

# Impact of Various Social Movements in Advocating for Change in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Abstract

The following study has been focused on evaluating the impact of social movements on driving social changes in the 21st century. Social movements involve conducting public campaigns with the common aim of leading a change in society or the implementation of a new policy or rule associated with social interest. In short, social movements are closely connected to achieving some determined social goals. Therefore, a secondary data collection method has been followed and relevant data has been collected from different journals, newspaper articles and websites. The findings suggest that social movements have become vital for driving a new change in society and the changing social, industrial and business contexts have led to several destructive impacts which are encouraging to conduct these social campaigns. These movements have been identified to be vital for society as well as for protecting public rights, environmental sustainability and inclusion in society. Several vital social movements of the 21st century have been explored, including “Black Lives Matter”, “Occupy Wall Street” and “MeToo Movement”. Additionally, their potential impact on contemporary society has been addressed and the changes brought by these movements have been explained. It has been identified that the “Occupy Wall Street” movement has not brought new changes in society, while the “MeToo” movement has convicted several persons accused of sexual exploitation, mainly in workplaces. The Black Lives Matter movement has changed the perception of racial discrimination, whereas the “MeToo” movement has increased the rate of “sex-crime reporting”.

## Keywords

21<sup>st</sup> Century, Public Campaigns, Social Change, Social Movements.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Social movements refer to an organised and loosely managed campaign aiming to achieve a social goal. The aim of conducting a social movement is to lead a change in society or to achieve or implement a new right associated with a social goal (1). It has been identified that throughout the history of democracy and humanity, conducting a social movement has always taken an efficient role in bringing new changes and reshaping existing norms of society. Social movements differ in size and purpose, however, the main focus remains similar and people use different mediums and methods for these movements. However, in the 21st century, with the emergence of advanced information and communication technology, it has become easier to spread awareness about a social requirement and encourage a social movement.

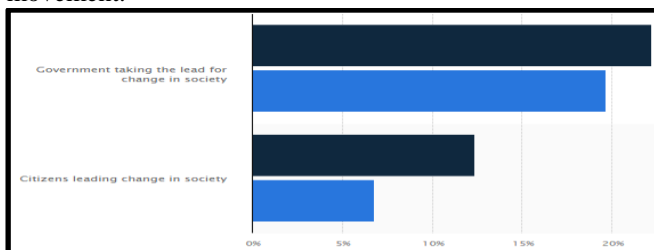


Figure 1: Role of the public and government in enacting social changes[3]

It has been observed that digital media has taken a vital role in creating awareness of a social movement as people are focused more on spending their time indulging in online activities. Changing economic and political contexts of the world have shaped the influencing factors associated with social movements (2). In addition, these movements pose a major impact on the perception and opinions of people along with influencing the government to shape or implement a change. The government and the general public both take positive roles in encouraging social changes and around 6.8% of people have claimed to have taken active roles in social change activities (3).

### Aim and objectives

The main purpose of this study is to address and evaluate the impact of various social movements leading to change in the 21st century.

#### Objectives

- To evaluate the importance of social movements in society
- To address the connection between social movements and social change
- To identify different social movements in the 21st century and address their impact on society

### Scope and relevance of the study

This study has presented the social impacts and potential changes brought by social movements and their importance

for upgrading society. Different social movements that became popular in the 21st century have been explored and their influence on bringing social changes has been discussed in this study. Therefore, it can be stated that the following study has presented a less explored phenomenon along with providing detailed insights about the importance and need of social movements for bringing social change. The influencing factors and methods used for creating awareness of these movements have also been evaluated. Thus, it can be stated that this study has presented an effective discussion on the influence and correlation between social movements and social change and these details can be used in future studies.

## METHODS

### Research design

In order to conduct research, various methods and procedures and the research design can be defined as the comprehensive structure of the procedures. The main types of research design are experimental, exploratory, descriptive and correlational. The researcher has decided to follow an exploratory research design in the following study in order to explore the research phenomenon and develop a better understanding. It has been identified that using an exploratory design helps to explore a less-explored phenomenon with “limited coverage” (4). Choosing an appropriate research philosophy helps to maintain the balance between scientific integration and philosophical assumption in the research procedures. An interpretivism philosophy has been chosen to use for acquiring in-depth insights about the impact of social campaigns on driving change in the 21st century.

Selecting an appropriate and suitable research philosophy helps to explore the research problem more effectively by guiding the data collection and analysis procedures. Additionally, an interpretivism research philosophy involves developing further details and insights about a phenomenon (5). Apart from this, an inductive research approach has been selected to use in the study for gathering relevant information associated with the research problem and developing a better understanding. Therefore, these methods and techniques indicate the accuracy and consistency of the research outcomes. These methods and techniques have been selected in accordance with the research problem for attaining better outcomes and illustrating the importance of social movements for societal changes.

### Research type

Data collection is the most essential procedure in research and this procedure depends on the research type or the type of data required for the study. A secondary data collection method has been chosen for qualitative data associated with the research phenomenon. Consequently, secondary data refers to previously published data and can be collected from various trustworthy and valid sources (6). Furthermore, using a secondary data collection method allows for collecting and using existing datasets that are already structured and

published and consist of accuracy and validity. It is a cost-effective method for gathering relevant data and coinciding with these advantages, it has been selected for the present study. In addition, published data has been collected from reliable journals, websites and newspaper articles for analysing the impact of various social movements on driving changes in contemporary society.

### Inclusion and exclusion criteria

#### *Inclusion criteria*

- Journals, newspaper articles and websites published in 2018 or after 2018 have been included.
- Valid and trustworthy secondary sources consisting of accurate data published in the English language have been used.
- Websites, journals and newspaper articles containing relevant data associated with the research subject have been included

#### *Exclusion criteria*

- Secondary sources published before 2018 have been excluded.
- Websites or journal publishers in another language than English have not been used in the study.
- Secondary sources which are not reliable or consist of irrelevant data have not been used.

### Data analysis

The ultimate and most vital procedure in research is the data analysis process which involves analysing, processing and interpreting the gathered data. In the present study, the researcher has decided to use a secondary data collection method and considering this, a thematic analysis has been chosen to conduct for assessing the influence of social campaigns on enacting new changes in society. Thematic analysis is regarded to be a common and widely accepted approach for analysing qualitative data (7). Hence, this specific method has been selected to use in the present study and the outcomes of the data collection process have been thematised for interpreting and illustrating. Conducting thematic analysis for assessing qualitative data enables the researcher to gain detailed insights by evaluating and interpreting the outcomes more effectively.

## RESULTS

### Evaluation of the need for social movements in society

Social movements can be referred to as organised public campaigns aiming at a change or implementation of a new policy or legislation associated with social goals or interests. Additionally, these movements come with severe changes and transformations in society, including reshaping social rules, norms, government legislation and social inequalities. “Social movements” are similar to social reforms as these movements are concerned about various social issues and public interests, such as racism, gender discrimination and sexual harassment and create new opportunities for

“exploited classes” (8). On the other hand, these social campaigns are often concerned about leadership issues that are affecting public interest or creating a challenge for society.

An effectively managed and organised “social movement” can establish cultural or social coordination between different classes and is focused on ending discrimination in society. The main intention of organising a “social movement” is to bring an innovative and positive change in the social norms and rituals as well as promote a social goal. It has been identified that “social movements” consist of a direct connection with “democratic reforms” (9). Therefore, it can be stated that organised “social movements” have a direct positive impact on society and can influence the implementation of a new change with various possibilities that have increased the significance and need for arranging campaigns.

Organised “social movements” pose a direct and innovative impact on democracy and influence to bring positive changes in attitudes and social perception and can also break the social stigma. It helps to decrease regional, educational, cultural and racial inequalities and influences the ruling government to design effective policies in accordance with social demands. On the other hand, “social movements” can also influence the formation of a new common law (10). Considering these aspects, it can be stated that “social movements” provide various advantages as well as opportunities for social and influences “democratic reforms”. These advantages and opportunities have increased the significance and need for “social movements”.

### **Illustration of the correlation between social movements and social change**

“Social movements” are basically associated with social goals indulging with public interests, democratic or leadership issues and cultural and religious norms. These campaigns consist of a close association with societal, cultural and democratic changes and sometimes, they can also lead to bring changes in the legislative norms. Apart from this, the need for bringing societal changes often influences the development of a “social movement” aiming to change the socio-cultural context and norms. The main interests associated with the creation of a “social movement” can also involve political, legislative and “degrowth campaigns” (11). Along with that, the formation of every vital “social movement” involves one or more “counter-movements”, whose main aim is to oppose the “social movement”.

In the modern era, societal conflicts and issues have increased rapidly and globalisation and the industrial revolution have introduced diversified societies. Due to these aspects, societal issues have increased and the need for “social campaigns” has also increased. An organised and successful campaign influences the social orders and norms along with reducing socio-cultural diversity and inequalities. Since the ancient ages, “social movements” have remained a part of humanity and history has proven that these

movements are closely interconnected with “social change” (12). “Social campaigns” are mainly influenced, conducted and organised by the general public and involve one or more public interests aiming to bring positive changes in society.

Therefore, it can be stated that “social movements” are closely associated with innovative and compulsory changes in society that involves improving the quality and standard of people’s lives. Apart from this, these campaigns have been identified to introduce “philosophical questions” along with indulging in political activities (13). Thus, these “social movements” directly impact the existing social framework and bring innovative changes in society, particularly focusing on public interests associated with socio-cultural inequalities. These campaigns are sometimes focused on establishing cultural, social and racial collaboration and changing the existing attitude and perceptions about different social classes. “Social movements” are also focused on bringing democratic and social reforms for improving lifestyles.

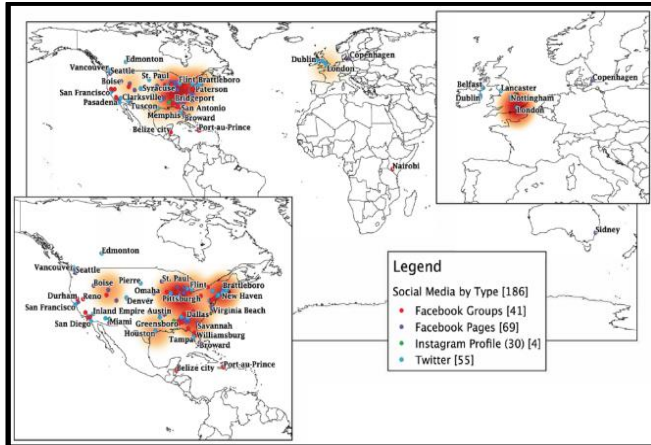
Social campaigns are mainly focused on establishing an “egalitarian system” in society. “Egalitarian system” involves fostering equality and prioritising individual people with the same treatment and economic, social, religious and legal opportunities. The anarchist movement has been raised with the expansion of “social movements” in the 21st century and aims to establish an “egalitarian system” (14). Thus, these movements have always remained active players in “social reforms” and change keeping the focus on promoting social goals and indulging in public interests. In addition, these movements have influenced social progress and development as well as fostered equality and justice while maintaining socio-cultural differences.

### **Vital social movements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

“Social movements” have always remained an essential part of the history of democracy and humanity and with the changes in time; the nature and core concepts of these campaigns have changed. However, the main focus has remained similar, though, in the 21st century, the key aspects and reasons behind these movements have changed. One of the major “social movements” of this era has been connected with the rights of equal income, the “*Occupy Wall Street*” (15). In addition, there are various other movements, including “*Anti-Dapi*”, which appeared in Standing Rock and involved the violations conducted by the “Army Corps of Engineers”. In several areas of the world, the indigenous people have indulged in protesting against violations, environmental issues and land acquisition.

Another vital protest has been identified to be the campaign named “*Black Lives Matter*”, which involved the dominance of white men in western countries, especially in America. A black man named George Floyd was killed by a white policeman and excessive protests took place against racism (16). In the contemporary era, the focus on digital media and its popularity has increased rapidly and it has been observed that social media plays an important role in encouraging social campaigns. The “*Black Lives Matter*” movement has gained significant support and expanded

through social media platforms, especially Twitter and Facebook (17). These online collaborative platforms have taken active roles in creating awareness of social protests and campaigns which have shaped the forms of 21st-century “social movements”.



**Figure 2:** Impact of social media on society [17]

The types, forms and reasons behind conducting “social movements” have thoroughly changed in the 21st century and people have become more flexible to protest against sexual exploitation and violation. These changes influenced the formation of the “*MeToo*” movement, in which people publicised their personal experiences of sexual harassment, exploitation, rape attempts and abuse. This protest introduced numerous cases of sexual assault and even workplace sexual harassment and a man named Harvey Weinstein has been convicted of abusing female employees (18). There are also several other social protests and movements such as “*You Know Me*” and “*Indivisible Movement*”. These protests have gained significant popularity and expanded via social media platforms. Social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter have taken an active role in creating awareness of these campaigns along with expanding their significance in other areas.

### Explanation of the changes made by these social movements

The “social movement” organised in the 21st century differ from the movements conducted in previous times and are more concerned with the root causes of social inequality, gender discrimination and dominance whether of males or the upper classes. These “social campaigns” not just pose a significant impact on society, but also consists of a direct impact on the political framework. These social campaigns have been identified to have a major impact on the existing political and legal framework, regarding which the United Nations have suggested governments embrace and support these movements for enhancing social progress (19). These protests have the potential to shape the political structure and democracy and the “*Occupy Wall Street*” movement has proven this fact.

The *Occupy protests* involved income inequality and allowed the dominant populations to raise their voice against

the inequalities and achieve equal rights. Additionally, the campaign mainly spread over digital media and allowed people to discuss their income inequalities and gained huge popularity and acceptance at the time (20). However, this movement remained neutral and did not influence the development of any policy or legislation regarding ensuring equal pay for equal job responsibilities. Hence, this movement, though gained popularity, failed to pose a significant impact on society and has not brought any effective changes. On the other hand, the “*MeToo*” movement has raised concerns and created awareness of sexual offences. This movement has influenced people to talk and report about sexual exploitation and increased the rate of cases and reports of sexual offences (21). This social campaign has brought positive changes in “sex-crime reporting” in the OECD countries and the rate has increased by 14%.

These “social movements” have sometimes brought positive changes in society, while several movements have lacked posing significant impacts, but, increased awareness. The “*Black Lives Matter*” involving the case of the death of George Floyd remained the largest movement involving the discrimination between white and black people. This movement created high awareness and thoroughly changed the discrimination between these people, as the young daughter of the victim claimed of changing the world through the movement (22). Therefore, it can be stated that these movements have brought possible changes as per their capability and awareness. These movements have often influenced governments to implement new legislation regarding the issues and reduce inequalities and conflicts.

## DISCUSSION

“Social campaigns” have been identified to be vital for societal changes and progress as these campaigns involve transforming “socio-cultural norms” and stigma. These protests have the potential to shape legal rules, policies, democratic and social inequalities and discrimination. Leadership issues and democratic faults are also the core reasons behind “social movements” as the main concern is to end discrimination and foster equality and inclusion. It has been identified that “gender inequality” and increasing political influences have a vital influence on encouraging “social movements” in the contemporary era (23). An organised and properly guided “social campaign” has the potential to end racism, “socio-cultural discrimination” and exploitation and can influence “democratic reforms”. In the current era, “social movements” are basically “anti-capitalist” and are directly connected with one or more social goals (24). Additionally, these movements have been observed to hold a direct and positive influence on “societal changes” and are necessary for ending discriminative systems and norms.

The vital need for “social movements” have been identified in this study and it has been observed that these movements can provide various opportunities and



advantages, including ending “social stigma” and discrimination regarding gender, race, social status and economic capabilities. In addition, due to globalisation and the industrial revolution, relocation has increased, which has forced “environmental migrants” to protest and join “social campaigns” (25). Therefore, it can be stated that these movements involve various social issues, including ending “discrimination”, inequality and sexual harassment and also influencing “democratic reforms”. These “social campaigns” are also concerned with legislative and cultural issues and as in the 21st century, social and political conflicts have increased, the root and type of “social movements” have also changed. In the 21st century, social media has taken an active role in arranging and expanding awareness of “social movements” along with leading to change in people’s opinions and perceptions about social stereotypes.

In the 21st century, with the increasing usage of advanced technology, especially social media platforms, people are more concerned with protesting against social issues, discrimination and sexual offences. These practices have led to the formation of various important “social campaigns” in the contemporary era, including “*Anti-Dapi*”, “*Black Lives Matter*”, “*MeToo*” and “*Occupy Wall Street*”. The “*Occupy Wall Street*” movement remained a vital protest against income inequalities and the prevalence of these types of “non-trade-union” based campaigns has increased since the mid-1990 (26). The “social campaigns” and movements in the 21st century are more concerned with in-depth social issues and has also lead to introduce “philosophical questions” regarding the existing system that are influencing discrimination. It has been observed that all of these movements have gained support and motivation from social media platforms, especially Twitter and Facebook and have changed the quality and social status of the dominant classes. The “*Black Lives Matter*” movement involved discrimination and violation regarding racism between white and black people and has posed a vital impact on contemporary society, whereas the “*MeToo*” campaign has increased the rate of sexual crime reporting.

### CONCLUSION

The following study has been carried out to assess and illustrate the potential impact and influence of social movements driving change in 21st-century society and a secondary qualitative data collection method has been used. Considering the overall aspects, it can be stated that social movements are basically public campaigns aimed at achieving a social goal or shaping a social rule as per public interest. Throughout the history of humanity, social campaigns have taken vital roles in changing the negative aspects of the society or negative impact of any policy or legislation. In the 21st century, with increasing complexities, globalisation, and technical advancement, new social conflicts have risen and social media has been observed to play an active role in creating awareness of social campaigns.

Several important movements conducted in the 21st

century have been discussed and their potential impacts on contemporary society has been explored. The most vital “social movements” of this era have been identified to be “*Black Lives Matter*”, “*MeToo*” and “*Occupy Wall Street*”. It has been observed that the “*Black Lives Matter*” movement has changed the quality and status of lives of black people as well as changing the perception toward them throughout the world. The prevalence of the protests involving the “*MeToo*” campaign has enhanced the awareness of reporting sexual crimes and the “*Occupy Wall Street*” has posed a less significant impact compared to these campaigns.

These campaigns have been identified to be vital for social progress, “societal change” and promoting economic, cultural and gender equality in society and workplaces. Oftentimes, these movements have been identified to influence the government or judiciary system for the implementation of a new policy consisting of one or more social goals. Thus, it can be stated that these movements have taken active roles in shaping stereotyped social and cultural norms along with posing a major impact on contemporary democracy, legislation and politics. These campaigns have increased awareness of protecting and reporting sexual offences, racial violations or exploitation.

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