

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND STUDENTS' LEARNING DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

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In the 21st century, social media have become the primary sources of information for the entire world. Though they are very useful to disseminate the required information, they are also vehicles of fake news and agents of wrong information. It is necessary that the media provide adequate information which is understandable, clear, and forceful. Different organizations across the globe employ media for their commercial gains either to outshine their counterparts in business or trumpet their excellence and achievements. This study aims to present the effect of using social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Academia, and Facebook as a boon or bane among school-going children. To identify the expediency of social media on students' learning during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period, data were collected using structured questionnaire distributed among the students of class IX and class X standards of Saint Claret English Medium School, Kachugaon, Assam, India. Data were analysed and presented in tables, figures, and charts. Overall, the results indicate that social media platforms are useful for students in their learning experience especially during COVID-19 lockdown period.

Keywords: COVID-19, lockdown, social media, student-learning, online classes

Introduction

In this age of high technology wherein the latest information and breaking news such as an earthquake, a tsunami, or a terrorist attack which happens in one part of the world reaches every nook and corner of the globe within seconds. Nowadays we have more real-time information available at our fingertips in

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the face of a worldwide event (Kaur, 2020). The world is today celebrating the improvements in communication technology which has broadened the scope of communication through information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Peter, 2015). It is unbelievable or sometimes seems like a dream that now we can get information as we never had in the past (Kaur, 2020). This affirms that today's society is bombarded with messages in different forms and social media functions as a powerful instrument to give the latest updates (Young, 2012). Hence, giving proper information is very essential because we are also in the age of fake news in which many naive and dupable people can be easily carried away without filtering the information received. During the outbreak of coronavirus Covid-19, social media platforms have shown effectiveness in information dissemination as one of the most important means of communication in this era (Baki, 2020; Shalvee, 2020). Social media is all around us and enables real-time communication with families and colleagues (Endacott, 2016). Social media platforms are amongst the most widely used sources of information in the world (González-Padilla, 2020). It has a plethora of benefits as it helps to the rampant spreading of news (Kaur, 2020) and allows citizens to address their queries directly (Srivastava, 2020). Hence, the need of the hour is to make media literacy an integral part of the course curricula (Ghosh, 2015).

Review of Literature

The world knelt in helplessness before the unprecedented Covid-19 with no ray of healing and hope at its nearest horizon right from the start in December 2019 in China till date. In this regard, mass media played an important role in recovering the news on Covid-19 (Sharma, 2020). In the face of covid-19, social media is a great way for individuals and communities to stay connected even while physically separated (Kaur, 2020). (Baki, 2020) affirms that 16.5 million were registered across its social media platforms. Information and communication technology (ICT) has made a great amount of change on the new ways people obtain, perceive, analyse, and evaluate information and knowledge since the last few decades (Cathy, 2015). During lockdown of Covid-19 people also turned to social media for various purposes such as information relaxation, entertainment, and guidance. Social media played a crucial role in providing information regarding Coronavirus via Social Media platforms (Srivastava, 2020). It took a significant part in the rapid dissemination of information both from scientific meeting sand from peer-reviewed journals (Mejia, 2020) ; (Endacott, 2016). In this regard, (Mejia, 2020) opines that the media must have a social responsibility to keep the population properly informed (Sharma, 2020). Indeed we are not only getting the latest news but using them to fight this contagious disease, to

understand how it spreads, how people interact and how people can respond to it (Lima, 2020). Therefore, (Shalvee, 2020) believes that in the crisis of Covid-19, media played a very important role in making people aware of the situation and encourage them to do positive action. Such information can help keep us safe, providing us with a better understanding of what is occurring and how it might impact us and those we love (Kaur, 2020).

Social Media and Online Classes

Social media is educational as it allows students to share experiences, discuss concepts, and create a space for co-learning (Chanda, 2020); (Endacott, 2016). According to (Chanda, 2020) social media has become an indispensable part of our lives with incoming of technology and World Wide Web It has broken the monotony of the classroom teaching as the students can now access relevant multimedia materials like videos, lecture notes, presentations, and overall wider access to sources and experts online (Dutta, 2020). (Sobaih, 2020) believes that students used social media for building an online community and supporting each other. It has emerged as the primary means to communicate, to keep oneself entertained and survive isolation (Chanda, 2020). Since the beginning of lockdown, schools, colleges, and universities around the world have shifted their classes to video conferencing platforms like Zoom and Google meet (De, 2020). To get in touch with the teachers and their classmates, the students who were not previously tech-savvy, are also using different media tools now (Dutta, 2020). Educators are now able to interact with students beyond the confines of the classroom or within four walls. A study conducted by (Sobaih, 2020) confirmed that proper usage of social media could promote a new era of online learning. (Srivastava, 2020) found that Social Medias are used by students to communicate and exchange information on matters related to their learning and lessons. In India, WhatsApp has been used mostly to share information, documents, presentations, texts, videos, etc. While YouTube has become one of the most significant tools for self-learning (Chanda, 2020). Besides, WhatsApp is formally used by institutions and their faculty members to communicate with their students (Sobaih, 2020). Apart from the text messages, video conferencing tools are widely used for interactions between teachers and students (Dutta, 2020). Surprisingly, social media have emerged as powerful platforms to enhance students' learning, thereby facilitating interactions between students and their instructors as well as with their peers (Sobaih, 2020). Students are now comfortable to access, share, and create useful information and gain knowledge in a subject (Dutta, 2020) thereby taking a significant role to keep going the teaching and learning process.

Social Media: A Boon

Social media is one of the best channels and networking sites to share the latest news about happenings in the world. Tyner (2012) remarks that the increased capacity to store and retrieve information, access to broad social networks, and the ability to use computer networks to transcend time and space is worthy of record. It gives quickly and instantly daily updates related to academic, health, business, and entertainment on a societal, national, and international level (Sharma, 2020). Social media strengthens the bond of loved ones and family members who are geographically separated due to the demands of their jobs and occupation. It keeps the colleagues and members of an organization connected and bonded. Thus, the 21st century offers life in a borderless world, globalization, internationalization and the explosion of the information (Sharma, 2020). Social media platforms can be used to encourage people and to reinforce public trust in supporting public health measures (Depoux, 2020). This is because of social media impacts on the quality of life of individuals of all age groups (Sharma, 2020).

Scope and Coverage of the Study

The present study intends to firstly, find out how social media platforms contributed and facilitated to continue the teaching-learning programme; and secondly, to understand the benefit of social media in students' learning during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period. The students of class IX (40) and Class X (40) of Saint Claret English Medium School, Kachugaon, Assam, India were randomly selected for the purpose.

Objectives

The objectives of the survey are:

- i. To find out if social media was a boon or bane during COVID-19 pandemic
- ii. To identify which social media was mostly used by students for learning
- iii. To understand whether social media facilitate or obstructed learning

Methodology

The population chosen for the study consists of the students of Saint Claret English Medium School, Kachugaon, Assam, India. The participants

consisted of 80 students (40 males & 40 females). Data were collected with the help of structured questionnaire (consisting of 13 items) administered among class IX and class X students. Collected data were analysed using basic descriptive analysis and presented in tables, figures, and charts.

Results

The present study shows that social media platforms helped the students to be connected to their teachers and peers during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. They were timely updated with the latest information from the school and teachers concerning their classes, unit tests, assignments, and homework (*Table 1*). It was also found that teachers mostly used WhatsApp groups as well as text messages (52.5%) and You Tube videos (28.8%) since the students were more familiar and comfortable with the same as the situation did not permit teachers to train their students for the usage of other social media platforms (*Figure 1*). Most of the students have multiple social media accounts mainly for academic purpose. Their regular online classes for all the subjects were conducted via ZOOM platform while their unit tests and half-yearly examinations were conducted online (*Figure 2*). Availing different network/internet connectivity, they used social media platforms very often because their classes, tests and assessments were carried out through online mode (*Figure 3*).

In respect of the frequency of students posting on social media, the findings expound that many of them prefer uploading their homework, assignments, and answer papers through media platforms. Besides, these platforms provide opportunity for feedback and responses they received from their teachers (*Figure 4*). Social media was employed and utilised the maximum for study (37.5%) and online classes (31.3%) by the students of class IX and Class X during the COVID-19 lockdown (*Figure 5*). Majority of the students also spent 4 to 5 hours on social media (33.8%) since most of their classes and teaching-learning programmes were carried out through the intervention of social media (*Figure 6*). The result also shows a positive picture of how the students used social media. No doubt, the findings also show that during their leisure time, the students used social media platforms for socialization with their peers (*Figure 7*). However, though the students got the opportunity to access social media during lockdown never like yester years it is appreciative that they were not blindly addicted to it (*Figure 8*).

Table 1: Question 1 to 5 on the use of social media by the students.

Q. No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
1	Social media is helpful to continue my learning.	0	0	27 (33.75)	53 (66.25)
2	The social media kept me connected with my teachers and classmates.	0	0	31 (38.75)	49 (61.25)
3	Social media kept me abreast with the latest information.	0	0	28 (35.00)	52 (65.00)
4	I used social media the maximum for academic and learning purpose.	0	0	35 (43.75)	45 (56.25)
5	I used social media more to chat and text with my friends.	0	0	51 (63.75)	29 (36.25)

The figures within parentheses indicate percentages

Figure 1: Media platform used to access learning materials

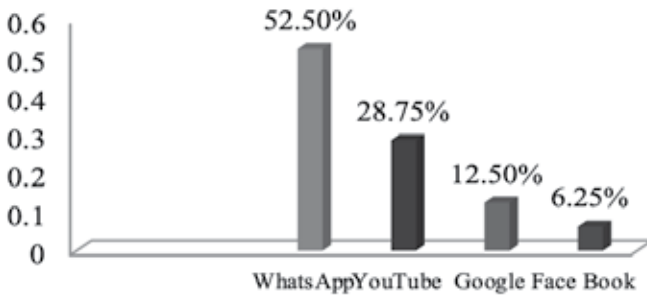


Figure 2: Number of social media sites do you have accounts

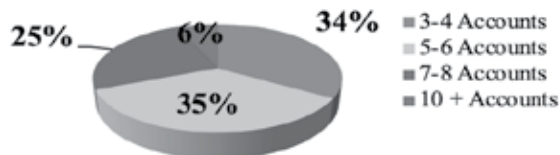


Figure 3: Frequency of using social media in a day

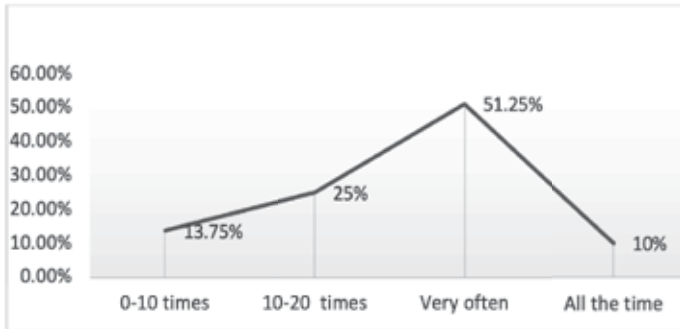


Figure 4: Frequency of posting on social media

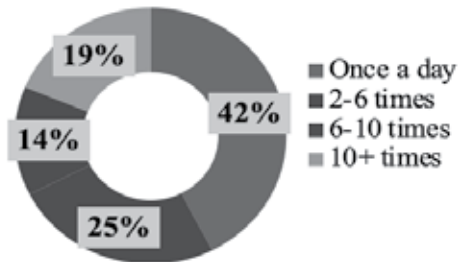


Figure 5: Purpose of using social media

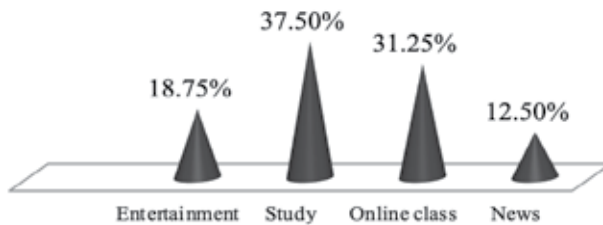


Figure 6: Hours spent on social media per day

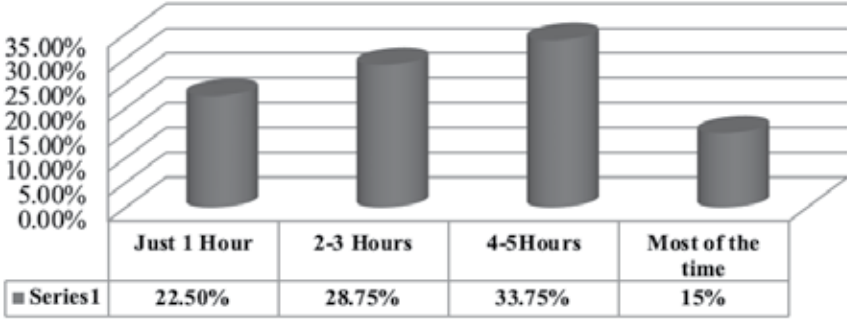


Figure 7: Time of access to social media

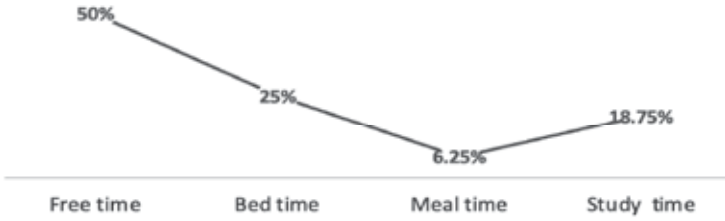
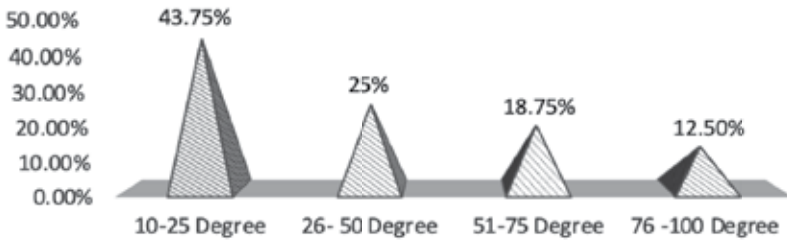


Figure 8: Addiction to social media



Discussions

The findings of this study show that 33.75% and 66.25% of the student participants agreed with the statement, “Using social media helped me continue my education.” This demonstrates how the student fraternity used social media as a helpful tool to carry out their educational initiatives. Regarding the claim that “social media helped me stay in touch with my teachers and classmates,” 61.25% of students have expressed their strong agreement, whilst 38.75% of students agree with it. This illustrates that 60% of the kids were able to establish connections with their teachers and friends through the use of social media. Regarding the subsequent claim, “social media kept me up to date with the latest information,” the research indicates that 65% of respondents strongly concur. The percentage of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement, “I used social media for academic and learning purposes,” was 56.25%, compared to 43.75% who agreed with it. “I used social media more to chat and text with my friends” was the subject of the following claim. It was discovered that while 63.75% of the students agreed with it, only 36.25% strongly agreed. These results clearly show that social media helped students stay in touch with their peers and teachers during the COVID-19 lockdown. They received regular updates from the school with the most recent information. When their physical attendance was not possible for class, they received regular updates from the school and teachers regarding their class, unit tests, assignment, and homework, which was a big help.

With its charm and promise to provide excellent service to individuals of all ages and backgrounds, social media did not think twice to entice young students with a variety of choices. The young students whose education and programmes abruptly came to an end were left with no choice but to turn to social media for support. From this angle, it was discovered that 52.50% of the students used WhatsApp to obtain their course materials, while just 28.75% of the students used YouTube to do the same. Additionally, the study discovered that a mere 12.50% of students obtained their course materials via Google, with the remaining 6.25% obtaining their information from Facebook. These results indicate that teachers used WhatsApp groups to share instructional materials with their students, such as videos and text messages, because the students were accustomed to using it. Moreover, it was not feasible to provide them with instruction on how to use other social media sites. Remarkably, it was discovered that 35% of the students had numerous accounts on different social media platforms, 51.25% of them used the platform frequently, and 25% of them used it at least ten to twenty times a

day for looks and visits. According to the study, 42% of the students posted on social media two to six times a day, and 25% of them posted six to ten times a day. The upside was that their primary use for it was educational. Additionally, they used the Zoom platform for their online courses, unit assessments, and half-yearly exam, which required internet access to access the social media network. The regularity with which the students uploaded their assignments, homework, and response papers to social media was for downloading the answers and comments they get from their instructors. It was shown that 18.75% of people used social media for leisure, 37.50% for research, and 31.25% for online learning. It was discovered that just 18.75% of people used social media for leisure, 37.50% for study, 31.25% for online learning, and 12.50% for news consumption. Despite the fact that 28.7% and 33.75% of the students were found to use social media for about two to three hours and four to five hours a day, respectively, the current study discovered that this was the case because social media was used in all of their classrooms and teaching-learning initiatives. Similarly, 25% of the student participants in the study browse social media after bedtime, 18.75% of them do so during study hours, and 50% of them do so during their leisure time. Thus, it may be inferred that despite the students' extensive social media exposure, 43.75%, 25%, 18.75%, and 12.50% of the students who developed and addiction at 10⁰-25⁰, 26⁰-50⁰, 51⁰-75⁰ and 76⁰-100⁰ points were addicted at a percentage of 43.75%, 25%, 18.75% and 12.50% respectively.

Conclusion

Never before in the human history has it been possible to communicate as quickly as today. Besides, it was unheard of that students would attend their classes and have their learning programmes engaged through online mode with the assistance of social media. From the present study, it is discovered that social media platforms have become helpful not only to maintain communication with friends and family, to reduce isolation, and boredom but to facilitate and keep the learning going even in the face of the strictest lockdown as understood from this case. The study also showed that WhatsApp was most used by the students for academic communication with their teachers and their peers. It can be concluded that social media is the greatest boon for the 21st century. Hence, the need of the hour is to train the young learners of the digital era an intelligent use of social media and cautious handling of the varied information offered to them.

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