A Study on the Role of the Social Media in Reconciliation and Peace Building in Sri Lanka

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Introduction

This paper analyzed how Social Media contribute to reconciliation peace building programs in Sri Lanka. The media can be a frightful weapon of violence when it propagates messages of intolerance or disinformation that manipulate public sentiment. One can also see this in the journalism in Sri Lanka where there is a profusion of ethnic stereotyping. After two decades of civil war, the vast majority of the people of Sri Lanka do not want a re-escalation of the ethnic problem. It is clear that efforts at conflict resolution and prevention should take the media situation in account. Media has an important role in reconciliation peace building in the country.

Discussion

The strong correlation between public opinion and media is best demonstrated by coverage of the Vietnam War. This statement is founded in the MacBride Report of 1981, referring to the war as one of "the most recent examples of the press's ability to unearth facts, to forge opinion and to encourage the people to act." The media often employs the idea of "objective journalism" and journalists often coin the term "neutral observer"

(Williams 1993).

UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali defined peace building as follows: "peace building: action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. (1995 and Jett 1999, 14)

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype and WeChat are playing both a positive and negative role in social cohesion, conflict dynamics, and broader social issues. Traditional media is more of a one-way communication, while social media and mobile technologies are two way in

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nature and more free from state control. They can reach large numbers of people very quickly and allows marginalized individuals and communities to articulate political voice and project political ideas in ways that were previously impossible. In Sri Lanaka Social Media is just another word for Facebook. Facebook is a free social networking site that permits registered users to make profiles, transfer photographs and videos, send messages and stay in contact with families, friends and colleagues. A vast majority of those on social media are the youth. The reason behind their prevalence has been ascribed to the simple access from mobile phones. The current study probes the possible role of social media for promoting dialogues on peace building and nonviolence among the youths by understanding the strengths of social media for the same. The communities that work for peace building in the society transform social media into an extremely utilitarian entity as spreading awareness for peace building tasks is concerned.

Although empirical evidence is thin, there is positive anecdotal evidence that social media can contribute to peace building by improving knowledge for conflict prevention and increasing contact and understanding between opposing groups (Oatley, 2011).

In his essay titled 'New Media for Peace building and Conflict Management,' Cladwell (2012) highlights on how new media is 'used to create peace or more tragically to foment violence'. It is understood that the knowledge revolution has created bridges and divides in the society and how new media when portrays information, makes it easier for destructive behavior to spread more easily across borders.

In this research I used survey method for study the role of social media for peace building. I gave a questioner for 100 students of University of Sri Jayewardenepura. As well as I referred some previous researches and books as primary data for fulfill my objectives.

There are numbers of ways that social media can contribute to the Peace Building program of the country instead of spread the violence through social media. Introduce those methods also an objective of this study.

Conclusion

The study had concluded that a major portion of university goers use internet on mobile, laptop and desktop in the decreasing order. A Majority of them five to seven hours on the internet and others spends an average of four hours.

By foster greater skill and capacity to use social media to support social cohesion, democracy and peace processes, by provide a menu of creative options for addressing social media threats, including recommendations for civil

society, governments, and the technology and finance sectors, by foster greater communication and joint problem solving between technology companies, governments, the financial sector and peace building organizations we can use social media to reconciliation and peace building program of the country.

Keywords: Facebook, Peace Building, World Peace, New Media, Reconciliation

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