

BANNED AND CHALLENGED LITERATURE: A BATTLE OVER OPINIONS, OBEDIENCE, AND REPERCUSSIONS

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ABSTRACT

If we take a look at the historical flashback of literature development, book banning has a long history. It has been a common practice throughout the world and continues to be so at present in India. There may be multiple backlashes and a diversity of reasons but the problem boils down to one thing – a book ban. The study aims to understand and present the problems, issues, viewpoints, and their impact that ultimately contribute to book ban. Research addresses: what does book banning entail? How does book banning work by taxing specific issues and problems in this complex environment, why does this current surge against and metastasize? Why do people engage in redaction, relocation, restriction, and removal? Short and long-term effects of banning books, scope and implications of the recent wave of book challenges and bans, significant crusades, and pushbacks against book bans. An endeavor is directed toward the goal of getting an in-depth idea of what is book banning and how it affects society. The study is intended to tread a fine line between a dichotomy of acceptance and non-acceptance of a controversial book whilst book banning mirrors trends on the continuum of time. An attempt is made to reinforce and review the study of books versus book bans by building a conceptual framework that reflects the ideology of how books influence our lives, imagination of life without books, the power of good books to a quote “a room without books is like a body without a soul”. – Cicero.

Keywords: Book Ban, Effects of Book Ban, Challenged Literature, Repercussions.

Introduction

It is theorized that certain objectionable graphical depictions, religious fundamentalism, postcolonial topics, the perceived notion of obscenity in women's characters, social discrimination, profanity in literature, slyly mocking and purported spoofs, libelous and derogatory writings cause frequent book bans. Perceptible ideological shift recoiling over time is observed. The book banning has significant impacts on our five major social institutions. The rapid growth of information technology has brought about a radical change in the notion of book banning. Let's first know what objectives this research is seeking,

- Investigating 'To Ban or Not to Ban': The Confronting Issue of Censorship.
- To Understand the Effect of How Book Bans Narrow the World View for People.
- To Establish an In-Depth Study of Banned Literature as Erasing Perspectives and Identities.
- To Study the Process of How Early Banned Books Be Viewed More Favourably Today.

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Research Methodology

At the outset of research planning, the following questions are raised in light of the rationale quoted above, which bear on the crucial points of the study. Possible attempts will be made to address them during the research process.

- What themes, contents, ideas, and graphical depictions were frequently challenged or banned? Is there any relevance encountered to perceptible shift that a specific audience tends to recoil from over time?
- How do book bans' educational, social, political, economic, and religious impacts help understand the ripple effects on students?
- How does the advent of information and communication technology influence the practice of book banning into its perspective landscape?

Defining Book/Literature Banning

Book banning refers to the deliberate act of prohibiting and removing a book from circulation in the market/libraries. This practice is typically employed when a book is deemed to contain content that either advocates social and political issues or accentuates differences among various groups based on religious beliefs. A banning is the removal of those materials. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others.

What is the difference between a challenge and a ban?

A challenge is an effort to remove or restrict materials, typically driven by objections from an individual or group. It goes beyond mere expression of a point of view, involving a deliberate attempt to eliminate certain content from the curriculum or library. In contrast, banning is the actual removal of those materials. For example, we see 'Satanic verses' by Salman Rushdie as a complete removal or ban based on highly religious problems.

Challenges are not just about personal opinions; they represent a concerted effort to limit access for others by removing materials from educational settings. Despite these challenges, the dedication of librarians, teachers, parents, students, and concerned citizens often leads to the preservation of most materials in school curricula or library collections. As a result, the majority of challenges are unsuccessful in achieving their goal.

Why are Books Challenged?

Books are frequently challenged with good intentions, typically aiming to shield others, especially children, from challenging ideas and information. Censorship, whether subtle or overt, is recognized as harmful. As articulated by John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty*, even if the entire human population saved one person and held a particular opinion, there would be no justification for silencing that dissenting individual. The harm in stifling opinions lies in robbing not only the present generation but also posterity, hindering the exchange of error for truth and impeding the vital clash between truth and falsehood.

Challenges often arise from a genuine concern to safeguard children from perceived "inappropriate" sexual content or "offensive" language. Reported reasons for challenging materials, according to the Office of Intellectual Freedom, include the following:

<i>Racial themes</i>	<i>Profanity</i>
<i>Sex & violence</i>	<i>Problematic religious views</i>
<i>Unpopular political views;</i>	<i>Offensive language;</i>
<i>Exsexuality</i>	<i>Nudity, drugs;</i>
<i>Anti-family</i>	<i>Racism/communalism;</i>
<i>Homosexuality, sex education</i>	<i>Occult satanism.</i>

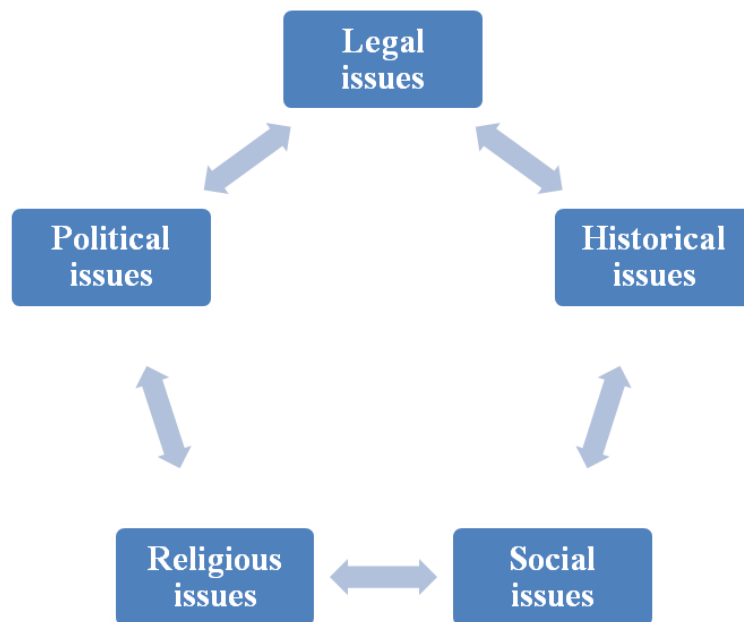
Legality In Banned Literature (Novels/Books)

Literary standards of morality have been challenged over time. These challenges face frequent pushbacks and acceptance as some arguments were made in Favor and against censorship in the article "LEGAL SERVICE INDIAN" E-JOURNAL. In the world scenario, legality and the process of banning/restricting books were aptly depicted in the article – "CENSORSHIP REGIME IN INDIA".

Law for Book Banning

Section 95 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973	Works power on the State Administration to ban if the content may "encourage, or challenge to encourage, hatred among similar groups on grounds of religious conviction or conflict, or sense of hatred, hatred or unkind-will among dissimilar religious groups
Section 153A of IPC	It provides punishments for acts that promote enmity between different groups in fields of religious conviction, race, area of childbirth, house, and foreign language.
Act, 1962,	This Act prevents the import of books in India to stop the circulation of books that the Indian government doesn't want to sell in the markets.
Section 95 of Criminal Procedure Code 1973	This act stops the production or selling of such books, which gives the power to the state government to declare any newspaper, document, or book that offends the provision of the penal code.
Section 124-A, section 153-A	Promoting ill will between two groups based on religion, language, caste
Section 153-B	Imputing disloyalty of country to any such group
Section 293	Sale of obscene literature to the young
Section 295-A	Insult to the religious feelings of any such groups of citizens
Section 292	obscene literature

Reasons in Favor of Book Banning



Reasons against Book Banning

- **Promoting Awareness:** The prohibition of books hinders access to information on specific social issues, leading to a lack of awareness
- **Academic Development:** Maintaining disciplines such as history in academia necessitates not only safeguarding valuable resources but also ensuring unrestricted access, allowing for academic exploration, interpretation, and the freedom to elucidate and communicate ideas.
- **Misinterpretation and Fear of Consequences:** Authorities often ban books without even reading them, as FIRs are filed based on public reactions and cases proceed based on objections from specific societal groups. This, in many instances, results from a misrepresentation of the content in question.

- **Legal Aspect:** In India, the judiciary is increasingly embracing a more liberal approach when it comes to interpreting challenged books.
- **Democratic Values:** The key contention opposing book banning is rooted in the argument that such practices violate the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression, as enshrined in Article 19(1) of the Indian Constitution. Moreover, it is asserted that these actions do not align with the parameters of reasonable restrictions outlined in Article 19.

The most popular reason against book banning is that the practice does not Favor the democratic ideal of freedom of speech and expression, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the constitution of India.

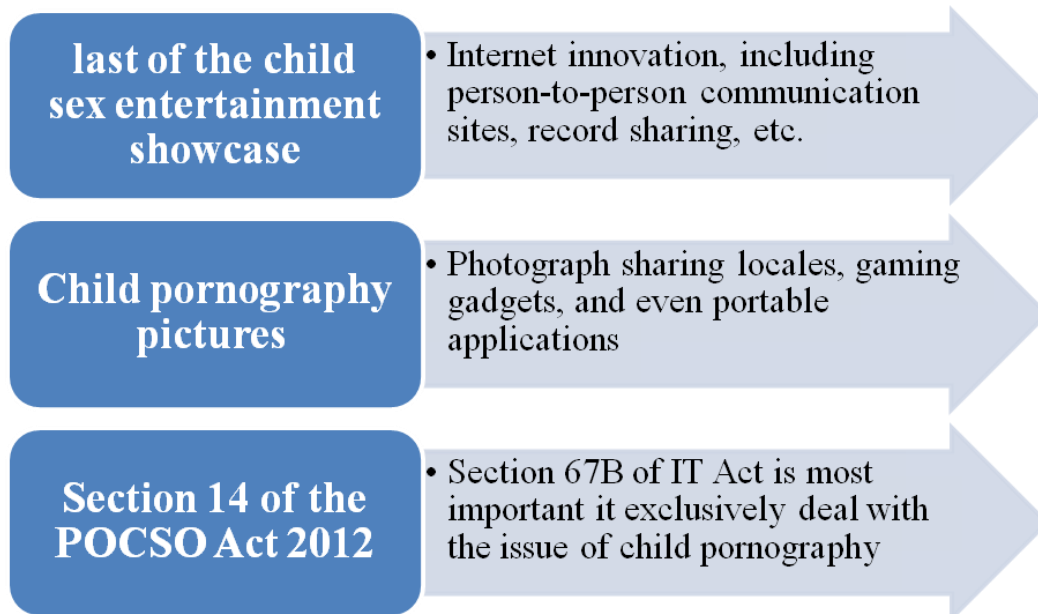
What are the extreme needs of banning literature/books/media, etc?

Addressing the Complexity of Banning Information: The study emphasizes that the prohibition of literature, books, media, or any informational medium is a contentious and intricate matter with significant potential consequences. Although there could be situations where limitations on specific content are deemed essential, such measures trigger apprehensions regarding freedom of expression, intellectual freedom, and the right to access information. Various reasons are occasionally put forth as compelling needs for banning or restricting certain content, including concerns related to national security, hate speech, obscenity, morality, and cultural sensitivity. If we take the example of child pornography and how easy assessment of the internet provides every good and bad thing on one platform, let me quote,

“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, -that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear, and that they grow in peace.”

~ Kofi Annan

Child pornography is universally condemned and illegal, given its inherent harm and exploitation of minors. There are global laws and initiatives dedicated to combating this issue, with several international conventions specifically addressing the problem. The prohibition of child pornography is justified for various reasons:



Australian attempted Book Bans haven't Worked

“I think that by removing books from libraries you are taking away peoples' stories and creativity. Therefore, you are lessening the creative thinking in students”

— Molly, Glenbard West High School

Banning of Australian Author Mem Fox's Book: The 1988 picture book "Guess What?" by Mem Fox, with illustrations by Vivienne Goodman, faced a ban in Duval County, Florida, on grounds of alleged "pornography." The controversy stemmed from a particular illustration portraying the main character, "old witch" Daisy O'Grady, taking a bath.



The picture book, inviting children to deduce Daisy's witchy identity through a sequence of clues, is now part of a multitude of titles—primarily featuring LGBTQIA+ or culturally diverse themes—that have been expelled from school libraries in the state. In the United States, "Gender Queer" earned the title of the 'Most Banned Book in the Country' for 2021, securing the top spot on the American Library Association's "Most Challenged" list in 2022 due to perceived "sexually explicit" content. Nevertheless, following a review by the Australian Classification Board, the book received an "unrestricted classification" with consumer advice suggesting that it is "not recommended for readers under 15 years."

Australian Classification Board director **Fiona Jolly** said of *Gender Queer*:

- **"The treatment of sex and nudity is [...] not high in impact and is not exploitative, offensive, gratuitous, or very detailed. Given the [book's] literary, artistic, and educational merits, the Board does not consider that the publication contains material that offends a reasonable adult to the extent that it should be restricted"**

So, these were some examples in which you can see the constant themes and issues that are frequently banned and challenged but at some point, these are so aptly related to the personal growth of children that it was challenged to not be banned.

Book Bans Aren't Effective? There Are Better Ways to Handle Sensitive Subjects?

"The choice to read the book is always with the reader. If you do not like a book, throw it away. There is no compulsion to read a book."

The question of whether book banning is right or wrong is subjective and depends on one's perspective. Advocates of intellectual freedom and freedom of speech argue that book banning is wrong because it restricts access to information and ideas, limiting the diversity of thought and stifling open discourse. They believe that individuals should have the right to make their own choices about what to read and that censorship undermines democratic values.

On the other hand, proponents of book banning often argue that certain materials may be harmful or offensive, particularly to certain age groups or cultural or religious communities. They may believe that restricting access to certain books is necessary to protect societal values, morals, or the well-being of individuals, especially children.

In many societies, the debate over book banning involves balancing the principles of freedom of expression with concerns about public safety, moral standards, and cultural sensitivities. It's important to note that opinions on this issue can vary widely, and the appropriateness of book banning is often a matter of ongoing debate within different communities and societies.

Thoughts on Banning Repercussions

Here, aptly using this quote is by Haruki Murakami,

“If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking.”

Banning or challenging books can have wide-ranging repercussions. On one hand, it may limit the dissemination of certain ideas, potentially hindering intellectual and cultural development. On the other hand, it can lead to backlash, sparking debates on freedom of expression, censorship, and the role of authority in shaping public discourse.

The question seems a bit broad, so I'll provide a general perspective on banning and its potential repercussions in various contexts:

◆ **Censorship and Freedom of Speech**

Banning certain content or ideas can be seen as a violation of freedom of speech. Striking a balance between protecting individuals from harm and allowing open discourse is a challenging task.

◆ **Online Platforms**

Banning users or content on social media platforms can have significant social and political consequences. It raises questions about who gets to decide what is acceptable and what isn't.

◆ **Educational Purposes**

Banning certain books or educational materials can limit access to information. It's important to weigh the potential harm against the benefits of exposing individuals to a diversity of perspectives.

◆ **Social and Cultural Reflection**

Literature often reflects the social and cultural context of its time. Banning certain works may prevent an honest and open discussion about historical and societal issues, hindering our understanding of the past.

● **Censorship and Suppression**

Banning books can be seen as a form of censorship and suppression of ideas. It may prevent individuals from engaging with different viewpoints and limit their exposure to the diversity of human experiences.

● **Book Banning is a Form of Discrimination**

Banning books with LGBTQ content suppresses the voices of LGBTQ authors and their ability to share their stories. It denies readers the opportunity to explore the diversity of human experiences.

This is just not fair. Some people want to remove books about LGBTQ experiences, and that's not right. LGBTQ students should be treated the same as everyone else in school. When books about their lives are banned, it makes them feel like they don't belong or aren't safe. If schools were banning all books about gender and sexuality, it might be a little better. But the truth is, they are singling out the LGBTQ community. It's like the people in charge don't like them, and that's not okay. Lawmakers and school boards shouldn't force their anti-LGBTQ beliefs on students.

— Kyle, W.T. Clarke High School

Conclusion

This practice of banning literature, and books will be an ongoing discussion in this wide world. Suppressing people, community, and literature produced by people are still targeted and challenged over the past to present. This battle has no significant end, result, or justification for Such burning issues over religion, politics, educational, and social/economical. The wide scope for censorship given to the govt. is probably a product of the acute diversity of Asian nations with its giant selection in terms of races,

creeds, spiritual, and social categories, it's significantly vital to not provoke any specific section of the population. The ugly effects of previously banned, controversial, and censored works of art are found favorable today, these are aptly set well in today's time. Book bans often stem from differing opinions about what is deemed acceptable or appropriate content. These opinions may be influenced by cultural, religious, political, or social perspectives. What one group considers valuable and enlightening, another may view as offensive or harmful. This banning or prohibiting published or issued works can be driven by authorities or institutions seeking to enforce a particular set of values or ideologies. Obedience to these authorities may be expected, with the belief that restricting certain ideas or perspectives is necessary for maintaining societal order or adhering to specific moral standards. The banning and challenging of books represent a complex battleground involving opinions, obedience, and repercussions.

In conclusion, the battle over banned and challenged books is intertwined with differing opinions, the dynamics of obedience, and the far-reaching repercussions on education and society. Balancing the need for order with the principles of intellectual freedom remains an ongoing challenge that requires thoughtful consideration and engagement from various stakeholders.

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