ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Arts

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON COLLEGE STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN- A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) declared as pandemic by the World Health Organization on March, 11th 2020. This disease spread like wildfire around the globe. In India it is treated as a notified disaster due to sudden increase in COVID 19 cases resulting in complete shutdown on March, 24th 2020. This has affected all sectors across the country including the educational sector as all educational institutions are ordered to remain closed till further notice. The closure of schools, colleges and universities has disrupted educational activities at various stages. To rebuild this disruption educational institutions have been forced to shift from traditional to online learning via various methods. Use of social media proves to be an effective tool in this new method of teaching and also for the social and emotional lives of students, as they are living under lockdown with stay home guidelines. The objective of this survey is to highlight the use of social media during lockdown for educational purposes by college students and assess how they are adapting to lockdown conditions via use of social media.

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of Coronavirus in early 2020 caused a worldwide crisis named COVID-19 (caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus). The new coronavirus started to spread from China (WHO, 2019) during December 2019, and engulfed the whole world within a short period of time. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 a pandemic (WHO, 2020).

India was expected to face high risk and many challenges due to COVID-19 pandemic because of its socio-cultural and inequalities in the health system. To contain the spread of the pandemic country, the government announces countrywide lockdown from 24th March 2020 (MHA, India 2020) for breaking the chain of the spread and controlling the cases to the possible minimum numbers. The situation of COVID-19 on March, 24th is shown in fig. 1.

Fig.1: COVID-19 cases in India on March, 24th 2020 (https:// www.covid19india.org/)

Closing of schools, colleges and universities proved to be an excellent way to check the spread of the virus, so all the schools, colleges and universities were ordered to remain closed for their students, and all exams were called off by the government of India. Because of this situation almost all teaching institutes adopted a new type of teaching method known as online teaching to maintain the continuity in absence of face to face teaching methods. In India approximately 32 crore students presently enrolled in all teaching institutes and a number of different online learning programs were deployed all over India to reach 32 crore students (UNESCO). Among the different methods of online teaching, Social media played a vital role and to provide a platform for both teacher and students as we all knew the fact that social media sites have been used to spread information. In the present era more than 85% of youngsters use social media for different purposes (Madden *et al.,* 2013) and the use of social media among college students is an all time popular trend. They use social sites daily, irrespective of whether the content is beneficial or not. Some social media platforms like Whatsapp, Telegram provide a channel to share information over large groups of students.

Apart from shifting of teaching-learning method during COVID-19 lockdown there were some major restrictions like social distancing, stay inside home, change in eating habits etc could be crucial factors affecting the social, educational and emotional lives of students. Khattar et al 2020 revealed a mixture of various moods with 42.9% of all respondents feeling frustrated, bored, overworked and anxious, while 37.9 feel relaxed and peaceful and 19.2% feel tired of using mobile phones. Social media again plays a crucial role here for students to connect them with their peers which provide a sort of strength.

With no doubts, during lockdown social media provides a ground to connect with friends, news, and online teaching-learning method while on other hand it also provides a suitable environment for transmission of misinformation which is as lethal as spreading of virus. Misinformation like the 5G network can check virus transmission, spraying of alcohol and chlorine on people, and washing of the nose with salt water (Helen *et al.,* 2020).

So keeping in view the importance of role of social media among students during COVID-19. The questionnaire was targeted college students with respect to what student life looked like during lockdown, including teaching learning habits, their routine, their social contacts and their emotional lives. The objective of this study is

1. To know the popular social media platforms during lockdown among college students.
2. To study the role of social media in social life of students during lockdown.
3. To find out the problems in online learing.

METHODOLOGY

An online survey was conducted to obtain data, for this survey questionnaire was a google form (https://docs. google. com/forms/d/1II-HwxEbkSsg G2XT w 9276q JHJWWjo7lLV-fkIxySHQ8/edit) consisted of 16 queries including the basic details of student, was circulated to college students of state Haryana (India) via Whatsapp and Gmail. A total no. of 745 students across Haryana responded to google form circulated over groups. The entire process was online and there was no physical exchange of information in the whole process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the 745 college students (UG/PG) 13.3% were male while remaining 86.4% were females, out of these 745 students 8.2% belonged to 1st year, 33.8% belonged to 2nd year, 47.2% belonged to 3rd year and remaining 10.7% belonged to PG classes as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Class wise data of respondents

S.No	Number of Students	Percentage
UG 1st Year	61	8.2%
UG 2nd Year	252	33.8%
UG 3rd Year	352	47.2%
PG	80	10.7%
Total	745	100%

Time Spent on social media

During lockdown all students were supposed to stay at home, which is not an easy task for students, while they have the habit of going outside with their peers. So the use of social media allowed them to spend their time and connect with their friends and relatives. Responses from respondents reveals that 39.9% respondents reported that they spend 1 hour daily on social media, 29.4% reported 2 hours , 17.3% reported 3 hours, 6.6% & 6.8% respondents spend their time 4 hours and more than 4 hours daily on social media respectively (fig.2).
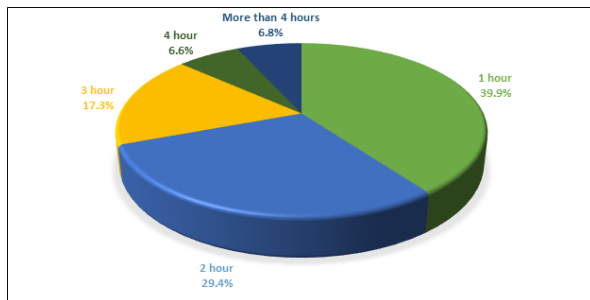

Fig.2: Time spent on Social media by students

Popular social media platform

Popularity of a social media platform defined by its number of users. Beyond other questions about social media this study also covers the popularity of social media platforms. Whatsapp and YouTube dominate over other social media platforms with 47.5% & 34.8% respondents respectively, while Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Telegram are on the bottom side of the online landscape with 7.1%, 5.4%, 3.2% and 2% respondents respectively as shown in Fig.3. Responses from this question reveals that use of Whatsapp outran the other social media platform, and this is the fact that most communication among college going students is meant for closed groups of individual students rather than public broadcast.
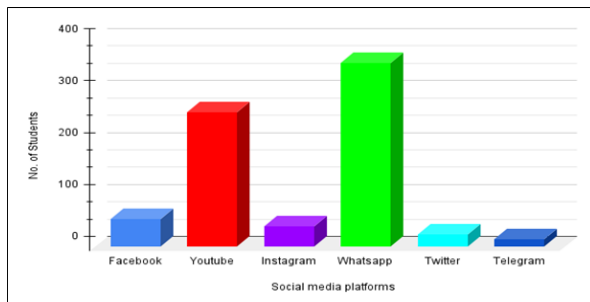

Fig.3: Popular social media platform.

During COVID -19 lockdown all schools, colleges and universities were closed. Students and teachers were struggling to shift their resources to a new method of teaching from live class to closed home and the process of this shifting was so abrupt, that it brought lots of challenges to teachers as well as students. But it was the necessity of time, because prolonged closure of educational institutes and stay home guidelines from the health ministry might have a negative impact on mental and physical health of students. Some other factors like more use of screen, improper diet (Cherikh *et al.,* 2020), anxiety (Pakpour & Griffiths, 2020, Satici *et al.,* 2020),

lesser physical activity, stress, disturbed sleep, frustration and personal space at home could have devastating effects on these students.

Updates about institution during lockdown

It was a big challenge for students to get updates about their institutions during lockdown. For which 85.1% respondents said that they receive updates about their institutes through social media while 14.9% respondents receive the same on simple phone calls shown in Fig. 4.
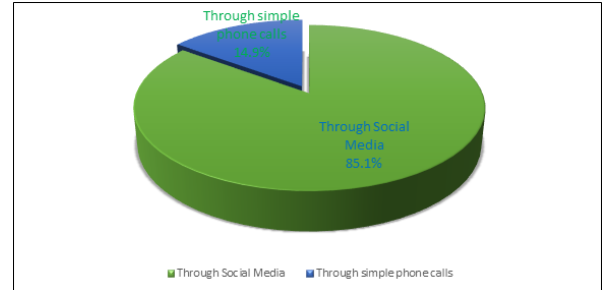

Fig. 4: Updates about institution during lockdown.

Arrangement of study material

Living in lockdown condition and continuing the studies via online learning method was one more challenge that was associated with closure of educational institutes. In these conditions another role of social media comes into play to arrange the study material from institutes. Whatsapp and YouTube again dominate the online landscape with 87.5% and 10.9% respondents respectively to get study material. Remaining 1.6% respondents prefer other platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Line, and Twitter to get study material as shown in Fig.5.
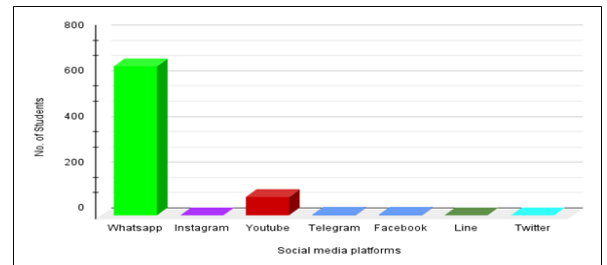

Fig.5: Social media platforms used to get study material during COVID-19 lockdown.

Level of comfortability

Online learning was not a traditional method of teaching and students were coping with some major problems while adopting the method of online teaching. One major problem was to be comfortable and satisfied with it. With this new method of teaching 63.2% respondents were not comfortable while 36.8% were comfortable with it (Table 2). Responses also revealed that 69.1 % respondents were satisfied with this new method of online teaching and 30.9% were not satisfied with it.

Table. 2: Comfortability level with online learning during lockdown.

S.No	State of Mind	Percentage
1	Comfortable with online learning	36.8%
2	Not comfortable with online learning	63.2%

Problems in online learning

Adoption of online learning brings more problems as shown in Table 3, rather than not being comfortable. Technical problems and Time management was on top of pile having 35.6% and 25.1% vote of respondents respectively. Lack of motivation, adaptability struggle and digital literacy with 21.3%, 9.1% and 8.9% votes respectively also reported (Fig.6, Table 3).

Table 3: Problems in online learning.

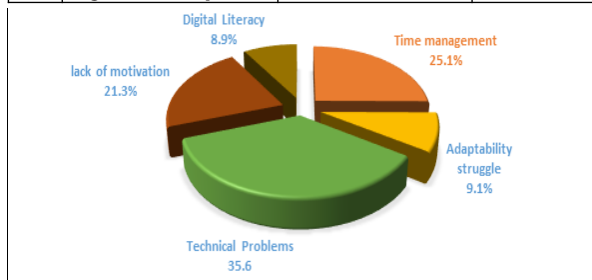| S.No	Problem	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Time management	187	25.1%
2	Adaptability struggle	68	9.1%
3	Technical Problems	265	35.6
4	lack of motivation	159	21.3
5	Digital Literacy	66	8.9

Fig.6: Problem faced during online learning by the respondents.

Effect of social media on study during lockdown

Learning with the new method via social media also affects the study in both ways that is positive and negative in view of individual students. About fifty percent (44.8%) respondents reported that learning via social media positively affect their study, 22.8% respondents reported that social media had negative affect on their study and remaining 32.3% reported that learning via social media had neither positive nor negative impact on their study during COVID-19 lockdown as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Effect of social media on study

S.No	Effects on study	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Positive	334	44.8%
2	Negative	170	22.8%
3	No Effect	241	32.3%

Role of social media in social life of students during lockdown

Apart from educational life which was changed a lot due to lockdown, their social life also changed along. During the pandemic not only educational institutes were under mass closure but all markets, temples and public places also closed to the public, as all individuals were asked to stay home. For students, social media again plays a crucial role to get news and events occurring outside.

Moreover they use social media to spend their time while staying at home. Social media proves to be a powerful tool to collect news and events with 92.5% vote of respondents, while 7.5% have other methods to get news and event updates. These responses show that the majority of students have access to social media through various devices. More than fifty percent (61.9%) students use Whatsapp during COVID-19 lockdown making it the most popular social media platform during lockdown, 27.5% students use YouTube as prime social media as it contains mostly video material, while the remaining 10.6% use other social media platforms during lockdown.

Fear and panic situation through use of social media

Having some good roles during COVID-19 lockdown social media also have a negative role to play during lockdown and that was to create fear and panic among students via fake news or posts related to pandemic. About ¾ th of respondents (73.3%) reported that they strongly agreed that news related to coronaviruses creates fear or panic among them and remaining ¼ th respondents (26.4%) denies about that fear or panic created by coronaviruses news on social media (Fig.7).
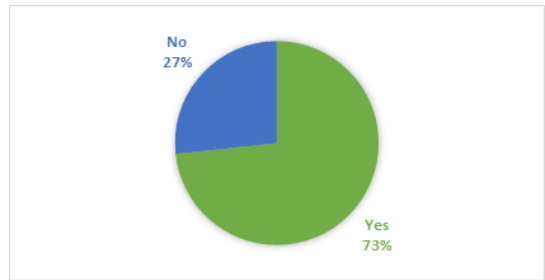

Fig.7: Fear and panic situation through news.

CONCLUSION

The period of COVID-19 pandemic radically transformed the lives of college students around the globe in a short period of time. In this respect this study provides meaningful and systematic insights into student's satisfaction and perception on use of social media during lockdown. The most prime duties for educators is to be there for students and provide support not only for teaching learning but also supplement the awareness about COVID-19, measures how to stay home, and bypass fake news. The pandemic forced the educational institutions to shift from traditional to a new method of online teaching. For this new method, use of social media proves to be a road for students to reach their destination during lockdown. According to this study, the use of social media is found to be the most effective way to communicate over groups, spreading educational updates, and many other tasks related to the academic life of students. The results also reveal that online teaching via social media can supplement face to face teaching but cannot be the substitute for classroom teaching as use of social media brings some challenges also. Beside academic life, use of social media is also found to be an effective way to settle social and emotional lives of college students under stay home conditions.

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