

Social Media Usage By College Students From Wai, Maharashtra

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Introduction

1.1 Post Covid, many changes have occurred in the various spectrum of life, without any aberrations such as cast, religion or socio-economic strata. The impact is visible on the moral and ethical fibre of the Indian society as well. The pedagogy is also not spared from such an impact. The periods of lock downs and social restrictions severely affected the teaching system in India. Though this impact also has two sides. The good side is that the entire pedagogy adapted to the online learning system, teacher and student alike. However, what lost out was the childhood development of children, particularly from the age group of 12 years to 15 years, termed as crucial formative years of adolescence. These students of standard seventh, eighth or ninth absorbed the online teaching method and adjusted themselves well. With that back ground of online learning, they crossed the basic hurdle of board exam (tenth standard) and switched over to off line learning for their twelfth standard board. The switch over which was certainly not very easy. Now that this age group has reached graduation stage and therefore it is important to understand, how these students have adapted to social media for their studies.

Keywords

Social Media, Post Covid, College Students,

Research Question

2.1 As mentioned earlier the subject age group has been exposed to digitized world, not by choice but due to compulsions, which were beyond anybody's control. However, the important question to be asked is, are they using this for their academic purpose? As we all know that the media convergence is existing and various forms of it were tried and tested in the past, even before world-wide lock down due to Covid. But the generation, whose foundation years of academics was hampered and were forced to lean on to digitized or online contents for the studies, are they adapting social media as a tool for learning, intentionally or unintentionally?

Literature Review

3.1 The term social media refers to technologies, platforms, and services that enable individuals to engage in communication from one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many. When this social media is utilized by students it implies blending traditional and digital media (text, video, audio, social media) to enhance teaching, research, and learning, fostering an interactive and accessible educational environment. Key uses include multimedia research, virtual collaboration via social platforms, increased access to online archives, and the development of digital skills for analysing, creating, and consuming content across platforms. Social media can serve as a valuable tool for academic collaboration and resource-sharing. However, excessive and unregulated usage often leads to distractions and reduced academic performance (Junaid & Faizan, 2022).

3.2 While understanding the usage of social media for academic purpose one has to also understand the phenomenon of media convergence. Media convergence can be defined as the interconnection of information and communication technologies, computer networks, and media content. It brings together the “three C’s”—computing, communication and content. One can safely infer that; digitization of media content and the popularization of the internet are directly responsible for it. Social media is a new driver of the convergent media sector. The same is applicable to the pedagogy in this country. Varied use of social media platform to enable the students to gather useful information pertaining to their field of studies is a common thing for the urban student but is the same phenomenon can be applicable to students in the rural areas of Maharashtra?

3.3 As per Yutian Yang of Liaoning Communication University, China, journalism and communications education, in present age, is no longer restricted to imparting knowledge of single media such as traditional newspapers and television. The present digital age is of media convergence, and hence education of media requires a more comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of cross-media literacy and comprehensive abilities. Though he is projecting his opinion about journalism curriculum but this logic can be applicable to all streams of education and in Indian context too. As digital technologies continue to evolve, understanding their influence on learning needs to be dwell upon, offering valuable recommendations for students, educators, counsellors and policymakers.

Theoretical Framework

4.1 This research is basically of exploratory in nature. The study of two theories is important here. Firstly, Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988), which suggests that excessive engagement with non-academic content increases extraneous cognitive load, thereby reducing students' ability to focus on learning tasks. Secondly Daniel Kahneman's (1973) Capacity Model of Attention which states that attention is a limited, flexible resource pool for mental effort rather than a fixed structural bottleneck and suggests to allocate this finite capacity across concurrent tasks based on arousal levels, task demands, and intentions. When we correlate these two theories in context with usage of various social media platform by students for their academic studies, a likely overload of information and distraction from studies is highly possible.

4.2 It is also important to understand which communication model is being preferred by the students when they are using various social media platforms while studying. Do these students prefer a Linear model with one-way process from sender to receiver is used, such as radio, YouTube, Instagram etc where study content is available for consumption. On the other hand, Interactional model, which has scope of response and sender-receiver roles are interchangeable and student can raise queries and tutor while teaching also clarifies the queries raised by students.

Objectives of the study

5.1 This research is looking into social media habits of the students between age group 18-20, from Wai, a rural area near Pune. The research question for this study is, ‘Weather the students in rural area using various social media platforms for their academic studies? and, ‘What are the preferred social media platforms, of students of rural Maharashtra, for their studies? To find answers to these queries broad objectives of this study are defined as follows:

- (a) To understand the usage of social media by the college students of Wai, Distt. Satara?
- (b) To understand the preference of media platforms being used for the study by the college students of Wai, Distt. Satara?
- (c) To verify the hypothesis, that, is usage of social media for studying, on various platforms, is in vogue in Wai, a rural area in western Maharashtra?’.

Research Methodology

6.1 This research adopts a mix approach. It is built upon an extensive review of existing literature, and gathering first hand data through surveys to explore the use of social media by under graduate students at college levels from a rural background at Wai, district Satara.

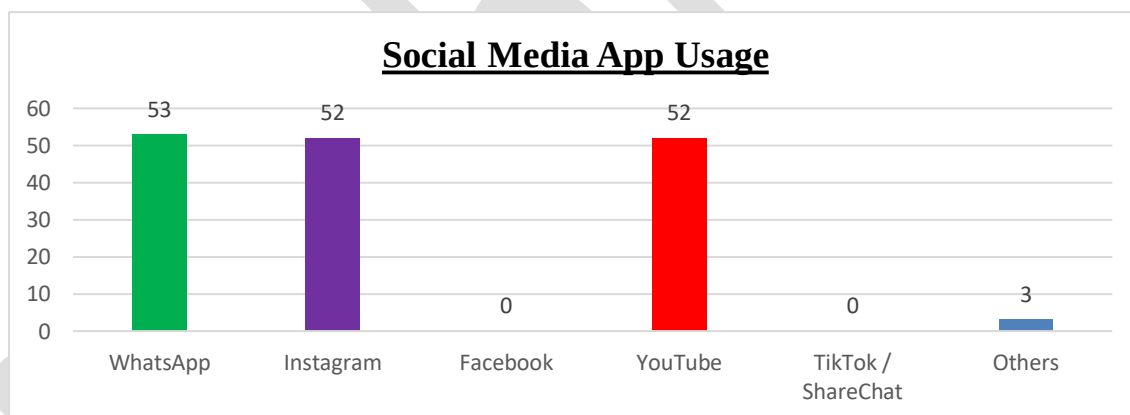
6.2 For the survey a questionnaire of total 15 questions were prepared. Questionnaire was both in English as well as in Marathi. Among these 12 questions were close ended. These questions were mostly related to availability and knowledge about media, regularity of usage, time spend, and general preferences for the platform as well as content.

Data Representation

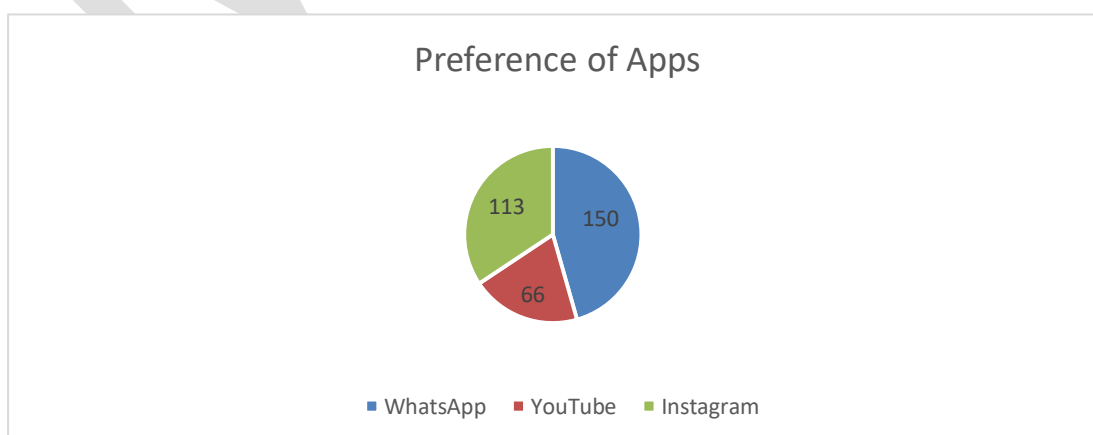
7.1 The survey was conducted in colleges of Wai District Satara. The place can be termed as semi urban with a populace of about 50,000 to 55,000, and literacy rate of 88%. Wai has various educational facilities and it is an educational hub for the students for nearby tehsils.

7.2 The questionnaire was administered on college students, age varying from 18 to 20. Among these 55 respondents nine are men and 46 women. Gender wise distribution of the respondents is not used in the charts since that variable was not in consideration. This data is only for information. Multivariate analysis of this data is not carried out. Since the sample size is small, analysis of data has been done to the total general sample. In future studies encompassing bigger sample size multivariate analysis can be undertaken.

7.3 The students were asked about their preferences while using the apps on social media. The students were given choices of WhatsApp, Insta and YouTube, Facebook, Sharechat/ TikTok and Snapchat and they were asked to opt for multiple options if they so desire. The students were aware of the ban on TikTok and the same was conveyed to the investigator while taking the survey.



(fig 7.3 A)



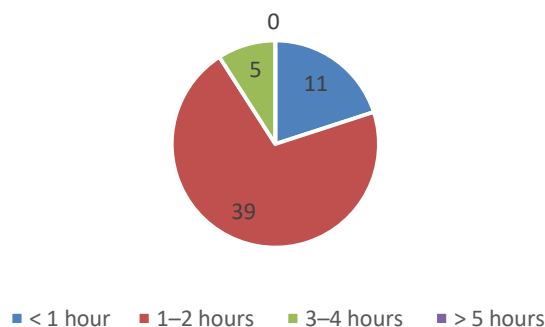
(fig 7.3 B)

It was observed that the students are not bound to one app (please refer fig 7.3 A) and they use multiple apps for the content consumption. When it comes to preference of using the app, the students were given three choices and they were asked to grade them in descending order. For calculation purpose first choice was given score of three, second choice was given two points and third choice was given one point.

WhatsApp, Insta and YouTube are the most preferred apps by the students (please refer fig 7.3 B) in the same order of liking.

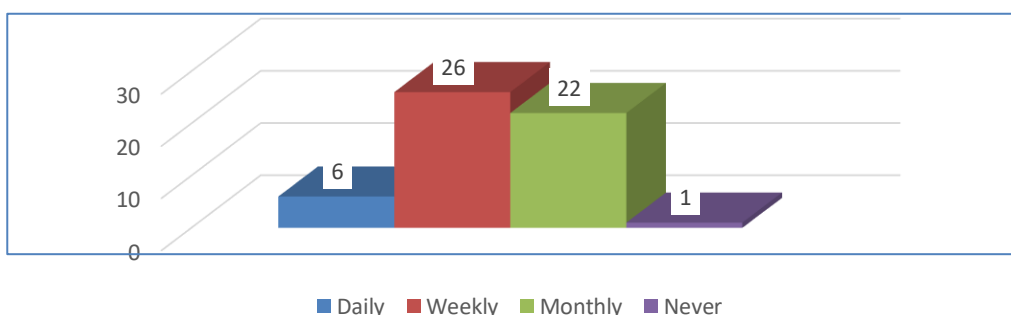
7.4 To check the time spend by the students on social media, they were asked to confirm the approximate time they use social media. They were given block options of less than one hour, one to two hours, three to four hours and more than five hours. (please refer fig 7.4) The majority of students (71%) spend about one to two hours daily on social media. About 20% spend less than one hour. However, 9% agreed that the (fig 7.4) social media consumes about three to four hours of their time daily. There was no student who spends more than five hours daily on social media.

Usage of Social Media per Day

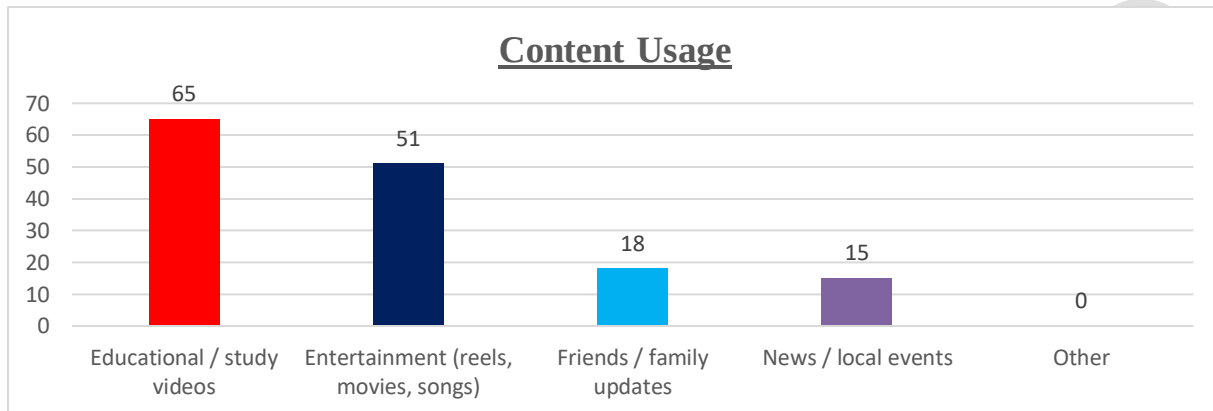


7.5 The respondents were enquired about their content sharing frequency and pattern. To understand the frequency of content sharing they were given choices of Daily, Weekly, Monthly and Never options. In the response, the students were not very keen on sharing of content. (please refer fig 7.5). Only 11% students carry out content sharing on daily basis, whereas 47% share some content on weekly basis. 40% of the student share content once in a month. Only one student claims of not sharing any content (fig 7.5) at all.

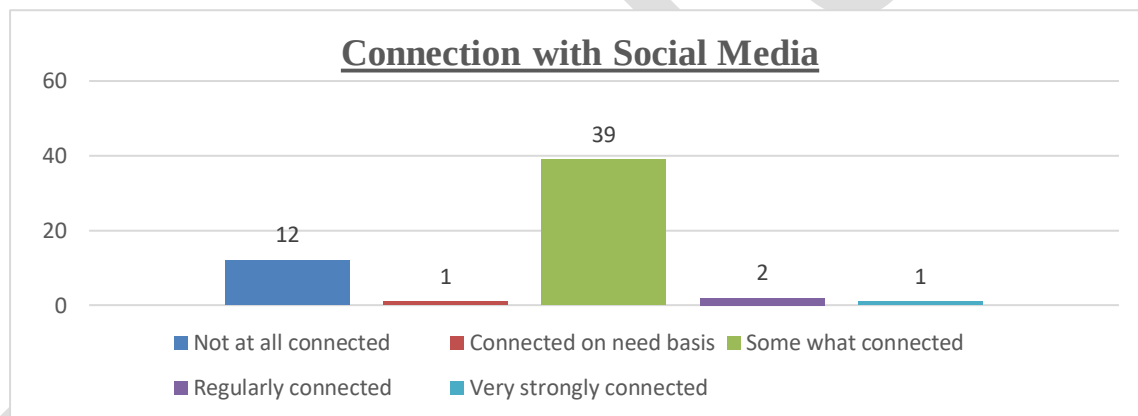
Frequency of Content Sharing



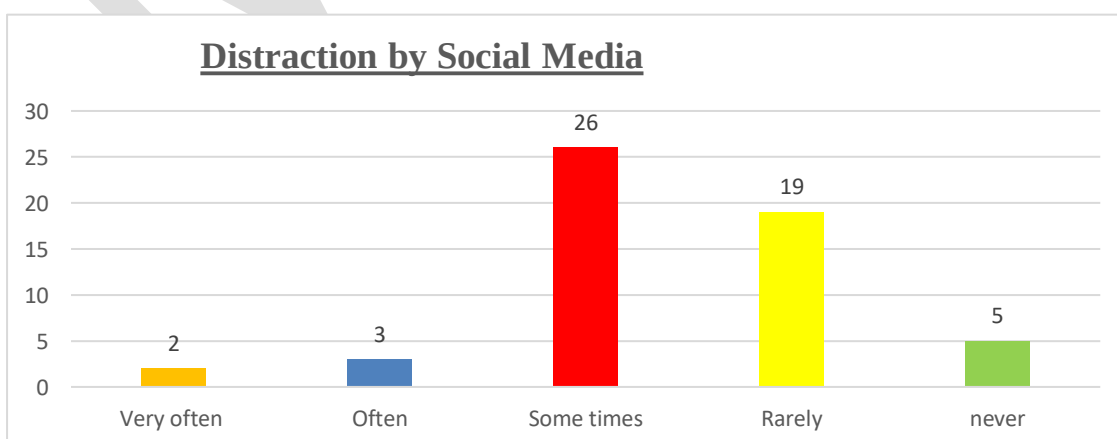
7.6 When it comes to content consumption, the respondents were asked to select three contents as per their liking out of contents/ topics such as educational/ study videos, entertainment (reels/ songs/ movies etc), friends or family updates, news and local events and other contents if any. For ease of calculation first choice was awarded three points, second choice got two and third choice received one point. As per the findings (please refer fig 7.6), educational videos were used by maximum students, followed by entertainment videos. Updates from family and friends was third, closely followed by news content.(fig 7.6)



7.7 The students were enquired if they feel connected with the social media and they were also asked about the distraction by social media during studies. Both issues are of utmost concern at present.



(fig 7.7 A)



(fig 7.7 B)

Almost 71% student agreed that they are somewhat connected to social media. 21% felt that they are not at all connected. Almost 4% felt they regularly connect to social media and only 2% each are either connected on need-to-need basis or very strongly connected.

Analysis and Conclusion

8.1 The entry of social media in our day-to-day life was not by choice but by chance. It is going to impact various aspects of life and academia is one such spectrum. The survey was one small effort to understand the pattern of usage of social media by college students in Wai, a rural educational hub in western Maharashtra. From the survey following can be deciphered:

- (a) The students, though from the rural background, are well versed with the use of social media and apps.
- (b) On an average, students are engaged from one hour to four hours on social media.
- (c) Content sharing is taking place at the students' level though it's a matter of detailed study that what type of contents are shared by these students. Are they involved in content creation or they are just forwarding the posts.
- (d) Though maximum students are utilising social media platforms for educational purpose, however, use for entertainment is close second which requires some attention.
- (e) Approximately 76% of the respondents feel either somewhat connected to strongly connected with social media. Moreover 56 % of the respondents get distracted by social media while studying which can be considered a cause of concern.

8.2 The inference which can be safely drawn from above analysis is that the college students of Wai, which is a rural area, are well versed with the social media platform and they use it for their studies. However social media is also distracting them during their studies.

Suggestions

9.1 A further study of usage of social media by students based on gender bias can be undertaken. Content consumption analysis by the college students also needs detailed analysis. The comparison of usage of social media by rural students' vis a vis urban collegians using variables such as gender-based research, content consumption, content sharing pattern as well as per day usage of social media can be undertaken.

9.2 Incorporating longitudinal studies would help capture the long-term implications of consistent social media use over time, offering a clearer picture of how it influences academic and emotional development through various stages of education.

9.3 Last but not the least, the role of parents, teachers, and counsellors in guiding responsible online behaviour. Future studies can examine how adult involvement and guidance influence students' digital habits and behaviour in handling online challenges. Investigating family dynamics and educational environments could offer valuable insights into how support systems affect students' experiences with social media

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