



SOCIAL MEDIA AND SKIN CARE- A BOON OR A BANE FOR DERMATOLOGY

Dermatology

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social media has become an essential source of health-related information, including dermatological advice. With the increasing reliance on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, concerns arise regarding the accuracy and reliability of information. Many individuals, especially young adults, seek dermatological guidance from social media, which can influence their treatment decisions, sometimes leading to misinformation and adverse effects. **Aims And Objectives:** To determine awareness, perception, and behavior regarding the impact of social media on individuals seeking dermatological information. Additionally, it evaluates the reliability of information available and its impact on patient decisions and health outcomes. **Materials And Methods:** A cross-sectional questionnaire-based study was conducted among the general population at tertiary care center over five months. The study employed snowball sampling, initially recruiting medical students who further disseminated the questionnaire. A total of 254 participants, aged ≥ 18 years and active social media users, were included. Data were collected using Google Forms and analyzed using SPSS V.20. **Results:** Out of 254 participants, the majority were aged 21-30 years (51.96%), and 70.47% were female. Among them, 50.39% used social media for dermatological concerns, with YouTube (56.29%) and Instagram (43.30%) being the most used platforms. General skincare (65.74%) and acne (41.33%) were the most searched topics. About 47.63% considered social media a reliable source, and 68.89% followed dermatologists, while 27.55% relied on non-dermatologist influencers. A total of 46.85% reported improvement in their skin condition, while 16.14% experienced side effects from social media-recommended products. **Conclusion:** Social media significantly influences dermatological information-seeking behavior. Although it provides accessible advice, the reliability of sources remains a concern. Misinformation can lead to inappropriate self-treatment and adverse effects. Public education on verifying sources and consulting qualified dermatologists is crucial for ensuring accurate dermatological care.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION:

"Social media" is a concept that encompasses various online platforms that allow real-time group communication using messages, text, audio, images, and videos. Social media use has grown exponentially and at a tremendous rate over the past few decades, surpassing more than half of the world population with 58.4%, there are currently more than 4.62 billion people globally who are considered active users of social media with higher penetration in industrialized countries and increasing use in developing countries, 1 of which, 99% have access via mobile at some point. 2 Over the last few decades, usage of social media has dramatically increased. According to research, 86% of adults aged 18 to 29 use social media, with 74% of Facebook users, 60% of Instagram users, and 63% of Snapchat users logging in at least once per day [1]. Recently, there has been a great interest in the use of social media in medicine, especially in Dermatology [2]. Many dermatology-related videos provide education by laypeople on dermatology, which has become increasingly popular with patients [3]. Nearly 90% of the individuals aged 18-24 report relying on social media for health care information, 34% state it will influence their choice of medication, and 41% state it will influence their choice of doctor [4]. Finding trustworthy health related information online is the biggest challenge [5]. Social media following is oftentimes equated to the offering of true and actual information to the people [2]. Medical advice from unreliable sources could lead to mismanagement, unnecessary treatment, and poor outcome [6]. We are conducting this study to evaluate knowledge and attitudes toward seeking dermatological information using social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, and Reddit.

In addition, we intend to find the factors that influence the patient's knowledge and perception of receiving physician counselling.

By identifying the gaps in public understanding of appropriate use of social media for dermatological information, we can develop targeted educational efforts to strengthen public health more effectively.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Source Of Data: Questionnaire based study in General Population

Methods Of Collection Of Data:

Study Designs: Cross Sectional Study

Sampling Technique: Snow ball sampling

Study Period: 5 months

Place Of Study: Tertiary care center

Study Population: General population

Sample Size: By the study Harshit Agarwal et al, showed that the prevalence of social media usage was 84.6%

Formula: $Z_{1-\alpha/2}^2 p(1-p) / d^2$

$Z = 1.96$

$P = 0.84$

$(1-P) = 0.2$

$d = 5\%$

$= (1.96)^2 (0.80)(0.20)$

$(0.05)^2$

The Sample Size = 245.68

Rounded off to 250

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Age more than 18 yrs
2. Anyone who uses social media account to seek dermatological information

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Individuals who were not willing to participate

Methodology

After obtaining approval and clearance from the institutional ethics committee, participants meeting the inclusion criteria were enrolled in the study after providing informed consent.

This cross-sectional study was conducted among 254 social media users using a snowball sampling method. Initially, medical college students were randomly selected and informed about the study. With their consent, they completed a structured questionnaire and were encouraged to share it with their relatives, friends, and family.

members. This process continued until the required sample size was reached.

The questionnaire was pre-designed, pre-tested, and structured with 15 questions. It was made available on Google Forms to ensure easy access and convenient participation. The questions were carefully designed to explore the role of social media in addressing dermatological concerns, including usage patterns, reliability of sources, and the impact of online advice on skincare decisions.

The Questionnaire Covered The Following Key Aspects:

- Utilization of social media for seeking dermatological advice.
- Frequency of social media usage for dermatological concerns.
- Preferred social media platforms for accessing dermatology-related information.
- Adverse effects experienced after using products or medications promoted on social media.
- Source of dermatological advice—whether obtained from certified dermatologists or non-medical influencers.

Statistical Analysis:

- The data collection was entered in MS excel
- Analysis was carried out using statistical software called SPSS V.20
- The results were expressed in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics.
- If $p < 0.05$ was said to be statistically significant.

RESULTS:

Table1. Socio-demographic details

Socio-demographic details	Sub-variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age	<20	108	42.51%
	21-30	132	51.96%
	31-40	6	2.36%
	>40	8	3.14%
Gender	Male	75	29.52%
	Female	179	70.47%
Occupation	Employed	68	26.77%
	Unemployed	186	73.22%
Total		254	100%

Out of 254 study participants, majority of them belonged to the age group of 21-30yrs (132,51.96%), followed by <20yrs (108,42.51%), >40yrs (8,3.14%) and 31-40yrs (6,2.36%) respectively.

Out of 254 study participants, majority were females (179,70.47%) and remaining were males (75,29.52%). Majority of the study participants were unemployed (186,73.22%) and remaining 68 study participants were employed (26.77%) respectively.

Table 2 Shows The Usage Of Social-media Usage For Dermatological Information

Among 254 participants in the study, 121 (47.63%) believed social media to be a reliable source of information; whereas 133 (52.32%) did not. The highest number of respondents used YouTube for dermatological information (56.29%), followed by Instagram (43.30%), others (34.64%), pintrest (5.51%), facebook (3.14%). General skin care was the most commonly searched topic, involving (65.74%) of the participants; Acne came in second with (41.33%), Dark circles (27.16%). Among the hair related concerns, majority of the study participants inquired for Hair fall (70.07%), Dry and frizzy hair (20.86%), Dandruff (19.68%). Frequency of usage of social media for the treatment advice in dermatology: Monthly: 74.40%, Weekly: 28 participants 11.02%, Daily: 9.44%. 46.85% of study participants reported improvement in their skin condition based on social media advice, while 53.14% of the study participants did not show improvement. 16.14% of the study participants experienced side effects from products recommended on social media, whereas 83.85% of them did not report any side effects.

Table 2. Social Media Usage

Social media usage	Sub-variables	Frequency	Percentage
Do you use social media for dermatological issues?	Yes	128	50.39%
	No	126	49.60%

Do you think social media is a reliable source?	Yes	121	47.63%
	No	133	52.36%
Which platform so you use to seek information?	Facebook	8	3.14%
	Instagram	110	43.30%
	Youtube	143	56.29%
	Pintrest	14	5.51%
	Others	88	34.64%
What type of information do you search related to skin issues?	Acne	105	41.33%
	General skin care	167	65.74%
	Pigmentation	58	22.83%
	Dark circles	69	27.16%
	Sun tan	51	20.79%
What type of information do you search	Wrinkles	16	6.29%
	Dandruff	50	19.68%
	Hair fall	178	70.07%
	Dry & frizzy hair	53	20.86%
	Patchy hair loss	24	9.44%
How frequently do you use social media for seeking treatment on dermatological issues?	Grey hair	22	8.66%
	Weekly	31	11.02%
	Everyday	26	9.44%
	Monthly	190	74.40%
Have you made any dietary or exercise modification for dermatological related issues based on information obtained from social media?	Yes	87	34.25%
	No	167	65.74%
Whom do you follow on social media for seeking information on skin related issues?	Dermatologist	175	68.89%
	Non dermatologist influences	70	27.55%
	You tube bloggers	59	23.22%
Has your skin condition improved by the advice seeked on social media?	Yes	119	46.85%
	No	135	53.14%
Have you encountered any side effects due to usage of product advised on social media?	Yes	41	16.14%
	No	213	83.85%
Total		254	100%

DISCUSSION:

Out of 254 study participants the majority were present in the age group of 21-30yrs (132,51.96%) followed by 20years (+108 42.51%), >40yr (8 Out of 254 study participants majority were females (179,70.47%) and remaining males (70.22%), Majority was unemployed (186,73.22%) and remaining 68 study participants employed (26.77%) respectively

Whereas in the study conducted by the Alumudimeegh et al [6]. among 1056 participants shows 26.1% of the patients were aged 18–22 years mostly comprising women (67.9%).

In another study Agarwal et al [7]. found that the maximum numbers of participants using social media (83.6%) were between 18 and 24 years of age.

Similar to the study done by Chen et al [8] the females outnumbered the male participants and most of all had at least attaining secondary level of education reflecting the predominance.

This demographic is particularly susceptible to various skin conditions, such as acne, which can greatly affect physical appearance, especially during puberty. Hence, these findings align closely with the results of the present study.

Out of 254 participants in the study 121 (47.63%) believed social media to be a reliable source of information whereas 133 (52.32%) did not.

YouTube was the most frequently used platform for accessing dermatological information (56.29%), followed by Instagram (43.30%). Additionally, 34.61% of respondents relied on multiple platforms, while Pinterest (5.51%) and Facebook (3.14%) were less commonly used.

Whereas, in Harshith Agarwal et al, showed that Facebook was the most used social networking site (86.4%) followed by YouTube (82%) and Instagram (81.1%).

A study conducted by Alumudimeegh et al. [6] revealed that Snapchat was the most frequently used social media platform on a daily basis. Interestingly, despite Facebook being the most widely used social media platform globally, with nearly three billion users [10], it did not rank among the top five most popular social media apps in Saudi Arabia.

A survey by Statista in 2020 identified Facebook as the most widely used social networking platform, with 2,498 million users, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, and Instagram [9]. Consequently, the findings of the our study are lower in comparison to the results reported by Agarwal et al.

In our study, the frequency of social media use for dermatological treatment advice was as follows: 189 participants (74.40%) used it monthly, 28 participants (11.02%) weekly, and 24 participants (9.44%) daily.

In contrast, a 2020 report by Smart Insights found that social media users spend an average of 2 hours and 24 minutes per day on these platforms [13].

Regarding daily usage, approximately 50% of our participants reported spending more than 3 hours per day on social media, exceeding the global average [1] but aligning with findings from a similar study [12].

Similarly, Agarwal and Agarwal reported that around 50% of participants used social networking sites for over 3 hours daily, making their findings consistent with those of the present study.

Limitations:

1. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference.
2. Restricted geographic scope affects generalizability.
3. Self-reporting may introduce recall bias.

CONCLUSION:

Social media is becoming a central hub for information dissemination, especially in the field of cosmetic dermatology among younger, frequent users.

Our study reveals that YouTube is the top choice among participants seeking cosmetic dermatology information. The majority of participants sought guidance on general skin care and hair loss treatments. This trend emphasizes the increasing dependence on social media for skincare and beauty advice.

A key finding of the study is that nearly 47% of respondents relied on advice from YouTube bloggers and non-dermatologists rather than certified dermatologists. This raises a critical concern about source credibility, as influencers and YouTube personalities may not always provide evidence-based or medically accurate advice. Non-expert advice can lead to misinformation, ineffective skincare routines, and potential adverse effects.

These findings emphasize the need to raise awareness about the credibility of online dermatological information and promote dermatologist-approved sources to ensure access to accurate and safe skincare guidance.

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