmosphere during the activity was play, happiness, excitement, and curiosity. They expressed happiness at having created their first meme. They would invite their friends sitting nearby to view it. They would also call me to see it and give my feedback. I took pictures of some of the memes they made, with their permission. This gesture seemed to have uplifted their motivation to make interesting memes. A few of them were shy about showing some memes.

Most of them, in pairs, made three to five memes and some of them more than five. They expressed happiness and satisfaction when they were able to make memes. It was very lively, and they also had fun making memes and showing others their memes. One of them told me that she went crazy making memes. The teacher in the class also expressed her amazement at how students were making memes. (Researcher note, session 4, *School A*)

Participants who took part in the video-making assignment also described their happiness and satisfaction about making the videos.

[Adhira, F] It was fun, we enjoyed a lot. (A13)

[Alisha, F] It was really nice learning as you know, you get to learn so many things and it's really nice about that. (A05)

As noted previously, Tanvi, who made the video in a group of four, spoke about spending time together with her friends. They took nine hours to make the video, but she felt it was not tedious but fun. Spending time together with friends and the process of making a video together with others was fun for her.

> [Tanvi, F] It was really fun because we actually took nine hours to make one video. It was really fun because we all were together the whole day. We had fun in making the video. (A27)

Among the four open-ended questions in the post-workshop feedback form, the second question was "What did you like most in the workshop?" In answering this question, among 29 respondents from *School A*, 16 stated memes (highest), 15 mentioned chart-making, 6 mentioned video-making, and 5 mentioned group projects/group activity. Among the responses from *School B*, 12 mentioned chart-making, drawing or activities, and 4 mentioned group activities. Overall, what participants seemed to have liked most in the workshop was the creative parts – where they made something or collaborated in making something whether with paper and colours or digitally. To further demonstrate the participants' experience of creative making, some responses from the feedback form are presented below. The feedback form was unnamed.

Responses to the question in the feedback form – "what you liked most in the workshop?"

School A:

> "Creating the memes was the most fun and interesting part of the workshop. Also getting together as a team for the group projects was fun."

“I liked the sessions [on] memes, fake news, etc. I had lots of fun making charts and activities. It was fun.

“Memes session, video creating, the chart making sessions.

“Doing group projects, watching video and making memes.”

“The videos and the chart-making part was the best. The charts helped us to do creative presentation.”

“The memes were the best thing in the workshop.”

“The activities and the chart making was really fun. I have never had so much fun in any school activities.”

“What I liked most in the workshop was the different and colourful charts we made…”

School B

“I liked to draw the charts in groups, giving messages by drawing. I liked because it tells about social media literacies.”

“I like the most in the workshop is drawing part.”

“I like how sir was explaining and we all do the work in group.”

“The videos, chart making.”

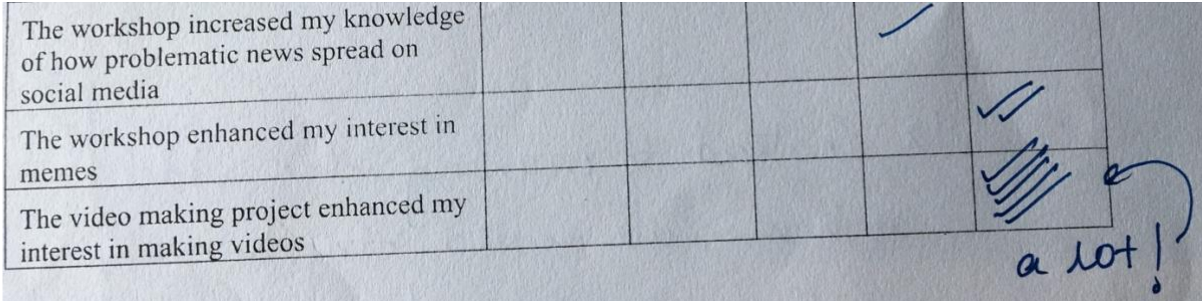
“In the workshop my favourite part was to do activities of making chart on topic that sir gave us.”

“Everything I like and also to make projects.”

“…the charts we did in the school hall.”

What stands out in participants' feedback is their appreciation of creative and collaborative parts in the workshop. While many from *School A* mentioned memes, nobody from *School B* mentioned memes. Since they did the meme-making on paper, they seem to be referring to the exercise as drawing or charts. As I had planned the interview questions, it did not occur to me to ask participants about their experience of making memes. As I analysed the data, I realised that I might have received more insights from participants' experience of making memes had I asked them.

In answering a closed question in the feedback form, “video making project enhanced my interest in making videos” a participant highlighted her answer with additional tick marks. She also wrote, “a lot!” (Figure 72).

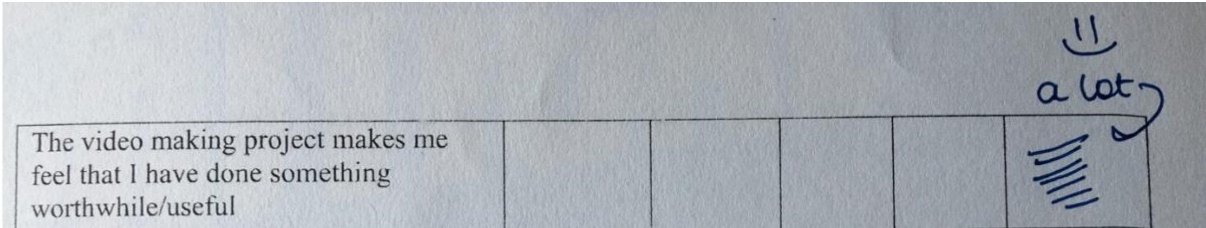


The workshop increased my knowledge of how problematic news spread on social media				✓	
The workshop enhanced my interest in memes					✓✓
The video making project enhanced my interest in making videos					✓✓✓✓

a lot!

Figure 72: A section from the workshop feedback form

She did the same for another question related to the same topic (Figure 73).

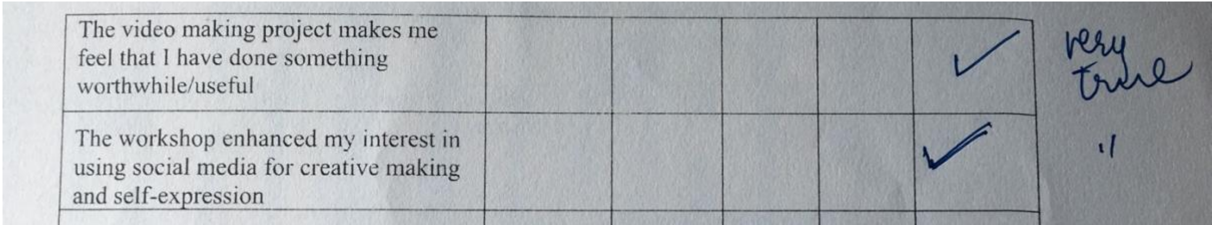


The video making project makes me feel that I have done something worthwhile/useful					✓✓✓✓✓

a lot

Figure 73: A section from the workshop feedback form

Another participant wrote, “very true” (Figure 74).



The video making project makes me feel that I have done something worthwhile/useful					✓	very true
The workshop enhanced my interest in using social media for creative making and self-expression					✓	"

Figure 74: A section from the workshop feedback form

During the interview, the participants were asked, including those who did not make videos, whether they would be interested in making videos in the future. Some of them responded positively and showed interest in making videos. Some said they might make, and some others were not sure about it. One participant, Roshan, from *School B*, signified his plan to start a YouTube channel. He showed interest in making informative videos on games and civic issues.

> [Roshan, M] In future, I have plan. I am thinking of making a YouTube channel and post videos on social causes and games. I can show some tricks for people to improve. If something happens in the society, I can make some videos, to inform others. (SL 24)

> [Kevin, M] I want to become an aeronautical engineer. I would post things about research of new technology. Good things. (SL 15)

Another participant said his father does not allow him to make videos:

> [Pranay, M] I like making videos. But, my father shouts at me if I make. (SL17)

Alisha from *School A* also expressed her desire to make videos when she gets free time or when she wants to take a break from her studies:

> [Alisha, F] Yeah, sure. Obviously whenever I get free time, and whenever I have to take a break from studies and I'll be like, no, now I'm really tired. I'll go and make videos and read over the internet about more about something about social media and then I can put it in by my own thoughts in a video.

8.2.10 "Sit back and be told" culture to "making and doing" culture

In the conclusion of his book, Gauntlett advocates the shift from "sit back and be told" culture to "making and doing" culture. He believes the shift is happening gradually. While passive enjoyment of entertainment does not involve much effort, making things involves some form of effort. The opportunities of easy-to-use tools for making things, sharing, and collaborating that are provided by contemporary platforms do not guarantee that many use them.

> The 'making and doing' culture does require a bit more effort – but it comes with rich rewards'.
>
> Making things shows us that we are powerful, creative agents – people who can really do things, things that other people can see, learn from, and enjoy (Gauntlett p276).

I believe that school education plays a significant role in driving this shift from "sit back and be told" culture to "making and doing" culture. Since Digital Storytelling involves some amount of effort, it calls for external motivation, support, and initiation. Schools may be the best place to provide such motivation and support. The creative participation of children seems to grow when they are motivated and encouraged. When the teacher or a facilitator guides them, then they get involved. This also requires

some form of training for teachers so that they in turn can introduce Digital Storytelling in their pedagogy.

Children's Digital Storytelling can be more effective if they are provided with some kind of training. Participation also can be better if they can be facilitated with the experience of making memes, podcasts, videos, and writing blogs during school hours.

In *School A*, students were instructed to send the video through WhatsApp to the teacher. The teacher also encouraged children to make the video. It might have added motivation for children to make videos. Participants in *School B* did not take part in the video-making home assignment.

The responses from the pilot study in three schools in Mumbai, discussed in Chapter 5, had shown that respondents' use of social media for creative use and self-expression was very limited. As discussed in Chapter 6 – the conceptual framework section – a recent cross-national, evidence-based study, in Bulgaria, Chile, and South Africa conducted by Livingstone, et al. (2019), as part of Global Kids Online project, found most children do not use the Internet for civic and creative participation. Likewise, none of the participants of my workshop had prior experience of making videos or memes. Only one participant mentioned during the interview that she used Instagram to post her artworks. But when they were introduced to creative making within a classroom setting, many of them actively took part. For several of them, the best part of the workshop was the experience of making memes, charts, or video. Based on my experience and the outcome of the study discussed above, I strongly advocate incorporating creative making in classroom learning.

8.3 Conclusion

As discussed above, most participants were perceived to have had happiness and pleasure while making memes. During the interview and in the post-workshop feedback, many affirmed their appreciation and satisfaction for making memes, charts, and videos. They found meaning and pleasure in the very process of making things and collaborating in a team. Creative making was a means for them to self-reflect and express their learning, judgement and social responsibility. Creative making also engaged participants in research and in deepening their knowledge.

I also suggest introducing Digital Storytelling as a method in classroom for children' learning, imagination, and for their agentic participation. In introducing Digital Storytelling as a method, it can adapt elements from the established Digital Storytelling discussed in Chapter 3 such as the process involved in making digital stories, the literacy aspects of Digital Storytelling workshops, the role of the facilitator and the collaboration in the group. Digital Storytelling in classroom should become an organised, structured, institution-supported and facilitator guided practice. It should also be adapted to suit the social media storytelling – use the affordances of platforms for remixing, creating, sharing, collaborating and networking (Jenkins, 2017; Meikle, 2016). Furthermore, I argue that integrating a planned and teacher-mentored Digital Storytelling practice in schools can contribute towards a "making and doing" culture (Gauntlett, 2018) for the transformation of the networked landscape.

The analysis and discussion in this chapter showed that many participants were able to self-reflect and express their knowledge, emotions, and experiences through creative making activities, especially the meme-making activity. Many participants expressed their reactions and feeling about the education system through the memes.

This does not mean they were now ready to unleash their reflection and feeling about the education system in public or come together to take up concrete actions to persuade the government to change the system. But it begs deeper questions like what prevents young people to collectively voice in the public space – offline and online – about the educational system affecting them? Do the consequences they will have to face stop them from taking up collective actions in matters that affect their lives? Or is it because they believe those who make and implement policies will not listen and recognise their voice? How can we open up listening space in family, school, community, media, and government? Young people need access and the opportunity to speak for matters that affect their lives and that their legitimate concerns are listened to and recognised.

The next chapter (Chapter 9) analyses the remaining three themes generated from the fieldwork data: Understanding news and responding to “fake news” on social media; the development of citizenship; and the participatory learning.

Chapter 9: Responding to information disorder, developing capabilities for participation and citizenship, and the impact of participatory learning

This chapter continues the analysis of the impact of the workshop. It has three sections, each dealing with the remaining themes generated from the fieldwork data. The first section discusses participants' perception of news on traditional media and social media, and their understanding and responses to the issue of “fake news”. The second section focuses on the capabilities and skills participants seemed to have developed for participation and citizenship. The third part presents the core principles of participatory learning and its impact on participants.

9.1 Understanding news and responding to information disorder in social media

This section is based on the third session of the workshop which dealt with understanding and managing news on social media. The session covered topics such as the difference between news on traditional media and social media, understanding problematic news on social media, understanding news bias and the difference between a news article and an opinion article.

For the warm-up activity, participants were asked to discuss how they came to know if a news story on social media was true or “fake”? They seemed unsure of how to fact-check and verify information. They were then given a handout on tips for fact-checking information. After the warm-up exercise, they were shown the video lesson.

> Before showing the video, I asked them if they were aware of the meaning of misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. They were not aware of the meaning. I then asked them to look for these topics. They responded well to the video lesson. I paused the video a few times to get their attention to the important points. After the video, I asked them if they could explain the differences between misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. They had a grasp of the first two but were not clear about propaganda. (Researcher field note, session 3, *School A*)

After the video lesson, I presented slides containing examples of images representing misinformation, disinformation, or propaganda. These examples were selected from Indian contexts. Each time an image was projected, they were invited to identify whether it was fact or misinformation or disinformation or propaganda. I then explained to them how that particular false story was created by altering and morphing images and framing characters. For instance, I showed them an image that had been shared widely on social media about Shehla Rashid Shora, a former vice-president of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union. The image makes a false claim that she wears a *sari* with the Pakistan flag on it when she travels outside India. They were, then, showed the original image from a fact-checking website, BOOM, to demonstrate how the image was morphed. In the original image, she was wearing a dark green *sari* (Badiruddin, 2019). I also explained to them how false stories spread on social media and how they can fact-check and verify the news.

> This exercise was engaging. I also found it difficult to manage the group as they were answering loudly together each time I projected an image. (Researcher field note, session 3, *School A*)

> They were not aware of the term misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. However, after the video and presentation activity, they showed that they grasped the meaning. (Researcher field note, session 3, *School B*)

9.1.1 Learning to write a news article and an opinion article

For the main activity, participants, in 5 groups, were asked to prepare a school newspaper page containing a news article of an event in their school and an opinion article on the use of fake news. Prior to the activity, I explained to them the basic difference between a news article and an opinion article. They were instructed to include in the news article What? Who? Where? When? Why? How? For the opinion article, they were instructed to write on issues related to "fake news". Explanation sheets on a news article and opinion article were given to each group. They were free to choose the topic for the news article. For the opinion piece, they were told to write on the issue of "fake news". This activity was primarily meant to give them a basic experience of presenting facts and opinions in writing. The exercise was also intended to help them have an experience of writing for an *audience* – fellow students and school staff – and understand some aspects of news *production*. They were asked to assign roles among themselves for writing the headlines, making the layout, and editing. Each group was given an A1 sheet to make a news page. In the images of their news pages, given below, I have anonymised wherever the school name was mentioned.

School A

Group 1

This group (Figure 75) expressed in their opinion article that social media can be used for social welfare. But they were concerned that people have been using social media to spread problematic news. They used terms like disinformation and propaganda, which were discussed prior to the activity. The news article was on Constitution Day. In the news article, they tried to capture What? Who? Where? When? Why? How?

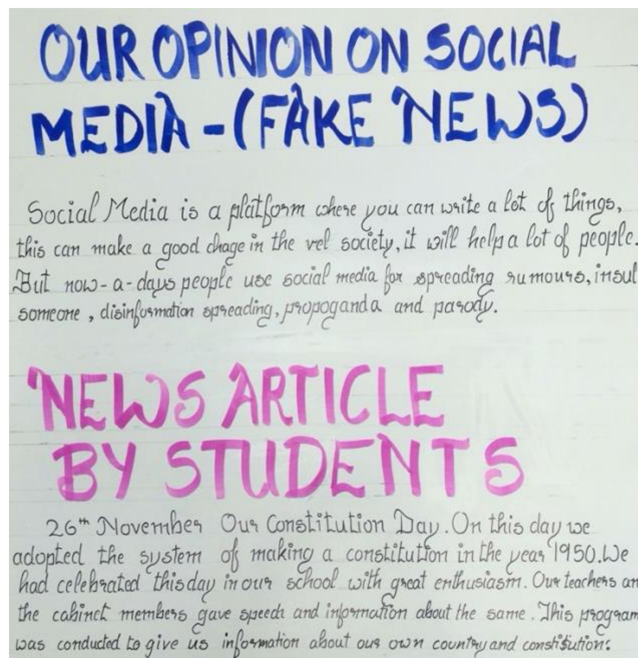


Figure 75: Main activity, group 1, session 3, School A

Group 2

For the opinion article, this group chose the theme, “Stop fake news” (Figure 76). The article showed their awareness of fake news as a social problem and their agency to respond to the issue of fake news. They were able to reflect on fake news that spread online as well as offline – “verbal or the ones we share on social media”. The terms “peace of the nation” and “violates our community” mentioned in the article showed their social consciousness and sense of citizenship. Their use of captions, “Think twice before you send messages” and “Stop being fake or sending fake news”, demonstrate their awareness of Fake News as a social problem.

The presentation and layout of the news article on *the Feast* showed happy emotions. On the other hand, for Fake News, they used a stop symbol depicting urgency and negativity. They ruled that the article was a fact but did not give sufficient details of the event.

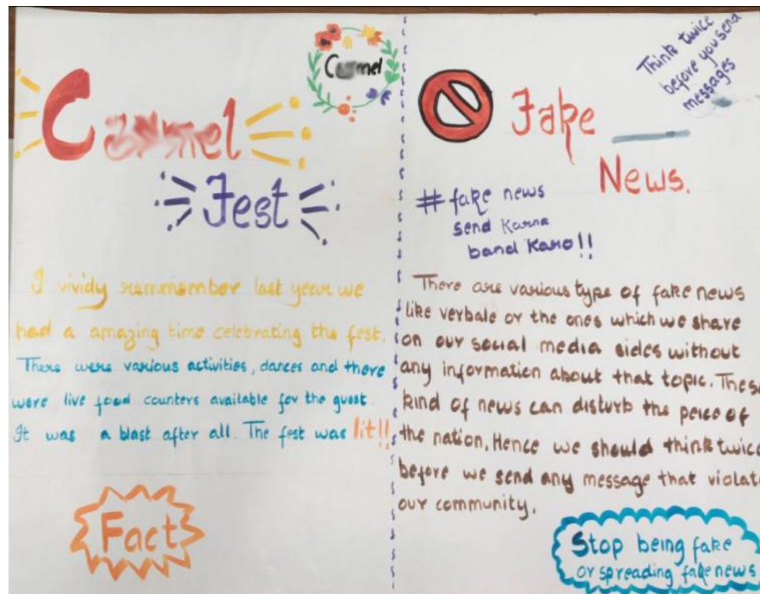


Figure 76: Main activity, group 2, session 3, School A

Group 3

This group (Figure 77) explained various types of “fake news” based on the workshop and the handout given to them. They tried to give examples for each type which showed their grasp of the terms. They were aware of dubious websites operating in India promoting false stories related to politics, actors, and terrorist acts. Though they knew there were cybercrime departments to check and control such activities, they urged their fellow students to help them in overcoming the menace by not sharing news stories without verifying. A higher level of awareness, sense of responsibility in addressing social issues, and citizenship was seen in this group’s work.

For the news article, they reported the event “Hindi Diwas” (Hindi Day). The article covered the journalistic principles of the inverted pyramid in the beginning, in their use of What? Who? Where? When? Why? How? In the report, they described the debate between two school teams on the advantages and disadvantages of social media. They found the debate useful and fun. The report showed their ability to evaluate, analyse, and describe events.

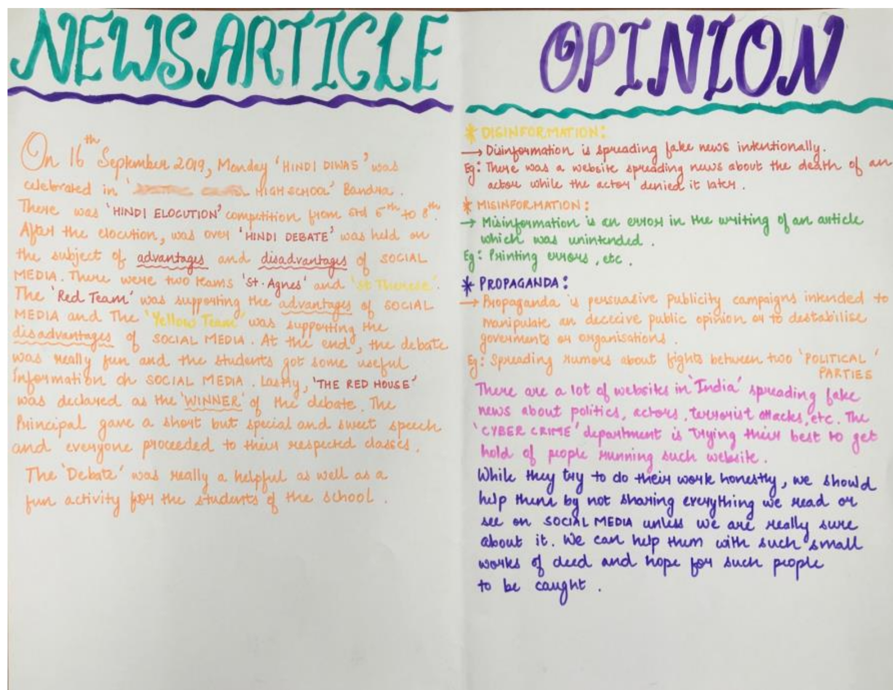


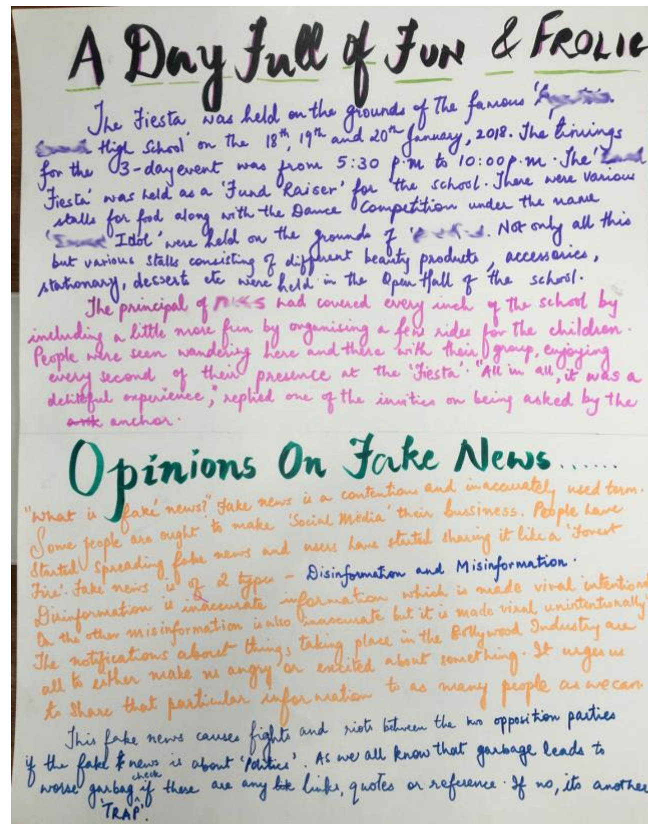
Figure 77: Main activity, group 3, session 3, School A

Group 4

This group's (Figure 78) news article showed their application of What? Who? Where? When? Why? How? They gave a suitable title for their article. They described what made the event fun-filled.

For the opinion article, they explained the term "fake news". Giving the example of news created on Bollywood celebrities, they said such news makes users react emotionally – "either angry or excited about something." They also felt the news is presented to catch the attention and to make them share without thinking: "It urges us all to share that particular information to as many people as we can." They also mentioned the evil effects of "fake news" as they can cause fights between two parties. They explained the impact of "fake news" by saying "garbage leads to worse garbage". In conclusion, they asked the readers to "check if there are any links, quotes or reference" in the news stories they get. A higher level of awareness, critical thinking,

and citizenship can be seen in them. They were able to adapt material from the handout given to them for writing the articles.



A Day Full of Fun & Frolic

The Fiesta was held on the grounds of The famous ' High School' on the 18th, 19th and 20th January, 2018. The timings for the 3-day event was from 5:30 p.m to 10:00 p.m. The ' Fiesta' was held as a 'Fund Raiser' for the school. There were various stalls for food along with the Dance Competition under the name ' Idol' were held on the grounds of ' '. Not only all this but various stalls consisting of different beauty products, accessories, stationary, dessert etc were held in the Open Hall of the school.

The principal of had covered every inch of the school by including a little more fun by organising a few rides for the children. People were seen wandering here and there with their group, enjoying every second of their presence at the 'Fiesta'. "All in all, it was a delightful experience," replied one of the invities on being asked by the anchor.

Opinions On Fake News……

"What is 'fake' news?" Fake news is a contentious and inaccurately used term. Some people are ought to make 'Social Media' their business. People have started spreading fake news and users have started sharing it like a 'Forest Fire'. Fake news is of 2 types – Disinformation and Misinformation. Disinformation is inaccurate information which is made viral intentionally. On the other misinformation is also inaccurate but it is made viral unintentionally. The notifications about things taking place in the Bollywood Industry are all to either make us angry or excited about something. It urges us to share that particular information to as many people as we can.

This fake news causes fights and riots between the two opposition parties if the fake news is about 'Politics'. As we all know that garbage leads to worse garbage check if there are any links, quotes or reference. If no, its another 'TRAP'.

Figure 78: Main activity, group 4, session 3, School A

The news page prepared by group 5 is given in the Appendix L.

School B

Group 1

This group (Figure 79) gave a title each for the news article and the opinion article. They wrote about the Children's Day party in their school for the news article, including What? Who? Where? When? Why? How? They mentioned the "DJ, dance, song, raps" as the highlight of the celebration.

Their opinion article was titled as a hashtag – #saynotofakenews. They also concluded the article by highlighting "say no to fake news." They illustrated the article

by giving an example of a piece of “fake news” that accused Prime Minister Modi of orchestrating the Pulwama attack on a military convoy that took place in the (then) state of Jammu and Kashmir on February 14, 2019. The writer, referring to the Prime Minister of India, said, “But it is my opinion that it was a fake news as it was not done by Modiji”. They used the words, “in my opinion” which shows the stand the writer has taken.

The article then explained the harm fake news can cause, saying, “It can occur many conflicts, rally’s, etc. in our society which can cause many bad effects on children, people, etc.”

The article shows that they understand the difference between a news article and an opinion article and what elements go in writing each. The opinion article shows their awareness of “fake news” in society and how it is used in politics. It also shows an awareness of the need for social responsibility.

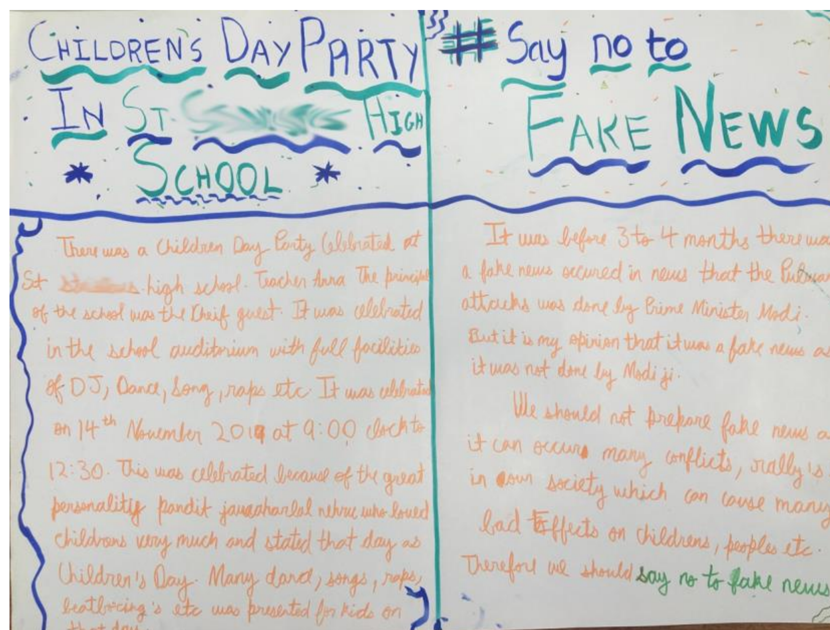


Figure 79: Main activity, group 1, session 3, School A

Group 2

This group (Figure 80) gave a visual representation in a poster format rather than writing actual articles. For the news article, they just explained in bullet points What? Who? Where? When? Why? How? For the why part, they wrote “students confidence builder”. This suggests their self-reflection that annual day and prize distribution are meant to build students’ confidence. For the how part, intriguingly they wrote “with hands and smiles” referring to the prize distribution. Though their grasp of the elements of a news article is evident, their presentation lacked the format of an article since they did not write it in sentences. The representation of the stage, characters on the stage, and the audience demonstrate their creative way of communicating a message.

Instead of writing an opinion article, they drew an image representing an imaginative “fake news” with a caption “PM DIED IN BATHTUB!!!” Their imagination of a bathtub death seems to be based on the death of a famous Bollywood actress who was allegedly found dead in a bathtub of a hotel where she was staying in 2018. There was no reflection or opinion on “fake news”. But they demonstrated that sensational and political “fake news” can be created.

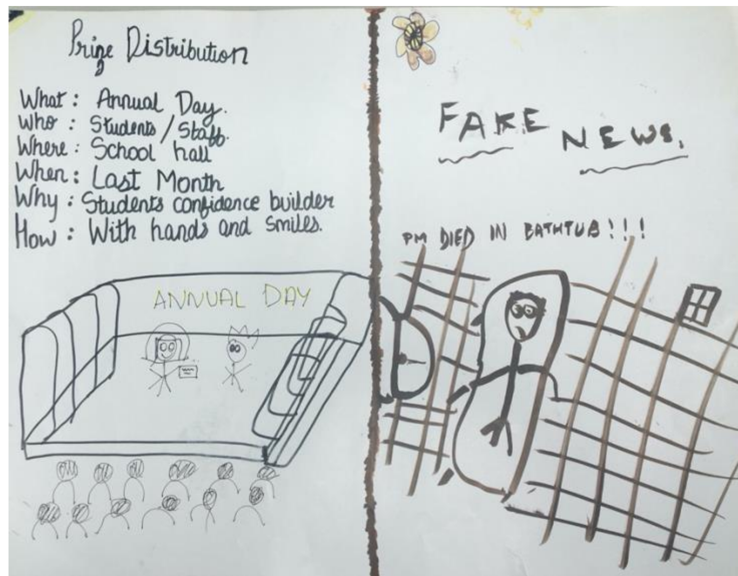


Figure 80: Main activity, group 2, session 3, School B

Group 3

Group three (Figure 81) gave a title for the news page – Headlines for today – and a title for the article – boys school celebrates St Francis Xavier feast!!! Unlike other groups, they wrote who was the editor, writer and reporter. They added “time pass helper” to show the lack of collaboration from one of the team members. The article covered What? Who? Where? When? Why? How? They paid attention to details such as date, time of starting and ending, what Catholics and non-Catholics did on that day, and what they were given. The article concluded with a positive note, “It was a wonderful day”.

Instead of writing an opinion article, they just urged people not to believe fake news.

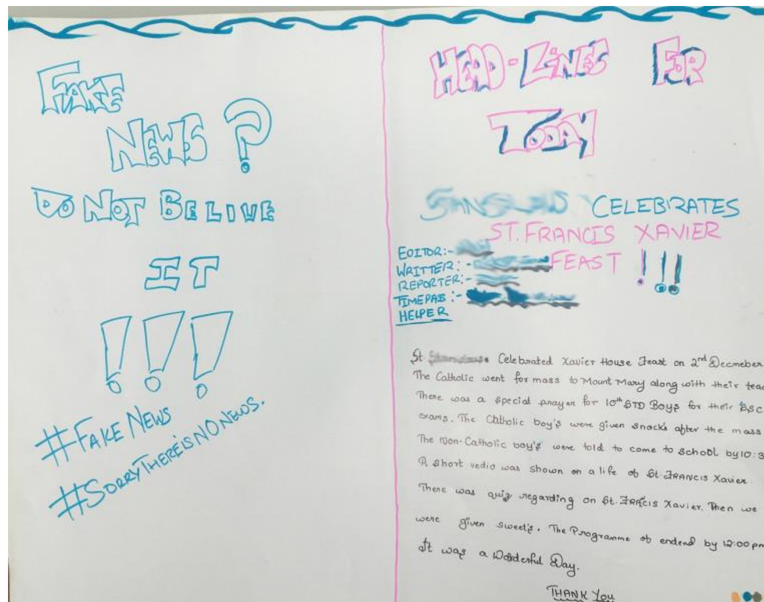


Figure 81: Main activity, group 3, session 3, School B

Group 4

This group (Figure 82) just wrote a news article. It had an appealing title – B-School becomes Santa Claus. For the by-line, they wrote, “Article by B-School Times”. The article showed good writing skills and calligraphy, and their sense of belonging to the school. The theme of the article was sharing and caring. It ended with a caption, “Let us pledge to help people in need.” It also revealed how the school involves children for civic participation.

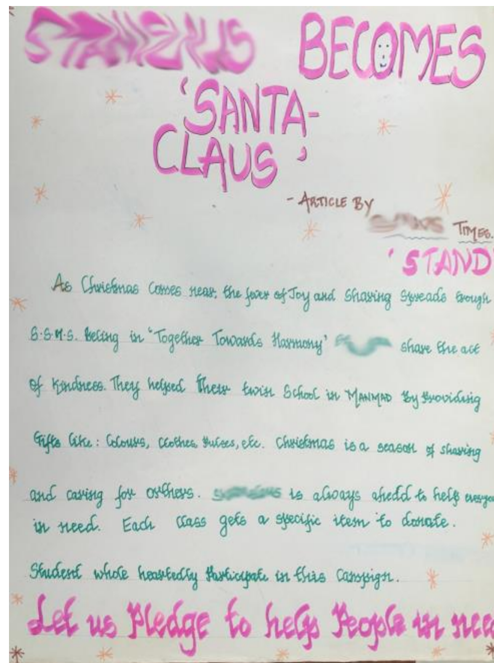


Figure 82: Main activity, group 4, session 3, School A

The fifth group's work is given in the Appendix M. It lacked reflection and details.

In my field note, I had observed that many participants actively participated in this activity for which there was insufficient time. We also faced a technical issue while showing the video as the sound was kept low in the amplifier. We then had to wait for the technician to come. Some of the participants seemed playful or disinterested.

> Students actively participated in the activity. Some of them were playful. Some of them were moving around. Three of them said they were not interested in doing the activity. Two groups asked for more time to complete. They said they found the activity useful. One of them said, "no ideas" for the activity. (Researcher field note, day 3, *School B*)

9.1.2 Knowledge of what is "fake news" and why people spread fake news

During the interview, many participants demonstrated a good grasp of the term "fake news". Most participants from *School A* mentioned the terms "misinformation" and

“disinformation” which were discussed during the workshop to explain “fake news”. They knew the differences between the two. However, they had difficulty explaining propaganda.

> [Adhira, F] Misinformation is not on purpose but by mistake. And disinformation is on purpose. (IN/A13)
>
> [Sneha, F] Misinformation is when you accidentally say the wrong thing. And then disinformation is you knowingly do it, like you know it's not right but then you share it on social media. (IN/A24)
>
> [Taara, F] There are three types of news: misinformation, disinformation and propaganda. Misinformation is by mistake when you post something which is not true, but disinformation is when you post something on purpose to insult someone or spread rumours… Yes, like when a political party spreads rumours about some other political party like the picture we just saw about the green logo of some political party which was not true. That was just to spread rumours about that political party. (IN/26)

All interviewees from *School B* showed awareness of the issue of “fake news” and how they need to be careful about it. When they were asked to explain the term “fake news”, only two mentioned the terms misinformation and disinformation. Between them, one partially explained the meaning of the terms.

> [Roshan, M] Misinformation is not correct. Disinformation is not for right use. (IN/B24)

But he expressed his concern that “fake news” can cause communal riots. He also said that the Muslim community is targeted through “fake news”.

> [Roshan, M] Fake news can be of many types. People who share fake news are creating bad situation in the country. The country can go

> through communal riots can happened by that news. Like how Muslim community is targeted. (IN/B24)

Nirav remembered the terms disinformation and misinformation, but he was unaware of the meaning.

> [Nirav, M] I remember the word disinformation and misinformation. But don't know the meaning. (IN/B16)

He narrated a personal experience to describe what is "fake news":

> [Nirav, M] Two to three months before, I heard a news that Byculla has a zoo and government is giving 300 crores to build it. That was a fake news. Today there is nothing. Fake news is an issue. (IN/B16)

He then explained the reason why people spread "fake news" and what should be our response to them.

> [Nirav, M] Many people post fake news for fun, for fight. We should report his ID, if someone sends fake news. Or comment not to post fake news. (IN/B16)

Pranay mentioned the term propaganda. He was of the opinion that they should not talk about politics.

> [Pranay, M] On WhatsApp and social media there is memes, and fake news. We should not share memes. Memes generally relate to propaganda. We should not talk on social media about politics. If the news is helpful to people, then share. If it is not, then see and delete it. (IN/B17)

Most interviewees from both schools were aware that people use social media to spread rumours for reasons such as to have fun, to take revenge or for political or religious reasons.

> [Taara, F] Yes, like when a political party spreads rumours about some other political party like the picture we just saw about the green logo of some political party which was not true. That was just to spread rumours about that political party. (IN/A26)

> [Amoli, F] Fake News can also be done for your rivals. Like if you don't like someone, you can post any rumour about them that they are doing this and they're doing that. As far as celebrities are concerned, there are many haters of them as well. So, they post anything about them. They just post like she was with this one or she was with that one and on the dressing and stuff like that. (IN/A15)

Kevin from *School B* described what is fake news, why it is spread and how to respond to such news:

> [Kevin, M] News is information about what happened. Fake new is something edited of what happened. People get fun in seeing others disturbed. People get happy others sadness. Fake news is an issue in India. Most important is religion is in India. Politician say Islam is bad, Hinduism is good. But that is wrong. Every religion is good, teaches bad. Fake news is now peace in the country are illegal. Like today about the citizenship bill. If it is good news, then share it. If any information helps, then share. If it is bad and edited, then we should not share. You can get to know if it is fake or real, by the character of a person who posted it. If someone is who don't respect the nation. If you don't know the person, then cross check with google. Some kind of news related to it is there, then we can know. (IN/B15)

9.1.3 Trust in news on social media vs traditional media

The majority of interviewees expressed the view that news on social media cannot be trusted. They considered news on traditional media such as TV and newspaper as legitimate and mostly trustworthy. They were aware that news on traditional media is published by qualified people with proper verification, but on social media, anyone can create and share the news.

> [Amoli, F] There's a lot of difference because social media news can be posted by anyone, like whoever wants to post they can post and traditional news is posted by authorities, they investigate and stuff like that, they post something which they know and which they investigated properly. But social media news can be anything it can be wrong also, you never know. They can be disinformation also and misinformation. As we all know misinformation is something which is done by mistake. And disinformation is purposely made for. like people want to troll someone so they write anything about them. (IN/A15)

> [Anushka, F] So the news on social media, as I said, is exaggerated. And you know it actually is apparently false only, I mean, they don't speak truth. They only want to put people down and they want to put people in trouble and then news on TV channels or newspaper maybe right maybe wrong, but you know what we don't know what it is we don't know the depth about the thing about them. (IN/A06)

Navya demonstrated a higher judgement of news. She compared the spread of rumours on social media to the Amazon fires in Brazil. She seemed to understand that media spice up content to get public attention. She also mentioned the term TRP (Television Rating Point). Traditional news outlets have limitations in spicing up news due to the check and control:

> [Navya, F] Yes, there is a big difference; on social media you can share rumours easily like how Amazon fire caught so easily; social media is like that. Fire catches easy, but traditional newspapers also do share some rumours, they make (an) issue out of every little thing. But it is not complete as bad as the social media thing because they again have some rules and regulations and they have some strategic planning and they have some limit to what they can spice it up they of course everybody will spice it up because they need TRPs. They need public attention. Media is media or social media. It's all public attention but social media not only spices it up it completely insults or completely makes the news fake. (IN/A20)

Another participant, Adhira, used an example from the video lesson to explain misinformation in traditional news:

> News on social media is different. Half of them are rumours and in the newspaper there can be disinformation, no, sorry, misinformation, like suppose some say like 40 people are dead they can get it as 41 or something. So, it is not content as rumors, it is just by mistake here but on the social media it is disinformation on purpose. (IN/A13)

Alisha distinguished between false news spreading on WhatsApp and news pages on social media from trusted news websites. She considered the latter legitimate and can be trusted:

> [Alisha, F] See, basically if I would get news from WhatsApp, I would never trust it because most of the time it is totally fake. Like recently also there was a news that 2000-rupee notes are going to be banned. So, I usually don't trust WhatsApp news. But then there are many social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, which have legal news pages. And the websites have their own accounts. So if the news is posted on that account, you can for sure trust them. And otherwise, you can’t really trust them; like news pages on Google and all that that you can’t completely trust. (IN/A05)

Sneha felt news on traditional media is accurate and can be trusted but not on social media. She knew that on social media people edit pictures and show false stories:

> [Sneha, F] No they can be different because the social media What news the share is not completely accurate but then, yeah its not accurate but the traditional news is accurate. Like on social media, they can edit a particular picture and then they put it like this was next to this man and he was celebrating this. But in traditional news they don't do that because they do it. They don't do it live, but they do it live. It's accurate. You can trust on them and not like the social media, sometimes it's true, but not all the time. (IN/A24)

Another participant expressed more confidence in trusting traditional media since there is an editorial process involved. In traditional media, there are many people involved in the production and therefore there are fewer errors. On social media, news stories are published by individuals and not collectively.

> [Tanvi] Traditional media is truer like because there are a lot of people who work in that company and like read it again and again. And if there is, something wrong, they correct it and stuff, but in social media one person writes, and he posts it. So, you just can't believe social media, but can believe traditional media. (A27)

Some interviewees mentioned about how people edit and morph pictures on social media. They also referred to the examples I had shown during the workshop presentation. For example, Rebecca referred to an edited picture to change the context which I had shown in my presentation:

> [Rebecca, F] And they send the news, sometimes edit picture you showed us a picture. So, some it would be fake also on social media, but I don't think it would be fake on newspapers. (A21)

Alisha felt traditional media will not publish false stories since they work officially and with government regulation. On the other hand, news spreading on social media is not verified and therefore people should not share such news.

> [Alisha, F] See the newspaper is basically it's very legal and totally assured that it is true and it has to be true by hook or by crook because it is approved by the government. When it comes on WhatsApp and other accounts you don't really know because they don't even have the verification, you don't know that if it is true on one, you should not really share that information. Because others might believe it and something wrong might happen. (IN/A05)

Ranbir from *School B* gave a more balanced response by stating that both traditional media and social media have positives and negatives, but traditional media can be trusted better:

> [Ranbir, M] In traditional media, news come late. In social media someone can share rumors. In newspaper, there are experts. There are both negatives and positives in both. I trust more traditional news. In social media there are more chances of rumors more. Traditional media will say that they have not confirmed this. (IN/B27)

Another participant, Yash, stated that he did not trust social media news since they are not verified news:

> [Yash, M] On Social media they are not fully accurate. They news that they are giving are not verified by any source. I don’t trust news on social media as compare to TV. Most of the time TV news can be trusted. (IN/B28)

The interviews reveal that participants were aware of rumours and false stories circulating in social media. They were aware of the editorial structures in traditional

media. They need further news literacy training to judge and evaluate news on traditional media. Their knowledge of bias and agenda-setting in news is limited.

9.1.4 "Fake news" – a social evil and national issue

Some participants felt "fake news" is a serious social issue that can affect social harmony and peace. For example, Alisha gave an example of how her family was alarmed and worried when they got false news that the Rs. 2,000 note was going to be demonetised. Later the family came to know it was false news.

> [Alisha, F] Yes it can create like a very big problem, like recently I talked about that note thing so it was a fake news and everyone in my house was in a hustle and bustle…and everyone was very irritated and they started like getting very irritated and all of them were like…he went to the bank, he's like, no, there's nothing like this is all fake news. And then we came to know about that. (IN/A05)

Taara referred to the examples from the workshop presentation to explain the seriousness of the issue:

> [Taara, F] People post fake news sometimes for fun and sometimes to spread rumours and we should not spread fake news because it can be harmful for some people. Like we saw those incidents in the workshops that we did about the girl whose video they spread, and also, we should not. And we should not believe every news that we read on social media. We should always visit we should always cross check with other websites and newspapers and news channels to see if the news is true or fake. (IN/A26)

Adhira spoke of organised and paid creation of fake news for political attacks:

> [Adhira, F] It's this only fake news means, or something related to rumours which is not valid. It's just paid to spoil something; someone's

> name like in politics and which is something wrong to spoil someone's name the image. (IN/A13)

9.1.5 Importance of verifying and fact-checking news

Some participants showed evidence of a higher level of awareness and judgement with regard to the information that they came across. They explained how to verify the news. They also spoke of responsible sharing by not forwarding news without verifying. Anushka was very critical of the consequence of sharing news without verification:

> [Anushka, F] So like, after reading it, you shall not directly send it to your friends, or somebody like, you should to actually get, you should get detail about it that is it even true or not. Because then if you forward it to your other friends or family groups, even they think it's true. They don't have so much time to read. They only read the first sentence in the last sentence. That's what I do. And then you know, just forward it to some other groups and then they think it is true, so they forward it to some other groups. So, it's better not to forward that you like get into the thing and then forwarded it. (IN/A06)

Amoli said that there is a need to cross check the news on social media with established newspapers:

> [Amoli, F] We can search more about it. So that we come to know what exactly is going on. And we can ask many people around us, and then newspapers as well, if that news is really true, it will come in the newspaper automatically. If it's not coming in the newspaper that means, it's wrong. Because as I told before, there are many people who post whatever they want to on social media. You don't know the authority sometimes. But newspaper is something trustworthy. So, you can reassure with the help of newspaper. (IN/A15)

For Sneha, verifying news can be done by asking someone who is more knowledgeable or by fact checking in traditional news or Google:

> [Sneha, F] You can be careful like, if I, if you see something and you want to confirm it, either you ask somebody who will know the right news or you use traditional news. You can watch it on TV or you can google it also. (IN/A24)

Roshan expressed that we should first reflect about the news, then verify its validity before forwarding to groups:

> [Roshan, M] If we get a news on WhatsApp just think about, if it is true. Don’t just forward. Some people as soon as they get they forward to groups. We should not do. Look at the news, try to think about it, then search about it in google. And then if it is true, share. (IN/B24)

For Yash, verifying news is important. He also explained how he verifies the news:

> Verify the news. I first ask or check with newspaper or TV if it is true. I also ask whoever sends it to me to check if it is fake. (IN/B28)

Alex said that he approached his mother to fact check news for him:

> I ask my mother if it is a fake news. She goes to website and searches. (IN/B01)

9.1.6 Conclusion

The workshop tried to introduce the participants to some aspects of how and why news is produced and shared online and the issues of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda. However, the complex landscape of information disorder involves various actors such as mainstream media, social media, political parties and civic society.

Understanding the architecture of information disorder in a country like India involves critically analysing how political parties and mainstream media spearhead systematic dissemination of disinformation and hate content, targeting particular communities, and how citizen groups and civic society participate in it (Banaji and Bhat, 2019). Developing capabilities to analyse and respond to information disorder requires systematic training and ongoing classroom practices. To take participants' learning to the next level, more sessions will be required on topics such as how platform design and social and political contexts influence the spread of disinformation (Banaji and Bhat, 2019); how and why emotionally engaging content spread fast on networked platforms; the role of community participation in spreading hate content; implications of bringing in more regulations to platform owners; government's use and misuse of social media in managing information; and politically motivated and systematic targeting of some communities through disinformation. Introducing case studies on mob lynching incidents and other recent disinformation campaigns specific to India in the classroom can be helpful in deconstructing the complex architecture of disinformation campaigns. Such case studies should evaluate how and why some groups and communities in India are targeted through disinformation, who are the actors involved in such campaigns, what benefits do they gain, and how ideologies and prejudice impact the spread of such campaigns (Banaji and Bhat, 2019). Social media literacy education must incorporate critical self-reflection of how emotions, bias, and prejudice play a role in one's news habits and sharing and how family, community, and media shape them.

Bias in news was briefly explained in the video lesson. During the interview, I asked some of them if they could explain their understanding of bias. They seemed to

have a poor grasp of the term. But a separate session with dedicated activities on news bias may be helpful for participants to understand and critically reflect on bias in news.

The activity of writing an opinion and a news article seemed to have facilitated a better understanding of the terms. It also facilitated further reflection on the issue of “fake news”. This type of activity seemingly is helpful to introduce participants to the aspects of *audience, language, representation,* and *production*. By writing and designing a news page with two types of articles, they were in fact participating in the *production*. They worked in a team with assigned roles which is another aspect of *production*. They had to choose a story and decide what message was to be included or excluded and what meaning to convey – the aspect of *representation*. They prepared the newspaper page for an *audience* – students and staff of their school. They used metaphors, expressions, headlines, captions, explanations, and examples to make meaning and to convey their message – the aspect of *language*. It was also a storytelling group activity as they had to identify and report a story.

9.2 Developing informed and creative participation and citizenship

This section analyses the fifth theme from the field work data. The conceptual framework of this study included developing informed and creative *participation* and *citizenship* as core features of social media literacy. I broadly categorised the capabilities and practices of participation into three:

a) Informed and critical participation on social media platforms
b) Creative participation for self-expression and citizenship

c) Participation characterised by respect, kindness, resilience and responsibility

9.2.1 Informed and critical participation on social media platforms

Developing capabilities for critically understanding commercially driven, data-centric, algorithmic platforms and capabilities for understanding and managing visibility and news are important for participation in contemporary media ecology. This study, as discussed above and in Chapter 7, found some evidence to suggest that social media literacy in school can help children to develop these core capabilities. Many participants demonstrated their understanding of how an algorithm is embedded in a platform interface and how it plays a role in showing personalised content and ads. They also seem to have developed a basic knowledge of how a platform collects and stores user data for showing recommendations and for selling them to advertisers. However, more sessions which include case studies and group activities on the inequalities, discriminations, surveillance (Lyon, 2018; Cheney-Lippold, 2019) and the behavioural shaping happening on platforms (Zuboff, 2019) are required to deepen their learning and judgement.

Another important aspect related to participation is understanding social media as public platforms on which various types of communication, including personal and private communication, happen. Since sharing on social media has uncertain visibility, it has serious implications for interpersonal privacy (Meikle, 2016). It also leads to corporate and governmental surveillance and control. Managing visibility and self-representation on social media involves a critical understanding of online visibility and building resilience. Many participants showed evidence of their awareness that social media are public platforms and the social or personal practices on social media can have uncertain consequences. Some of them seem to have gained knowledge of

different aspects of self-representation on social media. Awareness of these aspects is vital for informed and critical participation. While the workshop discussed the consequences of uncertain visibility, it did not include discussions on deeper issues of surveillance due to the limited nature of my study. As noted earlier, a couple of interviewees mentioned that they were surprised to learn that governments can access users' content. However, they were curious as to how that is technically possible. Critically reflecting on how platforms, governments, political parties, and other domestic or international agencies use social media for monitoring and surveillance, are important for informed participation. Additionally, group activities and reflexive discussion on how networked ecosystem and the user participation mutually constitute surveillance are required to further understand the surveillance culture (Lyon, 2018).

Another capability which the workshop tried to develop for critical participation was understanding news and managing news on social media. The workshop tried to make participants understand how news on traditional media is different from the news on social media, how to respond to problematic news on social media, what is bias in news, and how to distinguish between facts and opinions in news.

9.2.2 Creative participation for self-expression and citizenship

As Gauntlett (2018) suggests, creative making is useful both for the very *process* of making something and for connecting and communicating with others. Creative making and sharing online transform passive viewers to active participants. Everyday creativity can lead to personal transformation of self and growth. Making and sharing creative material online gives a positive feeling of active participation and doing something for the world. The act of creative making and sharing can give happiness, pleasure, sense of accomplishment and enhance self-esteem. In creative making,

firstly, we connect together materials and ideas; secondly, by sharing our creative making online, we also connect with others.

As discussed in Chapter 8, the workshop tried to give participants an experience of creative making – making charts, memes, and videos. Many participants showed interest in participating in creative making. The process of coming together, sharing ideas, and contributing based on each one's talents and abilities is an important aspect of participation. Some of the memes, charts, and videos that they prepared, demonstrated their social responsibility and respect towards others. They tried to voice their opinion through their creative making.

Channelising children's creative power and forming them for DIY culture

As discussed in the pilot study findings, though social media are embedded in children's lives, their creative use of platforms for self-expression is very limited. The participants of the main study had no prior experience of making memes or videos. But when they were introduced to making memes, all of them actively engaged in doing so. When they were given a video making assignment, 13 of them took initiatives to self-learn and make videos from home. Besides, most of them actively took part in making news pages, and other charts. They seemed to have enjoyed the very process of making things. As Gauntlett argues, "DIY is not powerful because of the stuff that is made, but because of the feelings and meanings of the process" (2018, p202). Some of them asked me if they could take home the charts and memes they prepared. Participants demonstrated the application of creativity, self-reflection, and social responsibility in what they made.

This seems to suggest that children's creative participation can be enhanced by motivating them and providing them with some guidance and mentoring. For many, creative participation does not seem to be automatic. They may need to be initiated into the DIY culture. When the participants were given materials or facilities for creative making within a classroom setting, most of them participated actively. However, when they were asked to self-learn and make videos from home, participation was much less. While children possess skills and capabilities for creative making, they may have to be motivated with some planned activities and programmes in schools. They may also need some form of training for making things that can be shared on social media. They need to be introduced to the language of memes, videos, and blogs. They need to be shown the basic technique of writing a script, shooting, editing and making engaging videos. This study suggests incorporating creative making such as memes, videos, and blogs in schools' programmes for children.

More discussion on how participants valued the experience of creative making is presented below under the subheading: Play and creativity, motivation and engagement in participatory learning.

Respect, kindness, resilience and responsible sharing

While going through the data, four important aspects related to participation and managing visibility were noted – respect, kindness, resilience, and responsible sharing. These themes were noted in some of the charts, memes, videos, and in the interviews.

As discussed in Chapter 7, many participants, particularly in *School A*, seemed to value responsible sharing. They also showed strong objection against toxic social

media behaviours. They manifested a spirit of resilience in dealing with issues of interpersonal privacy and agency in addressing such problems. Participants also had an experience of making hashtags, and writing comments related to respect, responsibility, and resilience.

These qualities may be helpful in responding to the toxic culture that is coexisting with the participatory culture on social media.

Speaking about the key take away from the workshop, one of them, Anushka expressed responsible sharing, being kind, and helping others on social media.

> [Anushka, F] So the first thing is, you know, not to post any rubbish on social media, which will cause trouble. Then secondly is you know, you should …..for something sensible, you should not spread rumours or fake news and thirdly and lastly, it would be like, you should help people who are in need and not trouble them and not bully them. And, you know, you should be very kind to people because they think we are speaking the truth and they end up learning that you're not speaking the truth. So, you should always be helpful. I mean, grateful to God that He has created such a platform where you know, all can connect, and all can chat you know after years and years. (A06)

Responding to a question on interpersonal privacy issues, another participant, Amoli, expressed her views on building resilience and responsible sharing.

> [Amoli, F] How do we deal with it? It's their mentality; mentality we can't change. So, it's like we should always be motivated. Like this can't affect us…As far as possible, just wear decent clothes and post decent photos so that no one gets a chance to troll you. And even if people troll you, you can block them always. And you can block them from viewing your stories and viewing a post and commenting you, so that there are no more trolls. And you should always be focused on what you are doing. You should

not let the other people affect you because it's their mentality you can't change. (A15)

Shen then spoke about motivating oneself from using motivational resources on social media.

[Amoli, F] Yeah, social media can always help you to motivate yourself through the motivational posts they have. And you can, you only be a healthy person like have a healthy mind. (A15)

Taara expressed her opinion that we should not disrespect others.

[Taara, F] We should keep in mind that we don't insult someone, or we should say that our posts are always based on true information and not something about what we think, so that no one is disrespected or anything. (A26)

However, the aspects of respect, resilience and responsible sharing were expressed more by girls than boys participants. In their activity material and interviews, boys did not show much concern about gender violence, why it is taking place and how they can prevent it. A short workshop is not sufficient for conscientizing boys about gender violence and how some of their everyday practices – online and offline – reproduce and reinforce gender violence and discrimination in society. More thorough in-depth reflections and activities and prolonged learning programmes focused on gendered citizenship are suggested. Evaluations and assessment of the impact of such programmes can reveal to what extent they are useful in changing the mindset of boys and if they come forward to collectively act against gender discriminations in their families, communities, and the media.

(More discussion on this topic can be found in Chapter 7, section two)

9.2.3 Using social media for civic participation

The workshop did not have activities that directly involved participants in civic engagement. But the activities for managing visibility and news management were focused on social responsibility. Some of the charts they prepared for these sessions demonstrate their social responsibility.

During the interview, they were asked to express their opinion on civic campaigns on social media. Most of them affirmed that social media are good platforms for voicing about social issues. Some of them were aware of the campaigns that were going on at that time such as the Aarey Forest and the Citizenship Bill. For example, Alisha mentioned “hashtag Aarey Forest and hashtag MeToo”. She also said one has to be careful in joining petition-signing campaigns as the email ID might be misused.

> [Alisha, F]. Yes, it is useful because now if you see there is going on hashtag Aarey Forest and hashtag MeToo. It's really useful and now there are also these petition signing things that have come up. But in that you should also be really careful because at times your email ID can be misused so it's upon you that you want to sign it or no. So, it's really useful campaigns and stuff like hashtag Aarey as I said it's really useful. (A05)

Taara felt social media campaigns can create awareness and bring about change.

> [Taara, F] It is good because it spreads awareness and it shows your opinion and it shows how many people are interested or how many people care about the environment, so that even the government can take action and do something about it. (A26)

For Tanvi, bigger platforms like Instagram can be used for campaigns but not Snapchat.

> [Tanvi, F] If it's a bigger platform, you can actually use it for good stuff, like to start a campaign and stuff. You cannot start a campaign on Snapchat. But if it's Instagram, you can use it, because there are many people using it so that it can be for a better thing. (A27)

She also spoke about mobilising people on social media to support a cause. She was of the opinion that a campaign on social media is more effective compared to offline.

> [Tanvi, F] Yeah, because what you can't do without social media, like there are no people around you to support you, but when you turn social media you actually have a lot of people supporting you. So, it's much better to start a campaign on social media than to do it on roads and stuff. Social media still create a lot of fun.

Navya gave the example of an organisation which collects the left-over food from events and parties to distribute to the needy.

> [Navya, F] Media is a very good way to, you know, do something good or start organisation by even like a sort of new idea many people are organising stuff on social media many people are using it for social awareness, which is very good. Many people I know one organisation which you on which that they have a Facebook and Instagram page, I don't remember the name but they do have and when you if you have extra food now in many parties or weddings, Indian weddings are dam this thing, various food like anything, food, people throw literally throw the food. That's how this thing you have in India. So, when if you have such big amount of food left in your house, you get House of whatever up after your function, you can go to their Instagram or Facebook page, you can contact them. They have information on Google also if you search them on Google, you will get on Google also. Yes. So, they and what they do they pack the stuff they take it to like people on the road and they share that food. So, it's not you're not wasting the food…(A20)

She also expressed her plans to start blogging and making videos to create social awareness. She spoke convincingly about her plans and goals. She was not bothered whether she can bring about a huge impact on society; she was happy even if she can reach only a small number of people through her works.

> [Navya, F] And I'm thinking of doing blogging. I will turn 15 in February. So, for my 15th birthday, I don't want to exactly celebrate it, but I want to start blogging, also because it's my interest as such, it's like I can share my views to others. I have seen a lot of people who are educated, but they were literate, but they're not educated, they still have those narrow-minded things, like girls should not do this and that. A lot of things, a lot of misunderstandings also. So, blogging and making videos on YouTube is a way I can express myself and make it even if reading my blogs and seeing my videos, even if one person is convinced that this is not exactly wrong, but then it should not be like that it can be taught in another way also, then it will be a useful thing. 10 people watching my videos even if one understands. It's good enough now, fair enough. (A20)

Navya wanted to spread awareness for the empowerment of young women through her blogs and videos. She wanted girls to realise their strengths and to develop resilience. She wanted girls to self-protect. She directed her anger towards gender inequalities and social narratives that portray girls as weak. She also gave the example of her mother who for her was strong, resilient, and independent. She was aware of the impact of using social media to communicate her thoughts. While she can reach many people through social media, she may also face risk. But she felt that risk is inevitable for anything that we do. She demonstrated agency and a higher level of social responsibility.

> [Navya, F] Yeah. It's like this I get from my mother My mother has always wanted to help people. Unfortunately, she couldn't do it. So, this helping and making people understand something comes from there. And I have

> noticed that there are a lot of social problems like mostly on girls. It's like, even when we are child, we have we are taught that we are supposed to be you know, protected and even the slogan says save the girl child. Why can't we say that make boys understand that we need to be; there has to be a control or limit. You don't have to tell the girls that you need to be protected. Girls should learn to fight back. That is what the main point is. Because many girls are taught that you are weak, and you can't fight back. And boys are there to protect you. My mother is a single mother she has raised three kids on her own. So, like, it's not like there was a guide to protect her or as such, why can't people understand that girls can also fight back there is no need of boys or guys to protect them. So many people don't understand this. Many people talk about saving the girl child or something like that. Why don't they say that we should teach our boys not to be the guys who need who because of them, the girls are insecure. So blogging is a way that I can express all this. I am talking to you; I am talking to you about this. And I talk to 10 people about this, but making videos on YouTube and blogging, I can share it to hundreds of people, thousands of people, it can bring risk to me but then I'm doing something good. If there is a risk more than everything walking on the road also that is a risk. So, if I'm doing something good, I believe that I believe in Ganpati, I believe my Ganpati will protect me from it. (A20)

Most participants from *School B* who took the interview also felt that social media should be used for promoting social awareness. Though they have not used social media for civic purposes in the past, they showed interest in taking part in civic campaigns whenever the school organised such activities.

One of them, Roshan spoke about a few civic and political issues such as the government’s decision to cut trees for making a metro station in Mumbai, plastic use, and the controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) which the ruling party in India had introduced in December 2019:

> [Roshan, M] For making metro station, Array forest was cut. That is bad. Plastic should be banned. Nowadays, against citizenship bill, many are protesting. Social media is good…If my school is planning to organize a campaign, I am happy to participate. (SL24)

Nirav shared his plan to create awareness on saving water:

> [Nirav, M] In India there are issues of water, I will make a campaign on scarcity of water and to plant more trees and save water. I have this plan. (SL16)

Alex mentioned that social media can be used to spread awareness about issues like flood:

> [Alex, M] If there is something wrong, we can share news. If a flood is coming, we can give small news. We can take precaution. (SL01)

When asked if he would join any campaign organized by his school, he responded positively:

> [Alex, M] I will be interested to join a campaign if the school is organizing on environmental cause. (SL01)

Another participant, Yash, also gave a similar response:

> [Yash, M] Many people use social media for civic promotion…If my school is organizing, I might join. (SL28)

Overall, many participants showed interest in civic participation. Some of them demonstrated awareness of civic campaigns taking place on social media. A few seemed to have future plans for responding to civic issues.

9.2.4 Conclusion

The social media literacy framework of this study views children as agents and collaborators of change in the digital era. However, they are to be helped to critically understand social media and the socio-political structures in which social media are embedded. They have to be mentored to use platforms to creatively and objectively voice and express their opinion through various forms of Digital Storytelling. They are to be guided to use the platforms to connect and collaborate with likeminded people for working together and to make the work visible. They are to be facilitated to join groups from other schools or organisations to learn new things, to discuss issues addressing the society. Children are also to be motivated to report issues of networked society through their citizen journalism skills.

In India, democracy is experienced unevenly due to various intersecting categories of difference like gender, caste, class, and religion. Exercising democratic citizenship requires evaluating one's goals and values and judging their social benefits and consequences; evaluating one's prejudices due to class, caste, religious, and gender identities and judging whether one's actions violate the rights of others; and co-operating with others to collectively raise voice for the structural changes for social justice. A detailed discussion on the everyday practices of participants would have helped in understanding and evaluating these aspects in participants. The study showed a lack of awareness in boys about gendered citizenship, and some of them were disinterested or not concerned about the issues of gender discrimination.

9.3 Developing social media literacy through participatory learning

This section analyses the final key theme generated from the fieldwork data. As discussed in the literature review, media literacy through participatory learning focuses on collective and peer-centred learning and developing the skills to participate with the networked public. In participatory learning, the contribution of every member is valued, and everyone is part of the decision making. Students exert some kind of control over their learning while contributing to collective decision making (Jenkins, Ito and boyd, 2016). The workshop, in this study, was designed to actively engage participants in the learning process. The role of the teacher or the resource person for the workshop, in this context the researcher, was that of a facilitator or mentor. Active learning was facilitated through video lessons, activities, discussions, reflections, and presentations. Their participation was sought in a number of ways – group work, discussions, and presenting their creative work. The sessions consisted of a warm-up activity and the main activity. The warmup activities were intended to reflect on topics based on participants' prior knowledge. The main activities were intended to facilitate their reflection on the key topics in the light of their lived experiences and the new information they were provided with.

A study, conducted by Reilly et al. (2012) with 11 elementary and secondary teachers from Los Angeles, identified five principles for participatory learning:

1. Participants receive many chances to exercise *creativity* through diverse media, tools, and practices;

2. Participants adopt an ethos of *co-learning,* respecting each person's skills and knowledge;
3. Participants experience heightened *motivation* and *engagement* through meaningful play;
4. Activities feel *relevant* to the learners' identities and interests;
5. An integrated learning system - or *learning ecosystem* - honours rich connections between home, school, community and world (Reilly et al., 2012).

These principles of participatory learning were also observed in my study. As discussed in the previous sections, participants exercised their creativity by way of making charts, memes, and videos. The activities were also perceived to be relevant to the participants' interests and social media experiences. Many participants, especially in *School A* demonstrated high motivation and engagement in the learning process. Since these principles are interconnected and complimentary, I present them under two subheadings: collaborative problem-solving, and play, creativity, motivation, and engagement.

Collaborative problem-solving

Collaborative problem-solving is a form of participatory culture in Jenkins' (2009) view. In the social media literacy workshop, every session had two or three group activities. The participants were divided into groups to discuss, reflect, and creatively present their knowledge and understanding of the topics discussed for the workshop. In collaborative problem-solving the participants contribute based on their areas of expertise. During the chart making activities, it was noticed that some who were good at drawing focused on the creative part, and some were good at ideas or writing

focused on those areas. For the news and opinion article writing, they self-divided roles in the groups. For the video making activity, which was an assignment to be done from home, some of them self-formed into groups. They then organised themselves and decided whose house to meet in to make the video. Working in teams helped them to complete the task.

After making charts, each group presented and explained them in the class. In my field note, I had noted that during the first session in *School A*, two groups were initially shy to come forward and explain the charts.

For the group activity, each group was given a variety of colour pens. The participants seemed to enjoy playing with different colours. Some asked for more colour pens.

In general, almost all the participants in *School A* showed interest in group activities. Among them, some were more involved, and they actively participated. While some groups would finish the activity before the allotted time, some others would ask for additional time to complete their work. They took the activities seriously in a sporting spirit.

Collaborative learning also had its challenges. Some participants were playful, disinterested, or distracted. A few of them were dominating and few others were trying to disturb other groups.

> They looked for more colour pens. Some of them spoke loudly or made noise during the discussion. They were given 30 minutes for the activity. Three groups finished in 30 minutes. The other two groups took an extra 8 minutes. After making the chart, they explained it. (Researcher field note, session 1, *School A*)

> In one group, 2 students were busy doing their homework while others were doing the activity. (Researcher field note, session 3, *School A*)

In comparison to *School A,* the participants in *School B* showed less interest in the activities. Some participants would distract their team members or other teams. Others, then, would complain to me about them.

> While, many students actively participated in the activities, some of them were playful. Some of them were moving around. Two groups asked for more time to complete. They said they found the activity useful. During the activity, some were not serious. (Researcher field note, session 3, *School B*)

The participants also tried to self-address the problems associated with teamwork such as domination or lack of collaboration. At times, they also sought my support to solve the issues. Students' interest to self-form teams and their agency to mentor teams were also mentioned in the report of Reilly et al., "students engaged in peer-to-peer mentoring and self-selected teams based on strengths and skill" (2012).

> A few of them were playful during the activity. Two students in a group were dominating during the activity and others were upset with it. So they asked if they could be given more chart paper so that they could be divided into two groups. (Researcher field note, session 2, *School A*)

During the third session, one of the groups was upset with one of the team members while doing the main activity. They had completed one part of the poster and then this particular team member tried to work on the other part. Other members were upset with her since the outcome lacked their expected quality. They then called me to resolve the issue.

> They called my attention that a particular team member spoiled their work. They asked me if they could have another chart and then again, they redid the whole thing, spending extra time. Finally, the team was happy. (Researcher field note, session 3, *School A*)

Some participants preferred to self-form groups and have their friends in the team. I noticed that was more productive in terms of teamwork and creativity.

Each group also had a competitive spirit. They would ask if their chart was done well or if their chart was better than other groups. Some of them pointed out to me the part she or he did. I moved around among groups and appreciated their work.

One group asked me if they could take with them the chart they made. After the sessions, some of them gave me informal feedback that they enjoyed the activity. Some of the participants asked me things such as which other schools I planned to conduct the workshop. Some of them asked me if I can conduct more sessions.

Play and creativity, motivation and engagement in participatory learning

In the interviews, some from *School A* stated that the workshop was fun and that they enjoyed the chart making and meme-making activities.

> [Tanvi, F] Workshop was actually fun because after classes like you get to do something new and we learned a lot about it like the good things and the bad things; the activities were fun, like the chart making and the day we created memes, that was fun. (A27)

> [Taara, F] We had lot of fun. We made charts and all. (A26)

> [Adhira, F] It was very useful. we learnt quite a lot by making charts. (A13)

Anushka described her satisfaction in deciding to join the workshop. Initially, when the teacher had informed them about the workshop, she and her friends were undecided about whether or not to join the workshop. After participating in the workshop, she felt the workshop was fun. She then asked me if, I would conduct the workshop next year for them. She was interested in learning more about social media. Anushka demonstrated her agency as she told me to contact the computer education teacher to organise again the workshop for them:

> [Anushka, F] So, I would like to have it again in the 10th standard, if you could, you can, tell teacher (name of the teacher) and she can, you know, tell us; first we all were like, you know it will be waste of time and then we all decided that you know why not try something new. And then we just loved making the charts and, you know, using the board and it was so much fun, and I hope you will keep it next year also. We want to learn so much about social media, how people use it. (A06)

She then spoke about how the workshop was different from other regular classes she was attending. For a second time, she asked me if I would organise the workshop again the next year:

> [Anushka, F] I love it. I mean, you know, it's like, we only sit in our class and study math, science, English, Marathi. And then when we go out and we do all this stuff, it is so much fun. I mean, your mind is diverting, and you know, you develop interest in what you're doing. So are you planning to keep next year for us with something new? (A06)

The final question that I asked her was whether the social media workshop had any impact on her. After explaining to me various learnings she had during the workshop, for a third time she asked me if they would have it again. She told me that in Year 10,

there is no school trip and she hoped that I would conduct the workshop. She was seemingly associating the workshop as a fun or play activity:

> [Anushka, F] Yeah means I got to learn how to make a PPT. That's like the first thing I learned about this workshop, then it really, you know, interested me and knowing what algorithm user data, body positivity. I mean, you know, you should not just guide anything on social media, you should not just put anything on social media, which will cause harm to you. And then, you know, the workshop was fine. And I hope you create, I mean, you implemented next year or so that 10 standard will be like, at least fun. But this we don't have any school trip or anything. So, I hope you just keep it and we all we'll meet you once again. (A06)

Participatory learning through creative making seemed to be *engaging* and *motivating* for the participants. Most interviewees from *School A* expressed that they would like to have more workshops in the future. One of them, Alisha, suggested that the workshop should be done for every class. She felt the workshop would be useful even for primary classes as children start using social media at a young age:

> [Alisha, F] [The workshop] should be done for every standard not only for our standard even for like the kids it should be done so that they start learning from that age only that how to use social media. Because nowadays kids use social media more than us, even small kids, they don't eat food without using YouTube and watching nursery rhymes. (A05)

She felt the workshop was something different from other classes. She used the word "innovative", "unusual" and "thoroughly enjoyed" to describe the workshop:

> [Alisha, F] It was really great. I had so much fun it was like very unusual like all the time we are stuck up with schoolwork and math, science and all of this and so something new and very innovative, which I thoroughly enjoyed. (A05)

While she was explaining how the algorithm works on social media, I asked her if she knew the term before the workshop. She didn't know the term before and then she spoke about how the workshop helped her to understand the complicated aspects of algorithms and the fun she had.

> [Alisha, F] No. I absolutely had no idea and I had so much hope like yeah, I know something now about computers and information. You know earlier when used to hear about was about IT or all the stuff. I used to feel like Oh God, so much programming and all that stuff. But this workshop really helped me understand that it's nothing much complicated if you have fun and learn. (A05)

Another participant, Taara, mentioned they wanted to have more sessions:

> [Taara, F] Yeah, we wanted to have more sessions, there were only five sessions. So now we miss them because so much fun in the sessions. (A26)

During the workshop days, the teacher in *School A* informed me that the students were looking forward to my session and they were enjoying it.

As presented in the previous section, the second among the four open-ended question in the post-workshop feedback form, was "what you liked most in the workshop". Among 29 respondents from *School A*, 16 stated *memes*, 15 mentioned *chart-making,* 6 of them mentioned *video making,* and 5 mentioned *group projects/group activity*. Among the responses from *School B,* 11 mentioned *chart-making*, *drawing* or *activities* and 4 mentioned *group activities*.

Another question was, "Describe your overall experience of the social media literacy workshop". Nine respondents from *School A* and 2 from *School B* wrote, *fun*. Many from both schools used terms such as helpful, great, wonderful, amazing, cool,

interactive, interesting, awesome, and fabulous to describe the workshop. Overall, the responses indicated participants' appreciation for learning more about social media and the play that the workshop facilitated.

To the question "What you didn't like in the workshop", 8 from *School A*, 2 from *School B* mentioned that the workshop was over too soon, or it got over fast.

Reilly et al. (2012), in their research report on participatory learning, states, "a key insight from our research is that educators and students need to give themselves and each other permission to play". My study also gives a key insight that participatory learning through collaborative problem solving and creative making can actively involve students in their learning process. Participatory learning helps children to be "more motivated and resourceful" (Reilly et al., 2012). Participatory learning facilitates the active involvement of participants in learning and development.

Using video lessons

Every session had a short video lesson (4 to 5 minutes). The main topics were explained in the video lessons. Two young girls presented the lessons in the video. They tried to make the presentation informal and appealing to the target audience. The video lesson included graphics and texts to convey the meaning. Before screening the video lesson, I introduced the presenters in the video and told them where and how the video lesson was prepared. When the video lessons were screened, many participants were observed to be attentive and interested in them. After watching the video lesson, during the first session, participants in *School B* clapped. However, some participants, particularly from *School B*, showed disinterest in the video lessons on visibility and creativity. Some from *School A* gave me informal feedback that they liked

the videos. I feel the video lessons could be improved with better infographics and visualisation.

Before screening a video lesson, I asked the participants to look for answers to three questions that were connected to the main points discussed in the video. These questions were meant to be guides to the video lessons. They were prepared before the workshop and were included in my slideshow presentation. Additionally, I paused a video lesson when an important concept was being presented and asked them if they were able to grasp the concept being discussed. After the video lesson, I further explained to them key concepts in the video such as algorithm, misinformation and disinformation. These seem to have helped in getting the participants' attention and learning process.

Responding to the open-ended question in the feedback form, "What you liked most in the workshop" eight participants from *School A* and nine from *School B* mentioned video or video presentation. One of them wrote the reason why she liked the video lessons – "The videos. I am a visual learner, therefore it was really helpful for me". She also remembered the names of the presenters in the video, "The girls Shruti and Kristel explained the concepts really nicely."

Some interviewees used the examples discussed in the video lesson to explain the topic they were discussing:

> [Adhira, F] … in the newspaper like there can be disinformation, no… sorry misinformation, like suppose some say like 40 people are dead they can get it as 41 or something… (A13)

> [Taara, F] Yes, like when a political party spreads rumours about some other political party like the picture we just saw about the green logo of some political party which was not true…(A26)

9.3.1 Participants' responses on key takeaways and impact of the workshop

The interviews were conducted four weeks after the workshop. The gap was intended to give them time to reflect on their learning and their social media practices. I have discussed in the first part of this chapter and in Chapter 7, how the workshop helped many participants to improve their understanding of how platforms work, why they exist, the consequences of uncertain visibility, and how to manage news online. The topics discussed during the interviews were related to their reflection on the key topics discussed in the workshop. Towards the end of the interview, the participants were asked a specific question about their key learnings from the workshop and whether the workshop had any impact on them. Below, I present some of their responses:

School A

For Alisha, the key takeaways from the workshops were learning about the algorithm, surveillance, and information management:

> [Alisha, F] Okay, so from the workshop, I have learnt all about algorithms. Then how everything is connected to each other. Earlier I used to think that okay, whatever we are doing, it's only with us. But then I came to know the government has access to it. Then I came to know how to differentiate between types of information and not to believe them all the time. Because it is not true. Because earlier I used to forward all the messages, because I used to believe them, okay, now it's come on

> WhatsApp, so it might be true, and it might be legal, but it's not always the case. (A05)

She also expressed participating in the workshop had had some impact on her in using social media for positive purposes:

> [Alisha, F] Yes, there's a lot of change. So basically, we were taught advantages and disadvantages that we get distracted and stuff. So earlier, maybe I used to spend a little more time but then I started realising that no, you can use it in a positive way also. So, then I started using YouTube for learning my lessons and stuff and it has helped me a lot. (A05)

Another participant, Sneha, mentioned that she developed a different perspective about social media after the workshop:

> [Sneha, F] So, first thing was that I learn new words, and I know the meaning now so then I can improve. I'm improved by language because I never knew the meaning of algorithm and propaganda. Then it gave me a different perspective about social media. I thought it's all good, good. And now I know it's like it has two sides, then not everything on social media is accurate. They can like edit and put it on that I learned from this workshop, then, it helped me like it supported me to use social media for a positive use. (A24)

She also spoke about self-awareness when using social media:

> [Sneha, F] No, I see a little bit of difference when I'm using social media. I know at the back of my mind that what I'm using it, it's like, what I save is not completely private. And this can't be true if it like it's always you can say its fake news also. So, now I know that it's not all accurate on social media. (A24)

For Adhira, the key learning was being careful and distinguishing true and false information:

> [Adhira, F] The main learning, be careful in using social media and understand the difference between fake information and the right information. (A13)

> [Adhira, F] Yeah, I use it with greater awareness. And now I come to know what I'm doing is right or wrong. (A13)

Two more participants also spoke in a similar manner:

> [Amoli, F] It helped me to know what exactly disinformation and misinformation is. It helped me to know what algorithm does, then, like how people make money on social media. What else? It helped me to know a lot of things. (A15)

> [Rebecca, F] Workshop was, it was very nice I learned something about algorithm and then on what happens on internet some hacks and we want to be careful, we want to, means of your to be careful how to use an internet Instagram and how the data users and everything I understood from that. And it was it was very nice and it was very useful. (A21)

For Navya, the main takeaway from the workshop was social awareness:

> [Navya, F] Social awareness, responsibility and how to use your social media platform. How can you verify the new rumours spread on social media? And how can you protect yourself from being the you know, attacked person again say on social media. That's all I like it's the main and social awareness of course. (A20)

When I asked Navya if the workshop brought about any change in her, she told me her understanding of social media had increased:

> [Navya, F] Yes, I have a rough idea about all this. But then, in this workshop, I have a I have a clear vision now. Much, much, much clearer vision about how social media works. I had a very rough idea and a very random idea about social media. Now I have a very good idea about what social media is and how people use it, and how I use it, and how social media or the business, whatever the person is using it, and how people sense it. And that's what I gather from this. (A20)

Taara on her part made sure that her account was private and she is now more careful in using social media:

> Now I use it more carefully and I made my account I saw to it that my account was private I checked it I keep checking it and I don't send a lot of messages or pictures and all to my friends IDs be more careful even on YouTube by watching videos. (A26)

School B

Kevin mentioned that his thinking about platforms has changed:

> [Kevin, M] The thinking has changed on basis of the technology used, how a person is cheated and how the platforms are not doing any of people's welfare by getting communications fast but they are making money. (SL15)

Another participant, Roshan, spoke about responsible sharing, verifying news, and creating useful memes:

> [Roshan, M] You should think about the news you get on social media. Search on google. Think about it and then give your opinion. If the news is not correct, then don't share. Don't create memes which can create bad impact on children and others. Don't create memes like I will hit you. Create peaceful memes and not destructive memes. (SL24)

Responding to whether the workshop had any effect, he said:

> [Roshan, M] It has changed my mind. People post photos. Sometimes I believe this phone must be good and so on. Now I don't think. They get money. It has changed the way I think about social media before and now. (SL24)

He also mentioned the importance of having a social media workshop:

> [Roshan, M] I definitely recommend social media workshop. What we think about social media is different from what is truth. Others should get knowledge. (SL24)

Yash stated that he realised the importance of verifying information:

> [Yash, M] The workshop has made some change. I realised what is fake and wrong. I realised the need to verify. Also, about sharing personal information. (SL28)

Ranbir spoke about the importance of social media education and how the workshop helped him:

> [Ranbir, M] Connected me to various news terms. I learnt about fake news, what we can do about it. The poster activities. The videos were informative. For me it was a good workshop. Students should be made aware about privacy, about posting. Tell them the correct ways to use social media, how it is affecting. (SL27)

For Alex, it was about taking care of the negativity and being kind on social media:

> [Alex, M] The workshop helped me. I think that social media is good platform and also a bad platform. If something is wrong about, we take care. We should never take revenge. Never, edit face to take revenge for bad news. If they hurt forgive. Don't take revenge. (SL01)

For Pranay, the impact is in the critical knowledge he developed about platforms and "fake news" on social media:

> [Pranay, M] I learnt we should not share fake news. How social media earn money from us. Algorithm, propaganda. Memes related to propaganda. What we see on the YouTube, company uses that videos to earn money. Yes, the workshop made some impact. (SL17)

9.4 Conclusion

Based on my study, I argue that participatory social media literacy learning in schools is vital for helping children to self-express, network and participate. Schools should provide children with support, mentorship, appreciation, and recognition to participate in a networked culture. As Reilly et al., argue:

> In a networked culture, participants need to know how to find, process, and exchange already-accessible information and how to work together to generate new knowledge. Educators can foster co-learning by organizing their classroom as a participatory apprenticeship, where the content to be learned is vitally connected to learning to think, react, debate, deliberate, problem-solve, innovate, and collaborate in a networked society (Reilly et al., 2012).

Along with supporting children for creative self-expression online, they should also be made aware of the issues associated with online participation. As Lyon (2018) describes, the participation on social media is embedded in political and economic systems where the user may be seen either as "commodity" or "suspect". He also stresses the importance of understanding and responding to this culture of surveillance so that users can, at least, influence this construction through their informed practices:

> Their surveillance imaginaries and practices also make a difference to how well the system that construct subjects as commodities or suspects actually work. So that question then becomes, with what sorts of knowledgeability do so-called users participate in social media and gaming. What sort of concerns characterize their assessment of the media that absorb social life today? (Lyon, 2019, p119).

Social media literacy, therefore, is necessary to make children aware of the surveillance culture in contemporary media ecology, so that they can make informed participation. On the other hand, Digital Storytelling, which is part of social media literacy, can contribute to a construction of surveillance *imaginaries*.

However, there may be challenges in introducing participatory learning in schools in India. The Indian education system is currently teacher-centric and focused on rote learning. Several schools have around 40-60 students in a classroom. Classrooms are not designed for group activities; they are crowded with benches and desks. Schools generally have computer training, drawing classes, and many extracurricular activities. As a first step towards developing children's social media literacy, schools may introduce age-appropriate social media literacy education as a subject with trained and dedicated teachers, required facilities, and ongoing programmes and activities.

Introducing in-classroom case studies about datacentric algorithmic culture, young people's lived experiences in responding to uncertain visibility, and meme culture would be a useful start. Classroom activities related to news literacy and information disorder may help children to critically reflect and respond to the stories they read. Setting up student-led media labs and newsrooms in schools may be useful for children participating in Digital Storytelling and producing online news bulletins. Online campaigns that are appropriate to students' age also will be useful to build

citizenship, self-confidence, and resilience. While I was in *School B* for the workshop, I had the opportunity to listen to a school assembly on the public announcement system. During the assembly, one of the students presented a short newsflash with major headlines of the day. I felt that was a good practice in the school. I am personally convinced that participatory social media literacy learning in schools can have a great impact.

Chapter 10: CONCLUSION – Research on and development of teens' critical social media capabilities and practices

Through this action research study, I made an attempt to develop a critical social media literacy framework for the children in Indian contexts, and then empirically questioned its impact on two groups of participants while reflecting how it fits into the wider perspective of media literacy. Based on my investigation, this is the first serious study at a PhD level in the area of developing children's social media literacy in India. Though there have been many studies conducted, especially in Europe and America, on media literacy, information literacy, and digital literacy, I have not come across a social media literacy study of this type where the researcher developed a social media literacy framework and examined empirically how children develop social media literacy through classroom training. The study has revealed insights in the area of improvements children make in developing social media capabilities and practices when they participate in social media literacy programmes.

The first part of the study was focused on developing a critical social media literacy framework and a social media literacy toolkit for the classrooms in India. In the second part, I implemented social media literacy workshops in two secondary schools in Mumbai and assessed the impact of the workshop and the improvement of social media literacy among the learners. In the third part, I tried to examine how participants responded to the key concepts and tried to understand how developing social media literacy can enhance their critical analysis, informed participation, resilience, creative self-expression, and citizenship. The findings from this action research study favour incorporating critical social media literacy programmes in schools in India. While the

findings from the pilot study conducted in three secondary schools in Mumbai revealed the participants' lack of critical understanding of social media and their inadequate use of social media for creative participation, the main study in two schools showed the positive impact of critical and participatory social media literacy programmes. The study also proposes a critical social media literacy conceptual framework for implementing social media education in schools.

10.1 Limitations of the study

The main study was conducted with two groups of students in two government aided secondary schools in Bandra West, a suburb in Mumbai. The findings from the study cannot be used to generalise the impact of social media literacy learning on secondary school children in Mumbai or India. Implementation of the social media literacy workshops in more schools, for different age groups, in different cities and in rural areas of India is required to further investigate the impact of social media literacy learning on children. Since the researcher conducted the workshops using a framework he developed, the element of subjectivity in the analysis can be quite high.

The teaching material developed for the workshop is useful as a foundation to social media literacy and provides useful learning strategies. More teaching material and learning strategies specific to different age groups need to be designed, developed, and evaluated. Developing a critical understanding of important aspects such as algorithmic culture and bias, data and society, surveillance, representation, and propaganda need dedicated and detailed sessions, ongoing programmes and learning strategies.

Due to my initial lack of definition of agency, voice and empowerment, I did not include the social, political and cultural context and how they affect participants' process of empowerment, in the framework of social media literacy education. Participants' everyday practices, pre-existing values and civic ideals, and intersecting categories of difference like gender, caste, class, and religion were not factored into the framework. As a result, the study lacked participants' situated analysis of self and social relations. These also had methodological implications as the study failed to understand and interpret to what extent their pre-existing values and lived experiences affected their learning and empowerment process. The framework also lacked suggestions on how children can be helped in taking up collective actions against undemocratic practices and what impacts they will have.

The gender dynamics of *School A* and *School B* could have been better theorised through the lens of gendered citizenship. Although I have highlighted the gender differences in the analysis chapters, detailed attention to the nuances of gender, affecting what participants perceived or did not perceive, what they learnt and did not learn, was not included.

A training session on making videos was not included in the workshop. The workshop response showed that I should have included an introductory and practical session on Digital Storytelling. The outcome of the Digital Storytelling assignment would have been better if participants were trained on how to prepare a script, what types of shots to include, how to do a voiceover or an interview, how to source footage, and the aesthetics of editing.

This study has not analysed the wider media literacy covering print and digital media. A large section of Indian children belong to economically disadvantaged

background and they do not attend formal schools. The study has not looked into their media use and development of media literacy. The study has also not discussed the broader implications of data and society. This study has not discussed important aspects such as regulating platforms, implications of media regulations on free speech, creating public-funded platforms and creating verified news sources to counter information disorder. These are important topics that need specific studies.

My study was limited to developing a social media literacy framework for secondary school children in Mumbai and I made a pilot impact analysis of participatory and critical social media literacy learning in two small groups of teens using that framework.

10.2 Development of critical social media literacy framework

For developing the social media literacy framework, I mapped out seven inter-related key elements – social media literacy circuit. These seven elements in the circuit – platform use, information access, platform knowledge, visibility management, information management, creative self-expression, and participation and citizenship – are proposed as integral for responding and participating in the contemporary networked digital era. My pilot study and literature review showed evidence that children born in the digital age easily develop the skills for platform access and information access (those who have the means to access) with parental support. Their development of other areas of the *social media literacy circuit* – platform knowledge, visibility management, information management, creative self-expression, and participation and citizenship – need some form of learning, support, and mentoring.

Therefore, the framework proposes participatory social media literacy learning in schools to help children progress from mere *platform use* and *information access* to the wider areas of the *social media circuit*.

The process of empowerment – expanding agency for justice-driven democratic participation on and offline – is a situated process. The framework of the social media literacy circuit needs to be nuanced and situated in the social, political and cultural context. It needs to be improved by factoring in young people's pre-existing values, civic ideas, gendered citizenship, and other forms of difference and lived experiences with which they approach social media literacy education and how those impact their learning and empowerment. The citizenship and participation integral to the framework must include gendered citizenship and unequal experience of democracy by various subordinate groups and ways of challenging these undemocratic practices.

The framework also should include young people's collective voice and their access, resources, and opportunities for speaking and being heard. This, on the one hand, will require helping young people to voice their democratic needs collectively, and on the other hand, will require a change in the way families, educational institutions, media and government view young people's legitimate voice and their agency and their readiness to listen and act upon. Revisiting the definition of social media literacy to include contexts, lived realities, gendered identities, situated citizenship and collective voice, I suggest a revised definition: *Social media literacy is developing skills and capabilities for critically analysing lived experiences and practices and power relations operating on and offline, evaluating information, managing mediated visibility and gendered identities, participating in creative*

individual and collective voice and situated citizenship for developing a just democratic society characterised by inclusiveness, equity and equality in all domains of life.

10.2.1 Integrating the traditional concepts of media literacy

The traditional concepts of media literacy – *representation, language, audience, and production* – are relevant, but in this framework, they have been adapted and integrated to the contemporary networked digital setting (Buckingham, 2019). These core concepts have taken on new meaning and consequences in today's media ecology. For instance, the aspect of *representation* has new implications as platforms, though they do not produce content, select, sort, and represent personalised content to users. The platform *representation* of content, promotional material, and people, on social media is data centred, algorithmically driven and economically motivated. *Representation* should also be understood from the perspective of how producers, political parties, and other powerful actors use multimodal *language* to reach the *audience*. *Representation, production, language and audience* should be studied and analysed in the context of the economically and politically driven information disorder landscape of social media. The actors behind *representation* on social media encompass internationally managed platforms, large scale producers, domestic and international governments, and political parties. Various organisations, religious fundamentalists, and hate groups use social media to represent and promote certain values and agendas. As social media facilitate participatory culture and self-expression, people use the platforms to self-represent for various purposes and motives. Such self-representation has serious consequences since it happens on social media – public media that combine private communication (Meikle, 2016). While

self-representation on social media has many positive advantages, it has to deal with privacy and visibility issues.

Similarly, the concepts of *audience, language* and *production* have new meaning and implications in the contexts of datafication, algorithmic classifications, targeted advertising, predictive governance and surveillance. *Audience* are now users and co-creators of economic value. *Audience* are also co-creators of the emerging surveillance culture (Lyon, 2018). The multimodal and hypertextual *language* of digital storytelling such as selfies, memes, GIFS and shorts videos are easy to make and share. However, *audience* participation – self-expression, sharing, and interacting with people, platforms and content – passes through various monitoring, recording and tracking points. The architecture of platforms is designed to datafy *audience* engagement and participation. The trade-off in *audience* engagements and participation using the platform *language* – liking, commenting, and sharing – is ubiquitous collection of metadata and surveillance (Lyon, 2018; Zuboff, 2019). The metadata thus generated are then stored, processed and categorised to *produce* algorithmic *representation* of *audience* for targeted campaigns, surveillance and predictive governance (Lyon, 2018; Cheney-Lippold, 2019). Furthermore, the "economic logic" driving the platforms increasingly shape *audience* behaviour (Zuboff, 2019).

Although platforms are not producers in the traditional sense of content *production*, they engage in opaque *production* and trade of *audience* behavioural data (Zuboff, 2019). Taken in this sense, as Zuboff argues, *audience* become source of raw material. These have serious implications for *audience* privacy and autonomy (Zuboff, 2019) and can also result in social, political, economic and religious discriminations

(Cheney-Lippold, 2019). Therefore, developing literacy skills to understand, evaluate, and judge *representation, language, audience and production* in the networked digital environment is important. Citizens' critical understanding of these concepts and how they constitute the digital era are needed not only for informed participation but also to transform the networked society through their citizenship. Thus, in the social media literacy circuit, these four concepts are adapted, applied, and run through *platform knowledge, visibility management, information management, creative making, and participation and citizenship.*

10.2.2 Pedagogic, creative, and transformative dimensions of the framework

Since the framework is meant for teaching school children, the concepts were not to be abstract but those that awaken children's curiosity and creative imagination; those that can easily relate to their lived social media experiences; and those that develop capabilities of critical analysis, citizenship, and informed participation. The framework of social media literacy integrates the pedagogic, creative, and transformative elements from the established Digital Storytelling and participatory learning as methods for helping children foster social media literacies and practices. A reimagined established Digital Storytelling method that integrates contemporary forms like meme-making, vlogs, infographics, news reports, and podcast is included in this framework. The pedagogy of social media literacy education gives importance to children's voice, identity, creative self-expression, transformation, and citizenship.

The study analysed the impact of social media literacy learning using this framework on two groups of children in Mumbai. While the study gave significant findings of the positive impact of the framework, which I have presented in the analysis

chapters (7, 8 and 9), I suggest a wider study in different parts of India using this framework to further analyse its impact and how it fits in media literacy education in contemporary media ecology. A detailed discussion of the social media literacy framework was presented in Chapter 6.

10.3 Proposing a framework, methods, and material for further social media literacy research – *Researcher's Toolkit*

My research proposes and makes available online a framework, fieldwork methods, and material for researching secondary school children's social media practices, competencies, and development of social media literacy in India. The framework and material can be adapted in other contexts and age groups for conducting research. This framework and field work strategy are unique in the following ways:

1) While the research framework includes understanding teens' social media practices, reflecting social media risks and opportunities, and measuring their existing social media literacy, the research goes further to the development of their critical social media capabilities and practices.
2) It adapts and applies the traditional media literacy concepts to the contemporary social media ecology for developing critical social media capabilities and practices that are required today.
3) It focuses on teens' reflection, discussion, and critical understanding of contemporary issues in the context of social media and society such as data collection and use; algorithmic culture and bias; corporate control;

surveillance; information disorder; and privacy, visibility, and self-representation.

4) It gives importance to teens' voice and focuses on building their resilience, agency, participation and citizenship.
5) It focuses on participatory learning and mentoring.
6) It incorporates reimagined Digital Storytelling and values it as pedagogic, creative "process and feeling" (Gauntlett, 2018), and transformative.

For a critical understanding of platforms, I attempted to develop a survey instrument (Appendix A) that included questions on data collection, corporate control, algorithm, and surveillance. A survey was executed in three schools in Mumbai for my pilot study using this survey instrument. The survey findings from the pilot study gave insights on respondents' critical understanding of platforms. My original plan for the main study was to use the same survey instrument to conduct a pre- and post-test to measure the participants' development of critical understanding of social media by doing a statistical t-test. Even though the participants of my main study took the survey pre-and-post the workshop, I did not analyse the data for this thesis, because it was not necessary for a qualitative study and I had collected a wide range of qualitative data for my analysis. Therefore, I suggest further research in developing and testing a survey instrument for understanding children's critical social media literacy. The survey questionnaire that I have developed can be useful for such studies. Based on the study, I argue that contemporary research on children's Internet use and media literacy should go beyond understanding access, use, and practices to include categories on their critical understanding of social media.

I suggest conducting wider research across India using the framework, methods, and material this study has used. India is a vast country with different cultures, languages, habits, traditions, religions, and socio-economic situations. India is also characterised by a high Internet access using mobile data, increasing social media use, WhatsApp sharing culture, soft power, economic and digital divide, illiteracy and diversity in religion, caste, language and culture. In this world's largest democracy, misinformation, disinformation and highly polarising propaganda have become serious issues affecting the fabric and harmony of the country. Therefore, it is important to research in different regions of India taking into consideration the diverse contexts. As done by *Global Kids Online,* and *Transmedia Literacy Project,* I make available a *researcher's kit* online (https://socialmedialit.org/research/) which has the research framework, fieldwork methods, consent forms, survey instrument, workshop material, and feedback form from this study so that any future researchers of social media literacy can adapt and apply them. Implementing such research on a large scale will be challenging and requires more human and economic resources and extensive planning. In the future, I intend to invite collaboration from relevant stakeholders to conduct wider research across India. The impact of an action-oriented social media literacy research is twofold. As my study has shown, on the one hand, the research will result in producing evidence-based knowledge on the access, use, practices, and development of social media literacy. Such knowledge is expected to contribute in improving and designing school curriculum, programmes, and learning strategies that suit contemporary time. On the other hand, the implementation of the research is expected to enhance the social media capabilities and practices of many participants so that they progress from *platform use* and *information access* to the wider *social media spectrum*.

10.4 Proposing a framework and teaching material for social media literacy education – Teacher's toolkit

The research proposes and makes available online a framework for *teaching* social media literacy and also a toolkit (http://socialmedialit.org/) with original teaching materials and learning strategies for teaching social media literacy in high schools. The social media toolkit is student-centred and focused on participatory learning. The learning goals of the social media toolkit are to help children harness critical social media capabilities and practices so that they can progress from mere *platform use* and *information access* to the wider *social media spectrum*. Critical thinking, creative making, informed and resilient participation, and citizenship are important elements in social media education. The four topics of the social media literacy toolkit are: understanding social media; understanding visibility and identity; managing online news; and creative making and memes. The traditional concepts of media literacy are adapted and applied within these four topics. The teaching material made available in the toolkit is only basic. More materials need to be designed and developed for various age groups. The study does not suggest that teaching social media based on the material in the toolkit is sufficient for developing children's social media literacy. Age-appropriate teaching materials on contemporary topics and learning strategies will have to be designed, developed and implemented.

Participatory learning for each session is facilitated through a warmup activity, a five-minute video explaining key concepts of the topic, and a main activity. The study found short video lessons were useful for introducing key concepts to children. The study also found creative and participatory group activities such as creating colourful charts on how platforms work, making memes on social media, writing and designing

news and an opinion article page, reading blogs and writing comments and hashtags, and making a poster on how to use social media positively helped many participants to grasp the key concepts and reflect on them. Beyond facilitating participants' active participation and creative imaginations, those activities also seem to have helped them to voice their opinion and enhance their resilience. As a method of social media literacy research, such activities produced a variety of original material on contemporary themes related to social media and society. While the activity material from the workshop helps to understand qualitatively the impact of the workshop, they also contain participants' voice, self-reflection, and imagination. The findings from the workshops show that many participants actively reflected on key concepts and connected them to their life experiences. The activities solicited active involvement of participants by way of reflection, discussion, and doing things together. The activities and the participatory learning methods that were conducted in this study can be adapted in future research on social media literacy. Participatory learning through creative making activities is proposed as an important aspect of social media literacy. The meme-making session and video assignment were aimed at providing participants practical experience of Digital Storytelling and also to deepen their learning.

10.4.1 Impact of participatory and critical social media learning on participants

Although the impact of participatory and critical social media learning on participants was discussed in the analysis chapters (7, 8, and 9), in this concluding section, I present an overview. The implementation of social media literacy workshops, based on the critical social media literacy framework in two schools in Mumbai, show that many participants were able to understand and relate to the core concepts. Many

showed keen interest in knowing and understanding social media which they experience in their daily life. The development of a social media literacy paradigm, inquiry of its impacts through the workshops, and the assessment of the improvement of social media literacy among the participants have shed more light on media literacy that suits the contemporary social media environment. Remarkably, many participants appreciated and valued their learning experience and their participation in the collaborative, creative making activities. Many who took part in the interview had showed interest in attending further workshops on social media in the future. They also recommended the workshop for other students in their respective schools. Though the findings cannot be used to generalise, the study indicates that social media education using a participatory and critical social media literacy framework helps develop children's social media capabilities and practices. Participants' activity materials from the workshop and interview responses show evidence of their learning and signs of their growth on the *social media literacy circuit*.

Platform knowledge

Many participants showed a keen interest to understand, reflect, and discuss the reality of social media that are embedded in their lives. They paid attention to understand how platforms work, how platforms show personalised content, how and why they see content and ads the way they see, what platforms sell, and more importantly the meaning of algorithm and its role. Based on the study, I argue that helping children familiarise and critically reflect on terminologies such as users, data, platforms, corporate control, advertisers, algorithmic bias, and surveillance are important in today's media ecology. Understanding how content travels on platforms and how users are targeted with personalised recommendations and ads are helpful for informed use

of social media. I believe that social media literacy in schools play a vital role in uncovering the complex patterns of "algorithmic processes" where children can grow up making meaning of what is happening. Moreover, social media literacy could further help them to critically reflect and respond to the challenges of data-centric algorithmic culture and society. These are crucial issues that everyone, including children, should be aware of. It is only when they are aware of the shift that is taking place in today's society towards a data-centric algorithmic culture for dubious commercial and political gain that they may begin to ask critical questions. Such understanding is expected to help them move to higher judgment and ask critical questions related to platforms, datafication, surveillance, and algorithmic culture.

The fact that none of the participants who took part in my study were aware of the term algorithm and its function on social media (before the workshop) shows the importance of helping children understand critical elements of platforms. I propose that teaching algorithmic disorder and algorithmic bias, just like news bias, should become part of media literacy in contemporary media ecology. Children should be taught how to recognise, analyse, and respond to algorithmic bias and social sorting. When society depends more and more on machines to quantify human beings and their behaviours to generalise and segregate patterns and models, then there can be serious consequences related to race, gender, religion, economy, politics, and culture.

Visibility and identity management

Most participants in my study were not aware that what they post on social media are public and can be permanent. They had very little knowledge of the issue of data collection and surveillance. They were also not aware of the term *representation*. During the workshop and interviews, they manifested strong reactions against the toxic

culture of bullying, stalking, and trolling. But they did not blame platforms for the privacy issues, because they claimed that people who use technologies create problems for other users. Therefore, they expect people to be responsible, care for their privacy, develop resilience, and take measures to collectively address the issues. They believe that change can happen through spreading awareness of the positive use of social media. The workshop seems to have increased their awareness and their resilience to manage risks related to mediated visibility and interpersonal privacy. The workshop activities facilitated their collective reflection and response to the issues related to visibility, identity, and interpersonal privacy. The hashtags, blog comments, posters, memes, and the videos they made demonstrated their strong reaction to inter-personal privacy issues on social media, their awareness of responsible sharing and being kind, and their resilience and agency in responding to inter-personal privacy issues. These strongly demonstrated the transformative dimension of social media literacy education.

The study found evidence of the positive impact of engaging children to reflect, discuss, and respond to real-life situations of issues related to self-representation and inter-personal privacy on social media. What participants understand by privacy on social media is interpersonal privacy. Though, most of them became aware of platforms' commodification of personal data, they were not really concerned about its privacy aspects. What bothered them was the interpersonal privacy. Therefore, the study revealed the need for more learning and discussions on surveillance, datafication, and the formation of algorithmic identities and the resulting predictive governance, discriminations and privacy issues.

Information management

The study found many participants use social media for learning, information, and for consuming news. The workshop seemed to have helped many of them to improve their understanding of the difference between news in traditional media and social media; how to distinguish between news and opinion, and how to understand and respond to the issue of information disorder. They showed evidence of understanding the term "fake news", how to distinguish between misinformation and disinformation, and how to fact check information. Many interview participants explained what "fake news" is with examples from their own experiences. Most of them considered "fake news" a serious problem affecting the country, and many were upset with it. The material from group activities and the responses from interviews showed that the workshop helped many participants to improve their understanding of information disorder and enhance their news literacy skills. While many were upset with the information disorder which affects their life and society, they also manifested their desire to respond to this menace. However, understanding and evaluating the complex reality of disinformation and propaganda embedded in the socio-political contexts of India (Banaji and Bhat, 2019) require systematic training and ongoing classroom practices.

News literacy in contemporary ecosystem involves critically understanding how information flow on social media, how user sharing is designed, sought, and manipulated, how and why particular groups and communities are targeted, and who are the actors involved in disinformation campaigns. Children should be made aware of the role of sharing economy in the dissemination of disinformation on platforms, and the interventions of domestic and international governments, political parties, main stream media, celebrities, and various other power structures in circulating

disinformation and propaganda. Along with these, it is also important to help children develop skills to report, self-express, and voice their opinion through multimodal communication on social media. The study suggests formal and informal training and programmes in schools to build children's competencies to access, evaluate, verify, and judge information; and skills to engage in public deliberations while respecting human dignity. The study also suggests motivating and mentoring children to write, report, produce, and share news bulletins in various digital formats – podcasts, videos, and blogs.

Digital Storytelling

None of the participants had ever made a meme or a video before the workshop. Their use of social media and habits of seeing and sharing existing memes and videos did not automatically translate in making and sharing memes and videos on their own. However, the Digital Storytelling aspect of the social media literacy framework seemed to have had a positive impact on many participants. When the participants were initiated in the creative making, they actively participated and appreciated it. They easily learned to make memes. The memes they created showed creative imaginations, social reflections and learning. At the same time, they played and had fun in making memes. The participants enjoyed the *process* of Digital Storytelling and the *feeling* they experienced in creative making (Gauntlett, 2018). The participants of the study actively took part in making memes and they seem to have enjoyed the *process* of making memes. They enjoyed conveying their opinion and reflections humorously through memes.

When the video making was introduced as a home assignment without formal training to making videos, the participation was comparatively less. But those who took

interest and self-learned to make the video enjoyed the *process* of making the video either individually or in self-formed groups. The study found the importance of providing children some form of a learning environment and mentoring to develop their skills and aesthetics involved in digital storytelling—making meaningful videos, memes, podcasts, and blogs. The study also found involving children in creative making helps deepen in them the concepts and lessons discussed in the class. Digital Storytelling in classroom is useful to introduce children to the techniques, language, and aesthetics of Digital Storytelling – memes and videos. Digital Storytelling is also useful for introducing the core concept of traditional media literacy – *representation, language, production, and audience.* Teaching children to understand the contemporary meme culture is also important for deconstructing memes they encounter in their daily lives and for voicing their opinion through making and sharing meaningful and socially relevant memes. The study suggests integrating creative making as a learning strategy and motivating and mentoring children to make and share things.

Participation and citizenship

The social media literacy workshop aimed to help teens to critically understand social media and enhance their informed, resilient, and creative participation. As discussed above, many participants showed evidence of critical understanding of various underlying elements of social media – how and why platforms work the way they work; and how to manage visibility and information disorder on social media. These competencies are expected to help in their informed, and resilient participation on social media. One of the ways to respond to contemporary issues related to algorithmic discrimination, datafication and information disorder is to voice them out, both offline and online. The study does not argue that a workshop, conducted over a month,

transforms the participants into informed and creative participants of social media. Instead, the study showed some evidence that such participatory and critical social media workshops are useful in enhancing the participants' social media competencies and practices. The participants valued and showed interest in creative making, responsible behaviour and citizenship.

Developing social media literacy as conceptualised in this study – the social media literacy circuit – is fundamental for citizenship in today's digital era. As discussed extensively in the literature review, while social media and digital platforms provide opportunities for participatory culture, it comes with severe social, political and economic implications and privacy issues. Digital citizens' participation, engagements and self-expression are increasingly transcoded into datafied power in the hands of corporates and state bodies. Digital citizens' personal data is collected and used in exchange to their connecting, networking, engagement, and participation. Even their expressions of agency can embellish the government's power to track, identify, score, and control them. The endless transmissions and amplification of disinformation, polarised campaigns and hate content on social media are also affecting democracy and civic life in an unprecedented way. When more and more people speak out against such issues, that may help in conscientizing people and making governments and corporates more accountable. Towards this, school education must facilitate children to understand these issues and their implications in society.

The study proposes that schools can play a significant role in mentoring children to use social media for meaningful and creative participation and enhance their digital citizenship. However, more extensive research is required to correlate and measure

further the improvement of teens' informed and creative participation through social media literacy learning.

10.5 Implications of the study for the wider media literacy and digital literacy

The components in the social media literacy circuit have significance for the broader media literacy and digital literacy. In the contemporary media landscape, entertainment and news industries have been amalgamated with digital platforms. People increasingly use subscription-based platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hotstar for watching movies, popular shows and series. The news organisations also have their platforms for providing content to people. Entertainment and news platforms also engage in tracking, collection of user data, and algorithmic *representation* of personalised content to users. Interactive and participative elements are also embedded into these platforms. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, the information disorder is interlinked with the mainstream news media. News and entertainment industries also fall in the umbrella of platforms engaged in datafication, commodification, and dissemination of disinformation and hate content.

Besides the news and entertainment industry, digital platforms have become integral infrastructures of important sectors in society such as health, education, hospitality, transport and retail. Governments too have incorporated platforms in many aspects of their governance (van Dijck, Poell and Waal, 2018). To a great extent, these platforms, depend on social media for connectivity, user participation, circulation and monetisation. In this network of relationships, ubiquitous collection, flow, and manipulation of personal data take place. While citizens embrace platforms because

of their outwardly *free* service, enticing design, connectivity, convenience, and network effect, their lack of public values, behavioural shaping, misuse of personal data and privacy consequences are invisible to them (van Dijck, Poell and Waal, 2018; Zuboff, 2019). Therefore, developing capabilities of platform knowledge, information management, identity management, and critical participation are vital for citizenship in the digital age. People's informed *participation and citizenship* are important for protecting privacy, challenging manipulations, and influencing platforms to promote public welfare.

10.6 Social media literacy education for transforming the networked ecosystem

As pointed out above, in this digital era, citizens by and large are integrated in the circuit of platforms, datafication, user-generated content, surveillance, and information disorder. Citizens currently have not many options than to negotiate and participate in this circuit. While new literacy skills and capabilities are necessary to manage the mediated visibility and information disorder, they do not address the serious social issues present in the digitally connected ecosystem. As I have argued, along with developing new skills and capabilities to understand, judge, and manage participation in networked platforms, citizens also should develop a new mindset for agentic action to shape and transform the networked society for the welfare of the people. The circuit in which citizens live demands new skills, capabilities, and mindset to shape and to transform the circuit towards a welfare society. Therefore, this study proposes a transformative citizenship paradigm – the social media literacy circuit – consisting of skills and capabilities for analysing and engaging in the networked society, evaluating

information, managing mediated visibility, participating in creative self-expression, and developing a networked society driven by human rights and welfare logic and effected through critical participation and citizenship.

While this transformative citizenship paradigm values citizens' creative self-expression on social media, it aims to transform the impetuous and user-generated sharing with agentic and justice driven storytelling. It devalues the capitalistic logic that is driving user-generated-storytelling. Instead, it values the therapeutic and transformative logic of Digital Storytelling. It also seeks to create an environment where citizens creation and sharing are not used for algorithmic discriminations and corporate monetisation.

Although corporates and states should become important actors in addressing issues arising from datafication, hate-speech, and information disorder, these cannot be completely left in their hands. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have been taking measures to moderate hate-speech and information disorder. But the problems these platforms negotiate are interconnected with their very business model; then there are issues affecting free speech, transparency, equality and justice when commercial platforms take the accountability to moderate content. Such roles cannot be completely left in states' hands either, as corporate can lobby governments for their advantages, or governments can have political agendas and are also party to disseminating hate content. The control of personal data and addressing the issues of digital era cannot be left in the hands of monopolistic corporates or with the surveillant state. Digital citizens have a significant role in addressing these issues affecting civil society. Digital citizens should exercise their counter-power to ensure platforms guarantee transparency, fairness and justice (van Dijck, Poell and Waal, 2018; Lyon 2018).

The new dimension in the social media literacy education – citizenship for transforming the networked ecosystem – was not directly related to my research questions. The research questions of this study were focused on analysing the development of critical social media literacy capabilities and practices in teens through training. However, this new dimension is integrated in the critical social media literacy framework (discussed in Chapter 5) as I progressed in my study and references to this transformative dimension were also made in the research analysis chapters – the Chapters 7, 8, and 9. Furthermore, I suggest further research to inquire: How does social media literacy contribute to shaping a networked society in which citizens' privacy, dignity, and identity are respected; equality, justice, plurality, and tolerance are valued; and facts and trust are upheld?

10.7 Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations for the social media literacy education in India.

a. To view children as agents of change in the digital era and to provide them with age-appropriate learning opportunities for developing critical social media literacies and practices.
b. To develop and introduce social media literacy curriculum for different age groups in schools. The objective of the curriculum and pedagogy of social media education must be to enhance critical social media capabilities and practices. Such curriculum must help children to progress from entry-level use of social media – platform use and information access – to the wider areas of social media literacy circuit. This means social media education must aim to

transform children to be resilient, informed, critical, and creative participants. While the curriculum can be guided by the traditional media literacy concepts – *language, representation, production,* and *audience* – it has to adapt the contemporary media ecology (as discussed in chapter 6). These include critical understanding of platforms; how personal data is collected and used for personalisation, monetisation, and surveillance; algorithmic culture; terminologies related to online crimes, and their legal and criminal implications; managing visibility and information disorder; creative making; and participation and citizenship.

c. To appoint in secondary schools in India a competent social media literacy teacher who would organise and mentor ongoing social media literacy learning and programmes for various classes.
d. To make social media education a participatory learning experience for children. The role of a teacher in helping children to develop social media capabilities and practices is that of a mentor. In participatory learning, creative making for reflection and imagination is important.
e. To introduce teacher-monitored, and student-led social media clubs in schools. Such clubs can introduce campaigns and advocacies and involve creative making and sharing on various issues affecting the society. As found in the study, children are motivated and involved when they get initiated in creative making. Therefore, though children seem to be savvy in using technologies, they need some form of guidance and training on using technology for creative making and for understanding the aesthetics involved in creative making. Such clubs can also have resources and helpline support

for assisting students if they face inter-personal privacy issues on social media.

This study suggests that schools should play a significant role in helping children to develop critical social media capabilities and practices and thus progress on the social media literacy circuit. However, there are challenges in introducing and integrating participatory and critical social media learning in Indian schools. Among others, the classrooms in Indian schools are mostly designed for teacher-centred rote learning. In many schools, an average classroom has around 40-60 students. The educational system is tightly packed with a teaching curriculum, homework, and extracurricular activities. In this context, introducing participatory learning and squeezing in social media literacy programmes would involve additional resources.

However, many schools in cities and villages in India provide computer education, drawing classes, and extracurricular cultural, civic, and sports activities and programmes. They have the basic facilities and resources to organise such programmes. There are teachers assigned to handle such common programmes and activities. To concretise the positive implementation of social media literacy programmes, I strongly recommend that every secondary school in India introduce a trained social media literacy teacher. A dedicated social media teacher could initiate social media literacy learning and programmes for respective classes throughout the year.

Social media literacy education in schools requires teachers who can critically reflect on their positionality, emotions and prejudices within the teaching and learning process. I suggest operationalising teacher training programmes and critical social media literacy programmes in schools across India in a phased manner. To begin with,

I recommend identifying some districts where the programme can be implemented on an experimental basis, both in private and government-run schools, depending on the feasibility. After creating model districts with successful programmes, it can be expanded to more districts in various states.

Regarding training teachers for social media literacy education, partnership with some colleges and universities in various states is suggested. Appointing teachers in schools across India will involve additional economic resources. It will be a policy decision that the government has to take, to allocate additional funds for government-run and government-aided schools. Among private schools, it will depend on each school to weigh the feasibility of employing a social media literacy teacher and create awareness among parents to support this endeavour. Non-governmental organisations, advocacy groups, and reliable media houses must play an important role in this by setting up media literacy education centres that can facilitate media literacy programmes in schools with the help of paid members or volunteers.

The new education policy aims to change the existing structures and pedagogy of education in India. Implementing social media literacy learning within the new pedagogic structures gives it more scope.

Additionally, I would like to state that this study does not suggest social media literacy as a solution to all the problems of digital era. Based on the study, I conclude that social media education is essential to understand how and why platforms work the way they work; how to respond to datafied algorithmic assessment, classification and potential discriminations; how to manage visibility and privacy; how to understand news and information disorder; and how to participate and collaborate on social media platforms. Such understanding is expected to make children critical social media users

and grow while using social media for creative expressions, social participation and transformation.

As I conclude my thesis, I reiterate that social media literacy education in schools is fundamental to help children develop new literacy skills to critically use and participate in the networked, datafied, surveilled, algorithmic and information disorder culture and society. Social media literacy is important for knowledgeable use of platforms, for caring and respecting privacy, for evaluating the accuracy of information, for informed participation and for making creative self-expression on social media. Social media literacy is important for democratic participation and to bring in changes to the current structures of social media. In a society where people are tracked, used, and controlled by companies and various other agencies, education should play a significant role in empowering citizens with critical awareness of these realities. While such awareness may not be a solution to issues resulting from datafication, algorithmic culture and information disorder, it is expected to help the young generation respond to the challenges caused by these, thus growing in agency.

My journey of enquiring about the impact of social media literacy on teens has been challenging but rewarding. Having experienced personally and being convinced of the positive impact of social media literacy education for children, I intend to embark on a journey to reach out to schools in India to try and introduce social media literacy education and make known the toolkit that I have made available online. Through the *Social Media Literacy Centre* that I have initiated in collaboration with St Pauls Institute of Communication Education, Mumbai, I plan to solicit support from policymakers, governments, media organisations, and NGOs to introduce and integrate social media education in the school curriculum in India.

Appendix A: Pilot-study survey questionnaire

1. Your age:

2. Your gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say

3. Name of your school?
Choose from the options

4. Who do you live with?
You can mark several options

☐ Mother ☐Father ☐Brother/s and/or sister/s ☐Other relatives ☐Other situations

5. What is the highest level of school or college that your father attended?
Choose one answer

☐ Never been to school ☐ Preschool ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

☐ High School ☐ College/University ☐ Don't know

6. What is the highest level of school or college that your mother attended?
Choose one answer

☐ Never been to school ☐ Preschool ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

☐ High School ☐ College/University ☐ Don't know

7. Do you personally have your own: (You can mark several options)

☐ Smart phone ☐ Tablet ☐ Laptop or desktop computer

8. How often do you go online (use the Internet) using the following devices?
Tick mark for each option:

	Never	*Hardly ever*	*At least every month*	*At least every week*	*Daily or almost daily*	*Several times each day*	*Almost all the time*
mobile phone							
desktop computer							
laptop or notebook							
tablet (iPad, Samsung etc.)							

games console							
Television							

9. What does social media mean to you (in your words)?

10. How often do you use the following social media platforms?
Tick mark for each option:

	Never	*Hardly ever*	*At least every month*	*At least every week*	*Daily or almost daily*	*Several times each day*	*Almost all the time*
Facebook							
Twitter							
Instagram							
Snapchat							
Tumblr							
WhatsApp							
YouTube							
Hike							
TikTok							
ShareChat							
Pinterest							
Reddit							

11. Indicate the time spent on each of these activities (*Tick mark for each option:)*

	Never	*less than twice a month*	*at least twice a month*	*at least twice a week*	*every day*
I used social media to connect with friends					
I watched YouTube videos to learn new things					
I looked for resources or events about my local neighbourhood on social media					
I shared my art work (paintings, drawings, design etc.) on social media					
I posted photos on social media					
I blocked messages on social media from someone I don't want to hear from					
I remixed or changed existing content and shared it on social media					
I communicated with my teachers on social media					
I wrote a blog					
I watched videos on social media					
I played online games on social media					
I discussed political or social issues with other people on social media					
I created/remixed my own video and posted it on social media					
I used social media to talk to people from places or backgrounds different from mine					
I created/remixed my own music and posted it on social media					
I got involved with a campaign on/through social media					
I created/remixed GIF animation and posted it on social media					
I changed the settings so fewer people can view my social media profile					

12. Please mark how much you agree or disagree with each of these.

(*Tick mark for each option*)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Everything I do on social media is permanent.					
What I see on my Instagram/Snapchat is managed by its algorithm					
Governments and security agencies watch social media and their users.					
YouTube sells customer data to advertising companies.					
Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube watch their users in order to build up a profile for use by advertisers.					
Memes on social media very often get involved with political issues.					
I can easily delete information that I have posted about myself online if I don't want people to see it.					
Instagram and YouTube monitor and archive the activities of users on their platform.					
Everything I do on social media is public.					
Photos your friends post on social media are an accurate representation of what is going on in their life.					
Social media companies manipulate users to spend more time on their platforms.					
Facebook keeps deleted data.					
The stuff I share on social media can be copied and manipulated.					
Social media platforms mostly exist to make profit.					

Social media platforms are designed to encourage users to click, share, and engage.					
Advertisers pay social media companies based on the number of clicks and impressions.					
The social media platforms we use make visible our identity to the public.					
The posts we see on our feeds, though look real and natural, is a representation.					
Social media platforms influence the flow of content on their platforms, and control what content to be shown and to whom.					

13. Which of these you use most to get updates on news stories?

(You can mark several options)

☐ Through social media sites - e.g. Facebook/Twitter/ Snapchat, YouTube etc.

☐ Through search engines, e.g. Google

☐ Any other online sources of news whether a news website or any other type of website or app e.g. Times of India website, Mumbai Mirror website etc.

☐ On the radio (this might be hearing news in the car or at home)

☐ Watching news on television

☐ Reading paper copies of newspapers

☐ Reading paper copies of magazines

☐ Neither/Don’t know

14. Have you ever heard the phrase “fake news”?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you answered 'yes' to the above question (Q14), answer the question below. If you answered 'no', skip to the next question.

15. Have you ever seen anything on social media that you thought was a ‘fake news’ or not entirely true?

☐ Seen something online or on social media I thought was fake news/false news

☐ Not seen fake news online or on social media

☐ Unsure whether seen fake news online or on social media

16. Have you ever shared a video or an article that you later discovered was false or not entirely true?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Appendix B: A section of the post-workshop survey—open ended questions

1. Can you define social media?
2. Can you describe how social media such as YouTube and Instagram provide users with unique content?
3. Do you think social media companies collect your data? If yes, can you explain?
4. What do you feel about the visibility and privacy on social media?
5. How news on social media is different to traditional media such as newspaper or television?
6. Can you explain the term ‘fake news’?

Appendix C: Workshop Feedback form

1. Please mark how much you agree or disagree with each of these.
(*Tick mark for each option)*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The workshop lessons were clear and easy to understand					
I feel the workshop helped me to deepen my knowledge of social media					
I feel the workshop helped me to develop social media literacy					
The workshop helped me to understand how social media companies make money					
The workshop helped me to understand how social media companies use users' data for economic gain					
The workshop helped me to learn more about self-representation on social media					
The workshop helped me to understand different aspects of visibility on social media					
The workshop helped me to be aware that others can manipulate what I post					
The workshop helped me to understand how content travels on social media					
The workshop helped me to realise the importance of evaluating the information that I see on social media					
The workshop helped me to learn how to critically consume news on social media					
The workshop improved my knowledge of fact and opinion in news					
The workshop increased my knowledge of how problematic news spread on social media					
The workshop enhanced my interest in memes					
The video making project enhanced my interest in making videos					

The video making project makes me feel that I have done something worthwhile/useful					
The workshop enhanced my interest in using social media for creative making and self-expression					
The workshop enhanced my interest in using social media for civic participation					
I recommend social media literacy workshops for other classes					

2. Please describe your overall experience of the social media literacy workshop?

3. What you liked most in the workshops?

4. What you didn't like in the workshop?

5. Do you have any suggestions for improving the workshop?

Appendix D: Semi-structured interview questions

1. Can you tell me about your experience of using social media?

Platform knowledge

2. Based on the social media literacy workshop you attended recently, can you think of some important aspects of social media platforms?

   (Probe: What do social media companies take from users in exchange of their service? Why do social media companies collect your data? How does social media targets you with personalized ads?

Visibility management

3. Can you tell me something about managing the visibility and privacy on social media?

   (Probe: Can you think of some important aspects to bear in mind when posting stuff on social media? Has the workshop improved your understanding of privacy and visibility on social media?

4. Can you tell me something about self-representation on social media?

News management

5. Can you think of how news on social media is different to traditional media such as newspaper or television?

   (Probe: How do you decide what news to trust on social media?

6. What do you understand by the term “fake news”? How do you deal with it?

Creative making

7. Can you tell me about your experience of making the video project?

   (Probe: What have you learnt by doing this project? Has this project increased your interest in using social media for creative making and self-expression?

Participation

8. Are you interested in using social media for civic participation such as joining a campaign or reporting a social issue?

Key take away

9. Can you tell me your key take away from the social media literacy workshop?

   (Probe: Has the workshop had any effect on the way you use social media)

Appendix E: Pilot survey consent forms

Consent form - children

Researchers' name: Shaiju Vadakkemury
Institution: University of Westminster, London

To be completed by the participant/student

Please circle the relevant answer

Have you read and understood the information sheet about the survey? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that you can withdraw from this survey at any time, with no need to give a reason and without any problems? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that you can skip any questions you don't want to answer? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that the survey is anonymous and your answers are confidential and no one reading about the project will know who you really are? **YES/ NO**

Do you agree to take part in this study, whose results could be published (e.g., in a report, blog, journal article or book)? You will not be identified in any way in these publications. **YES/ NO**

My name is ……………………………………………

Today's date …………………………………………..

Please sign here ……………………………………….

Consent form - parents

Researchers' name: Shaiju Vadakkemury
Institution: University of Westminster, London

To be completed by the PARENT/GUARDIAN
Please circle the relevant answer

Have you read and understood the information sheet about the survey? **YES/ NO**

Do you understand that your child can withdraw from this survey at any time, with no need to give a reason and without any negative consequences? **YES/ NO**

Do you understand that the survey is anonymous and your child's answers are confidential and no one reading about the project will know who they really are? **YES/ NO**

Do you agree that your child can take part in this study, whose results could be published (e.g., in a report, blog, journal article or book)? Neither you nor your child will be identified in any way in these publications. **YES/ NO**

If **YES to all**, please fill in the details below.

Child's name: ………………………………………………

School: ………………………………………………………

Signed by parent/guardian: ……………………………

Date: ………………………………………………………...

Name in block letters: ……………………………………..

Consent form - School Principal

Researchers' name: Shaiju Vadakkemury
Institution: University of Westminster, London

I give consent to Shaiju Vadakkemury to approach the grade 9 students to participate in the survey as part of his PhD research on social media literacy in Mumbai.

The role of the school is voluntary.

Grade 9 students will be invited to participate in the survey. Permissions from them and their parents will be sought to participate in the survey. Only those students who consent and whose parents consent will take the survey.

Students can withdraw from this survey at any time, with no need to give a reason and without any negative consequences.

Students' answers are confidential and no one reading about the project will know who they really are. The results of the study could be published (e.g., in a report, blog, journal article or book). Student's name, parents name and school's name will not be used and will not be identifiable in any written reports from this study.

I understand that I may seek further information on the project from Shaiju Vadakkemury.

Name: ………………………………………………………….

Position:

Signature: ………………………………………………………

Date: ……………………………………………………………..

Appendix F: Main study consent forms—workshop participation

Consent form - children

Researchers' name: Shaiju Vadakkemury
Institution: University of Westminster, London

To be completed by the participant/student
Please circle the relevant answer

Have you read and understood the information sheet about this study? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that you can withdraw from this study at any time, with no need to give a reason and without any problems? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that you can skip any sessions or activities you don't want to participate or questions you don't want to answer? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that your participation and answers are confidential and no one reading about the project will know who you really are? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that the researcher will study the video you will make during the workshop? **YES/ NO**

Do you agree to take part in this study, whose results could be published (e.g., in a report, blog, journal article or book)?
You will not be identified in any way in these publications. **YES/ NO**

My name is ……………………………………………..

Today's date ……………………………………………

Please sign here ……………………………………….

Consent form - parents

Researchers' name: Shaiju Vadakkemury
Institution: University of Westminster, London

To be completed by the PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have read and understood the information sheet about this study.

I understand that my child can withdraw from this study at any time, with no need to give a reason and without any problems.

I know that my child can skip any sessions or activities they don't want to participate or questions they don't want to answer.

I understand that my child's participation and answers are confidential and no one reading about the project will know who they really are.

I know that the researcher will study the videos my child will make during the workshop.

I agree that my child can take part in this study, whose results could be published (e.g., in a report, blog, journal article or book. Neither my school nor my students will be identified in any way in these publications.

Child's name: ………………………………………………

School: …………………………………………………….

Signed by parent/guardian: ………………………..

Date: ……………………………………………………….

Name in block letters: ……………………………….

Consent form - School Principal

Researchers' name: Shaiju Vadakkemury
Institution: University of Westminster, London

I have read and understood the information sheet about this study.

I understand that my students can withdraw from this study at any time, with no need to give a reason and without any problems.

I know that students can skip any sessions or activities they don't want to participate or questions they don't want to answer.

I understand that students' participation and answers are confidential and no one reading about the project will know who they really are.

I know that the researcher will study the videos students will make during the workshop.

I agree that my students can take part in this study, whose results could be published (e.g., in a report, blog, journal article or book. Neither my school nor my students will be identified in any way in these publications.

Name: …………………………………………………………

Position: …………………………………………………

Signature: ………………………………………………….

Date: ……………………………………………………………

Appendix G: Main study consent forms—interview participation

Interview Consent form - children

Researchers' name: Shaiju Vadakkemury
Institution: University of Westminster, London

To be completed by the participant/student

Please circle the relevant answer

Have you read and understood the information sheet about this study? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that you can withdraw from this interview at any time, with no need to give a reason and without any problems? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that you can skip any questions you don't want to answer? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that your participation and responses are confidential and no one reading about the project will know who you really are? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that the interview will be audio-recorded? **YES/ NO**

Do you know that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which you would not be personally identified, may be presented in my PhD thesis and possibly published in a report, blog, journal article or book? **YES/ NO**

Do you agree to take part in this interview**? YES/ NO**

My name is …………………………………………..

Today's date ……………………………………………

Please sign here ……………………………………….

Interview Consent form - parents

Researchers' name: Shaiju Vadakkemury
Institution: University of Westminster, London

To be completed by the PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have read and understood the information sheet about this study.

I understand that my child can withdraw from this interview at any time, with no need to give a reason and without any problems.

I know that my child can skip any questions they don't want to answer.

I understand that my child's participation and responses are confidential and no one reading about the project will know who they really are.

I know that the interview will be audio-recorded.

I know that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which my child would not be personally identified, may be presented in my PhD thesis and possibly published in a report, blog, journal article or book.

I agree that my child can take part in this interview.

Child's name: ……………………………………………….

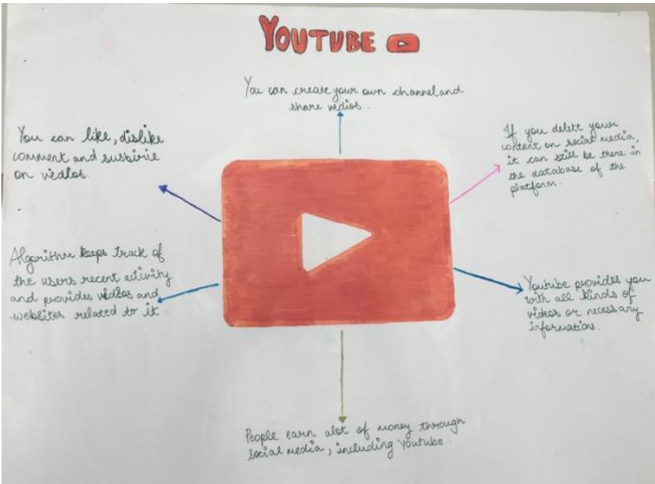
School: ………………………………………………………….

Signed by parent/guardian: ………………………..

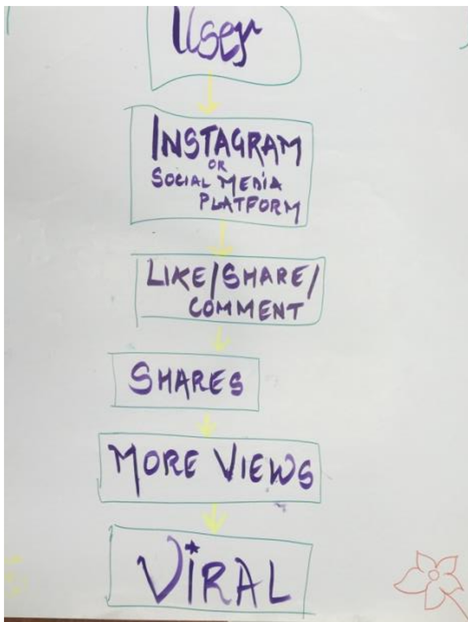
Date: ……………………………………………………………

Name in block letters: ……………………………….

Appendix H: Session 1, main activity, groups 4 and 5, *School A*



Appendix I: Session 1, main activity, groups 4 and 5, *School B*

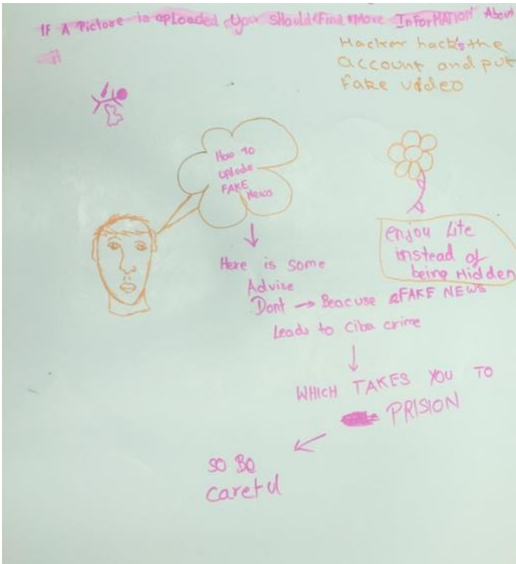


Appendix J: Session 2, main activity, group 4, School A

Appendix K: Session 2, main activity, group 4, School B

Appendix L: Session 3, main activity, group 5, School A

Appendix M: Session 3, main activity, group 5, School B



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