

Meme Usage Culture On Social Issues Among Youth

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ABSTRACT

Technology is growing rapidly every year. The youth in Tamil Nadu are caught in the web of this rapid change through the strings of Meme Culture. Today social media and the advent of Meme around us have led to the youth being immersed in it completely. There is a growing concern on how it influences a youngster's life. Meme culture has reached even remotest places in the world through these youngsters. These youngsters have either heard about memes, or are probably using them on a regular basis to express their views and are delighted in viewing them. Current issues and happenings in Tamil Nadu depicted through memes often grab the attention of youths on wider scale. This paper aims at studying youth meme culture on the social issues surrounding them. The researcher has employed quantitative approach and applied play theory in understanding the significant role of memes in social issues among the youths of Tamil Nadu.

Key words: Meme Culture, Tamil Nadu Youths and Social Issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mass Communication through social media has become a youth culture in Tamil Nadu. Today's youth is completely immersed in social media information like videos, pictures, meme and etc. There is growing concern on how it influences youngster's life. Youngsters from the remotest part of the world have at least heard a word about social media and many have used to it. Social Media is being used on a regular basis either to express their views or just to experience the delight of viewing them.

The recent issues in Tamil Nadu proved that rather than the traditional media, the social media has driven many people to discuss in various aspects for new perspective. Jallikattu protest is one example of how social media mobilized this revolution to worldwide. The social media were used as an effective tool in initiating a sudden revolution by youngsters to save Jallikattu, to stop Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant Protest, to stand against farmer suicide, to criticize NEET exam and so on in Tamil Nadu. Many social activists and scholars conclude that MEMES are there one of the dominate medium of social discussion and make it popularly successful one.

1.1 MEMES

Meme is a term coined by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene*. Its original meaning is no longer used except by sociology majors. In short, memes are a way for even friendless losers to have unfunny inside jokes. In the real-world, the meme is known by its true name, "idea". There is some controversy about who coined the term meme, but Richard Dawkins was surely the one who made it popular.

Memes act as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols or practices, which can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals or other imitable phenomena. Supporters of the concept regard memes as cultural analogues to genes in that they self-replicate, mutate and respond to selective pressures.

Sometimes the technological proficiency required is as simple as captioning a photo from a template; sometimes it is as complex as an intricate Photoshop job or piece of amateur video production. Technological tools blur with the social collectives where participants engage. Memetic conversation is premised on the discursive strands facilitated by this mediated expression.

1.2 EFFECTS OF MEMES AND ISSUES IN TAMIL NADU

The following social issues are getting wide spread of understanding through memes in various social media in Chennai:

- Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant Protest (2016)
- TASMAL protest (2016)
- Farmer Suicide (2017)
- Neduvasal Hydrocarbons protest (2017)
- NEET Exam protest (2018)
- Sterlite Protest (2018)
- Chennai to Salem Highway Protest (2018)

These all social movements are led by people only for popular causes and getting a wide support from all sides. Social media, including Facebook and Twitter, came up; mass forwards also began via WhatsApp. The memes primarily targeted Tamil Nadu government. The retaliatory posts also started coming in from Tamil Nadu.

1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

These social issues like Cauvery disputes, Jallikattu protest, NEET Exam, Neduvasal, Sterlite are the most important topic to discuss in recent scenario of Tamil Nadu. In this study, the researcher analysed usage pattern of memes and viewing tendency by youth on these various social issues. In this study the 'Netizens', who creates memes for everyone and fought over these issues in memes. In fact, a particular meme which went viral that implied Tamil Nadu, the young people who see memes as an offensive tool and considered as an expressive medium of art to the whole state. So, there always a viral war between the meme creators and the supporters who cause for this cyber bullying for the states. So, the theoretical frame work in this research will be associated with play theory which is considered memes as comical to someone and serious to another and also it creates some changes in culture of people.

This study is very interesting to understand the widespread expressive form of memes sharing by youths and its sensation for association for spreading awareness of issues that people have seen it, but not really noticed it.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives in this study are;

1. To the understanding level of memes among youth.
2. To analyse viewing, sharing and usage pattern of memes among the youth.
3. To find which memes gained highest recognition in social media sites and familiar meme creators who played a major role in creating effective memes in Tamil Nadu.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social Media helps massive amounts of information sharing in every day. Recent numbers illustrate the scale and speed by which the digital ecosystem continues to expand: every minute, users share 3,600 new photos on Instagram, upload 48 hours of video on YouTube, share 684, 478 pieces of content on Facebook, and enter over 2 million search queries into Google (Spencer 2012).

The 2016 internet consumption records mention that there are 462,124,989 internet users in India which constitute 34.8% of the population of India. The Cisco forecast which gave the Visual Networking Index, forecasted a change in digital consumption in India from 373 million (2016) to 829 million (2021). This statistical report suggest that social media become as an important center for information, knowledge and entertainment sharing among social media personalities. One of the newer mediums of participatory communication is "Internet Meme".

Social Media is a powerful tool to share information, creating opinions and connect people across the world. It influences youth lifestyle and make them to rise their voice against social issues and share or upload information for the welfare of the society. If youth uses this new technology for sharing healthy post, videos, meme and messages, that will help them to develop a strong and balanced society (Kulandairaj 2014).

The information and entertainment from social media were really useful and help them to be relax from their current work pressure. Social media is much helpful to their business development also and taking part in online exchanging of ideas and thoughts about any social issues and majority of youths are using this platform as their effective weapon in spreading awareness and standing for some good cause (Madavan 2017).

Memes are one among the popular tool for communication in social media which sharing some effective information to the society in humorous way. It is one the distinct form of communication tool in computer mediated communication. As Geslani 2016 says “Memes are popular in online than the Jesus Christ”, it almost captivating all netizens to use mems as a main criticizing and conveying tool about any issues prevailing in the society.

Memes are really gained more popularity among the youth and identified a new elements of communication tool in New media. “There are some definite reasons stating its popularity. However, in order to reach the millennials in India, memes can be used to a great extent. Government is no exception from this league; hence memes can be fashioned to carry the message to the target public in a way the government wanted it to be. Although, memes can be administered by the government as stated above, the status and nature of the existing ones should be considered in the first place” (Ruby 2018).

Memes are part of our culture, not only for its impact on our political norms, but for its importance in the lives of those who do not have equal access to other social spaces and other ways of having an impact on our cultural discourse. Mostly young people themselves push their boundaries and given their contribution for some cultural changes in the society through online space (Burton 2019).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study uses William Stephenson’s (1964) the play theory of mass Communication in his book “the play theory of mass communication” is selected as appropriate for this study. This theory is mainly emphasized with the way of “how people should use the media for their satisfaction and also how media bring changes in their lives based on its content. This theory basically based on two ends PAIN and PLEASURES. Work favours pain and play favours pleasure. Play is self-contained and people do it to get satisfaction. But work has to be done to increase productivity. People often are influenced by the media in a positive and negative way. The persuasion that is been offered by the advertisements, the characters of your favourite movie star all influence people. Use and gratification theory is somewhat related to this theory. The media greatly influences the needs of the audiences and also the gratification the media provide them. In play theory the media is mainly used to get pleasure out of its usage than as the medium of information and education” (Ranly 2019).

Through this theory the researchers can understand how extend the youths are using online meme sharing as an intensification of themselves and how it satisfies their needs for pleasure. The youths use memes for play purpose rather than work purpose. Based on this play theory this research proceeds with all young people who dwells with sharing memes on any social issues are mostly used for pleasure and self-satisfaction first and attaining information and knowledge are the second priority. Sharing memes are used merely to reduce anxiety in their day today lives. Meme sharing culture on any social issues helps majority of youths to solidify unique individual identities by spreading what they see or hear and observe from their knowledge and information through this digital outlet.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is to study about the memes culture and social issues among youth in Tamil Nadu, India. The researcher has chosen quantitative studies which awareness about the social issues through the understating of memes culture of youth on the comparative study with the other reviews which had close connection with. Ever since on every occurrences of social events, there has been a raising meme war between netizens all over the world. So, there are a lot of possibilities for the researchers to discover various data as memes and to analyse it or rather deconstruct it.

So the research has adopted the survey method to understand the usage pattern of memes culture among the youths. In sampling techniques, the researcher has chosen Convenient sampling method

because the research area is vast and that the identity of samples in social media may not be trusted on for data. Data are collected from 50 respondents who are aged between 18 – 30 especially studying in Tamil Naducity and using social media. The researcher has selected each sample is based on only if they aware about memes or once in while they need to share any kind of meme. The research questionnaire contains 20 variables which help to measure memes usage frequency and what content they like and share to the public through memes.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In social media, social sites like facebook, twitter and Instagram are the most popular sites that gained popularity in a very short time. Millions of users use these sites where they share and tag memes on daily basis. Mainly it includes youth as an online audience who actively take part in sharing, tagging and generating memes with other users from all over the world. However, the results of the study show out of 50 respondents 23 females and 27 male has participated in this survey.

Table 4.1 Meme is

A funny picture/video	74.0%
A immature form of cyber bullying	12.0%
I don't know	14.0%

The result shows that 74% of people consider that meme is a funny picture or a video, 12% of people telling that it is a immature form of cyber bullying and 14% of people telling that they don't know what is memes

Table 4.2 Familiarity in Meme

Memes are extremely familiar	10.0%
Memes are not so familiar	16.0%
Memes are somewhat familiar	38.0%
Memes are very familiar	36.0%

The result shows that 10% of people extremely familiar in memes and 16% of people are no so familiar and 38% of people are somewhat familiar in memes and 36% of people are very familiar in memes

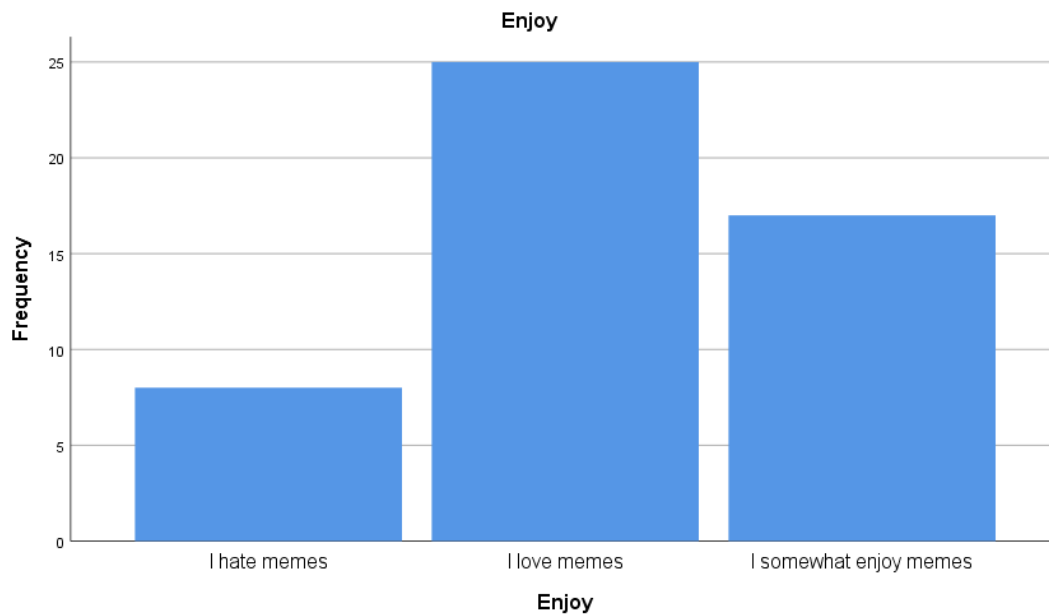


Figure 4.1 Likelihood of Memes

The result shows that 16% of people saying that they hate memes and this much 50% of people tells that they love memes and this much 34% of people says that they somewhat enjoy the memes.

Table 4.3 Frequent Seeing of Memes

Print Media	2.0%
Social Network Site (Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, etc.)	78.0%
Television	8.0%
Word of Mouth	10.0%
Others	2.0%

In this above table the researcher come to know that 10% of people frequently encounter memes as word of mouth and 78% of people frequently encounter memes as SNS (Facebook, twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube) 8% of people frequently encounter memes in Television 2% of people frequently encounter memes in Print Media (Newspaper or magazine) and 2% people says that people are frequently encounter memes in others.

Table 4.4 Memes are

Memes are boring	4.0%
Memes are cinematic	26.0%
Memes are Satirical	8.0%
Memes are stress buster	62.0%

In the above table the researcher come to know that 4% of people says that memes are boring, 26% of people says that memes are cinematic, 8% memes are satirical and 62% of people says that memes are stress buster elements.

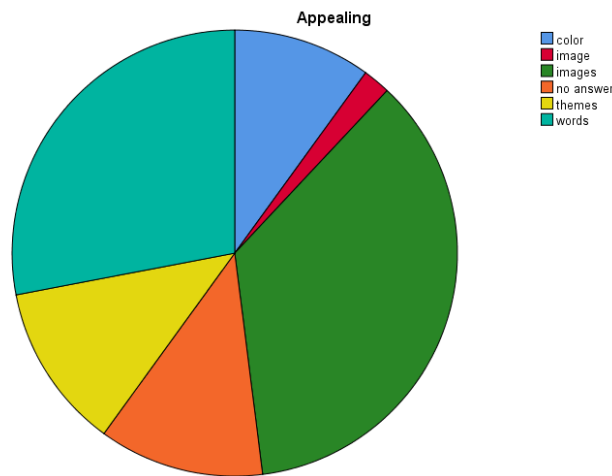


Figure 4.2 Appealing Elements in Every Memes

In this above figure the researcher come to know that 10% of people says colour is appealing. 2% of people are saying image is appealing. 36% of people are on images. 12% of people no answer. 12% of them saying themes and 28% of people says words are more appealing element in every meme.

Table 4.5 Unappealing Elements in Every Memes

Colour is an unappealing element	28.0%
Images are an unappealing element	22.0%
No answer	12.0%
Themes are an unappealing element	28.0%
Words are an unappealing element	10.0%

In this above table the researcher come to know that 28% of people says colour is unappealing, 2% of people says image, 20% of people says images, 12% of people don not answer, 28% of people says themes and finally 10% of people says words are unappealing elements.

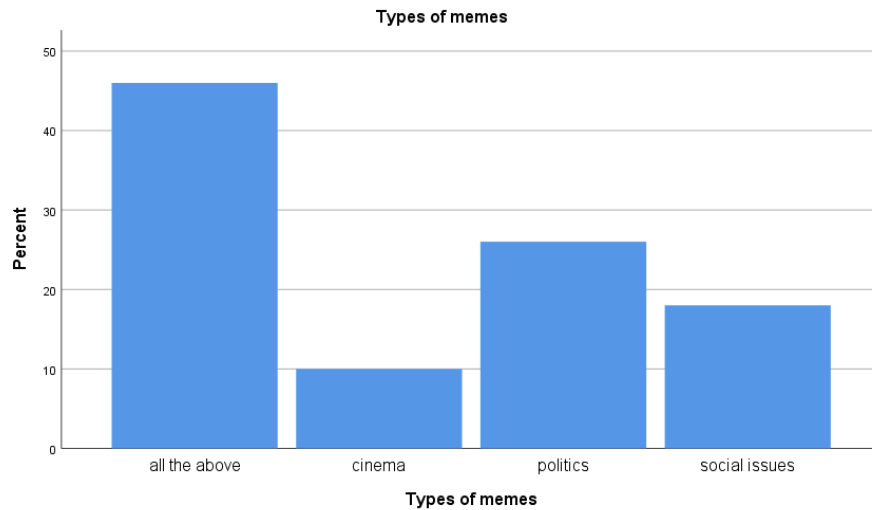


Figure 4.3 Types of Memes Like Much

In the above figure the researcher come to know that 26% of people interested most in political memes. 18% of people are interested in social memes and 10% of people are interested in cinema memes and 46% of people are interested in all the above three memes.

Table 4.6 Issues in memes

Issues	Respondents	Percentage
Political issue	32	64%
Jallikattu Issue	4	8%
Pollachi Issue	3	6%
Pub G	1	2%
Cinema	2	4%
Sexual Content	3	6%
Kaveri Issue	3	6%
Sterlite Issue	1	2%
NEET/Anitha Issue	1	2%

In the above table the result shows that 32% of people says politics issues, 6% of peoples says jallikatu issues, 8% of peoples says that pollachi issues, 1% of people says pubg, 6% of people says cinema, 2% of people says sex related content, 5% of people says that kaveri issues, 3% of people says that strilte issues and 1% of people says that NEET/Anitha issues are main content in all memes.

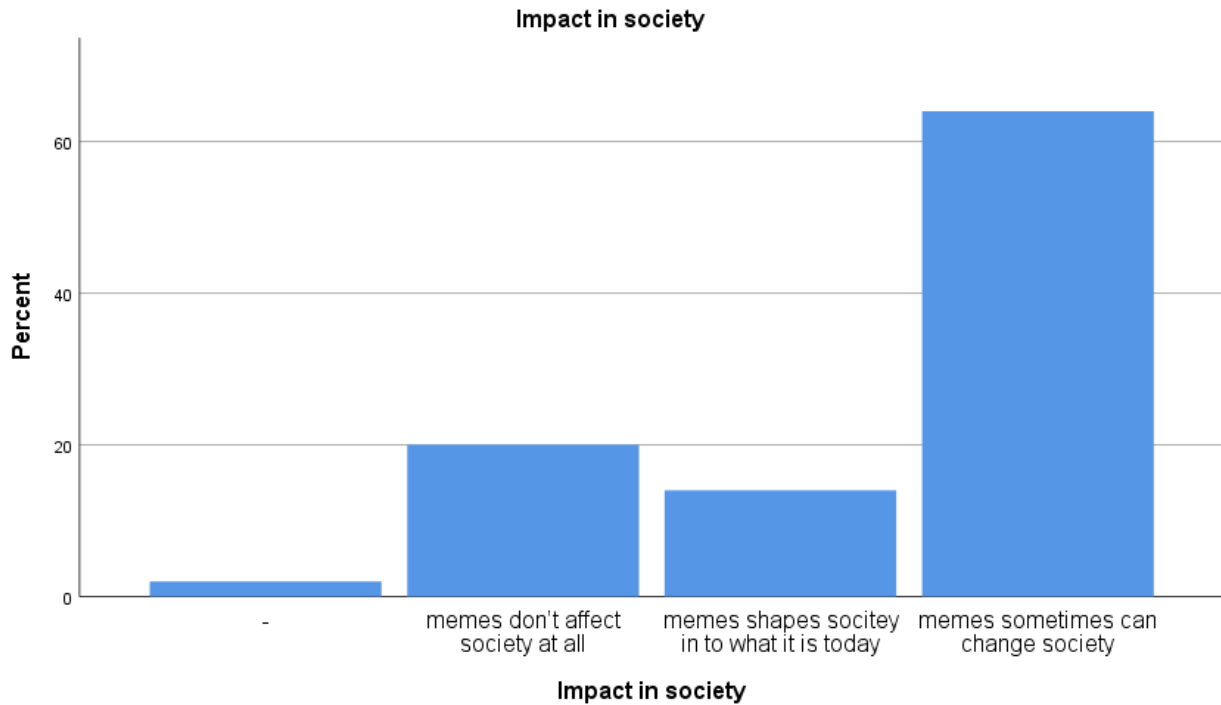


Figure 4.4 Memes are creating some impact in society

The above figure says 20% of peoples says memes don't affect society at all, 14% of people says that memes shapes society into what is today, and 64% of people says that memes sometimes can change society.

Table 4.7 Famous Meme Pages in Tamil Nadu

Meme Pages	Respondent	Percentage
Chennai memes	9	18%
Top 10 memes	2	4%
Mokkapost memes	3	6%
Tamil memes	3	6%
Thalapathy memes	3	6%
18+ memes	3	6%
Comedy memes	3	6%
Political memes	2	4%
None	22	44%

The above table shows that mokkapost, tamil memes, thalapathy memes, 18+ memes, comedy memes are each in 6% of total respondents, top 10 and political mems are in 4%, Chennai memes in 18%, 44% were no response.

Table 4.8 FamiliarMemes

Femiliar Meme	Respondents	Percentage
Pubg	1	2%
Fun	2	4%

18+	1	2%
Mokka post	1	2%
Sleeper Cells	1	2%
Political	41	82%
IPL	3	6%

The above table mentioned 41% of respondents familiar with political memes, 4% were fun memes and 2% were mentioned PubG, 18+, mokka post and sleeper cells mems and 6% were mentioned IPL memes.

5. FINDING

Major findings of the study are as follows

- Out of 50 participants 54% of male are participated in survey.
- As much as 74% of respondents saying that memes are so funny.
- 38% of respondents says that memes are somewhat familiar to them.
- 30% of people says that they will share and mention about memes to their friend's social network sites.
- In this survey 50% of peoples says that they love memes very much.
- 78% Peoples says that they frequently seen memes in Social Networking Sites (Facebook, twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram,)
- 82% of people says that memes are interesting.
- Out of 50 participants 62% of people says that memes are really a stress buster.
- 27% of male out of 50 says they likely recommended memes to their friends.
- 36% of respondents says that in every meme the appealing elements are image and 28% of respondents says that the unappealing in memes are colour and themes.
- 46% of respondents says that political, cinematic, and social issues memes are really interesting.
- Memes become viral to 52% of respondents.
- 58% of respondents says that they somewhat agree to consider memes to be overrated
- 44% of respondents says that memes are some extend it is misrepresented.
- 27% of male and 46% female says that memes are giving some awareness about the social issues which was previously unknown to them.
- 64% of respondents mention political issues are so predominant context in all meme sharing.
- 64% of respondents says that memes sometimes can bring some changes in society.
- 27% of respondents says memes are the future of news media.
- Out of 50 participants 18% of respondents are follow Tamil Nadu Memes page.
- 82% respondents are familiar with political memes.

6. CONCLUSION

Social media tendency is not only making youths to dwell into technological world but also bring many changes in their understanding of social structure. They just share what they see, observe and admire a lot through social media as memes and cartoons which all stir people to get aware of various issues.

There are many numbers of traditional media brings some detailed report in possible way of makes people to understand issues. But memes are different. This research concludes memes and memes creators alone can change society perception in a single sharing of visuals and texts through social media. Memes have become a stand-alone mechanism to change the youth into societal responsible individuals.

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