AN ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT OF STUDENTS

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Abstract

Currently social media is gaining popularity among the students. The students are getting more attached to the social networking sites and they are spending too much time on such sites. Due to COVID 19, the average screen time by the students have increased at a frightening speed. Many of them are not aware about the negativity on these sites. So, it becomes extremely important to study the usage of this social media by young generation. The purpose of this paper is to study how the social media is used by the undergraduates (UG) students and are they aware of the time spent, negativity and academic loss due to overuse of the internet.

Keywords: *Social Media, Usage, Undergraduate Students, Awareness*

1) INTRODUCTION

Social Media is a set of websites and applications that provides the user a platform for sharing. Over the years it has gained popularity among all sectors of the society. The Digital age had led to increase of social media among people. With the quarantine time, the social media has gained the traction among all peoples including students. Social media has become an important tool not only for communication and marketing, but also in the field of education. The Lockdown phase during COVID 19 has witnessed the closure of various educational institutions, leaving social media the only place for students to interact. Thus, it emerges as an effective spot for sharing, reviewing and getting quick information. With the replacement of brick-and-mortar system of education with online classes, it makes it easier for the students to gain and share the knowledge. But it also increases the screen time creating the negative impact. Students are spending more than usual time apart from studying to download pictures, browse through updates, chatting with the friends, posting status, stories, pictures, to keep themselves connected with the others. It is creating addiction among the youths where they find it difficult to concentrate on their studies, work and also creating unimaginable pressure with number of likes, shares, etc. Some suffered from social media anxiety disorder where they feel anxiety just from being separated from their accounts for the shorter period of time. With the increase in online learning platforms, parents have no way of knowing whether their child is spending so much time on phone to study or to surf. There are concerns regarding privacy, safety, time consumption, health issues, psychological wellbeing and academic performance. Like every coin has two sides, social media is also showing both positive and negative effects on the mindsets of this young generation.

2) REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are different definitions and meaning of social media. As per the dictionary of Merriam Webster "social media is forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)" Wang, Chen, and Liang (2011) define it as "the relationship that exists between a network of people." Similarly, Barkhuus and Tashiro (2010) state that online social networks give people the ability to communicate and share their interests with others over long distances. Online social networking has become a new trend that breaks boundaries and allows people to become members of collaborative online networks.

In research papers by Sabhani J., Gupta, A., (2019) and Ashok, A., Garima, K. (2016) concluded that maximum students are aware and have understanding regarding the ethical values necessary to understand while using social media. Ahn, J (2011) states that the technologies offered by the social media fascinate and attract the youth and teenage. However, there are concerns such as privacy, heath issues, time consumption, academic performance, etc.

Nowadays smartphones have several features that are comparable to an average computer. They can also engage students in far more dynamic ways than a laptop or a tablet computer (Hingorani & Woodard, 2012).

In a study done by Cochrane and Bateman (2010), they declare that there are more than four billion mobile phone users worldwide, but only about 800 million computer owners (Cochrane & Bateman, 2010). Conversely, another study found that 68% of students reported that they primarily use a laptop to check their accounts on social networking sites, while 20% use their smartphones and only 12% prefer to use a desktop computer (Wang et al., 2011). According to Stollak et al. (2011), nine out of ten college students with smartphones access the internet from the device, which increases their ability to obtain applications for social networking. Generally, the use of smartphones by college students is leading to a new concern in the academic world when it comes to accessing social networking sites.

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199

https://www.gapbodhitaru.org/

Wang et al. (2011) argue that social networking can yield both benefits and problems with similar individuals, and it highlights both negative and positive effects on students. A survey conducted by Wang et al. (2011) indicates that 57% of 102 students stated that the use of social networking sites decreases their productivity. Furthermore, students might disclose homework questions and interchange course materials, both of which are considered to be potential academic misconduct (Dyer & Columbia, 2010).

In brief, social media has made students life very easy and convenient. while it has both positive and negative aspect, the access to online networks using smartphones has become increasingly popular among college students. Students are influenced, of course, by social networking sites to a greater extent This paper takes into consideration all these factors in detail.

3) OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) To study the usage of social media by the students.
2) To study the understanding of social media among the students.
3) To Study the most popular sites among the students.

4) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a) Sources of Data:
This research paper aims to understand the impact of social media on undergraduate college students of Northern Central suburb of Mumbai. It is based on primary sources which consists of a response received from 176 students through the online questionnaire distributed in google form. It is given randomly to all. The respondents were a combination of both junior and senior students from different courses. There are 10 questions which are focused on the objectives of the research. The secondary data is collected from journals, research papers, magazines and internet websites for additional information related to research topic.

b) Statistical Tools used:
The collected data is analysed by using percentage analysis and chart analysis.

c) Limitations of the study:
Data is collected from the current junior and degree college students only. The area is restricted to Northern Central suburb of Mumbai.

5) IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

Today in this COVID 19 era, social media is growing by enormous speed and rate. Almost an entire generation carry the smart high ended phones. Approximately every student use social media for sharing personal information, to connect with the world, also to get adjusted with the blended learning. So, it is important to understand the importance of social media for this generation. The purpose of this paper is to study the usage, understanding and popularity of social media among the students.

6) DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
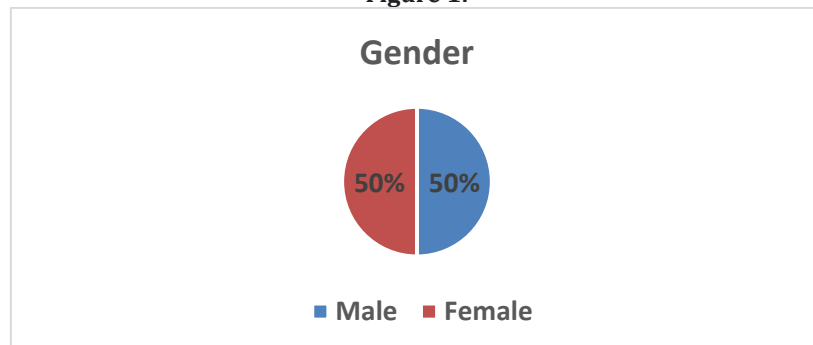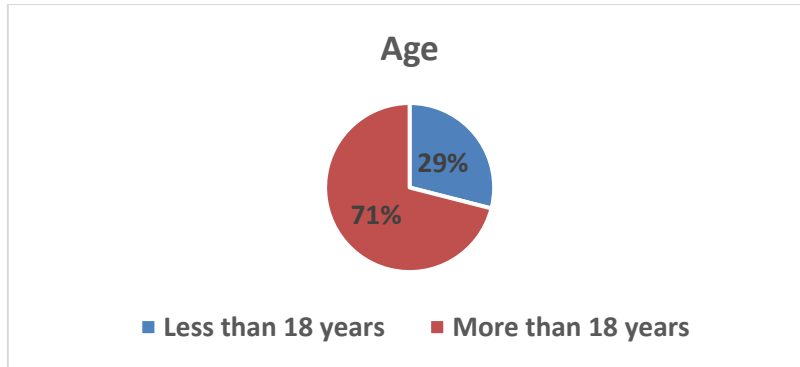
1) Gender & Age:

Figure 1:

Figure 2:

Age

The above figures indicate that total 176 students responded of which 88 are males and 88 are females, of which 71% are more than 18 years of age which can be considered as adults and 29% are less than 18 years of age.
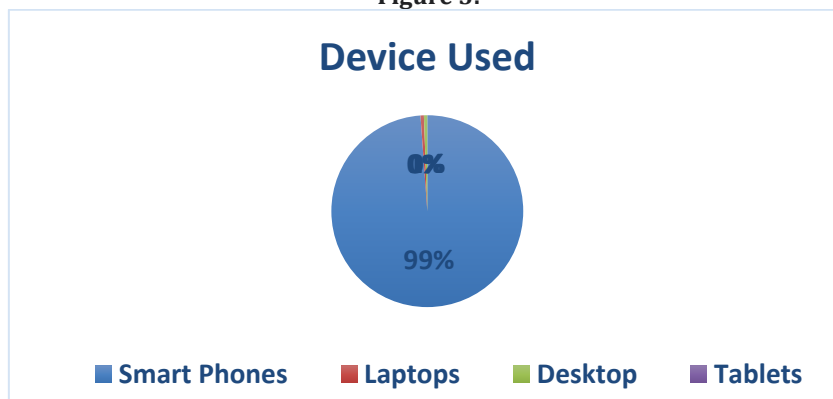
2) Device Used:

Figure 3:

Figure 3 shows that almost all students have and used Smart phones only. It shows the reach of smart phones among the youngsters. Negligent percentage used Laptops and Desktops. No student possesses any tablet.
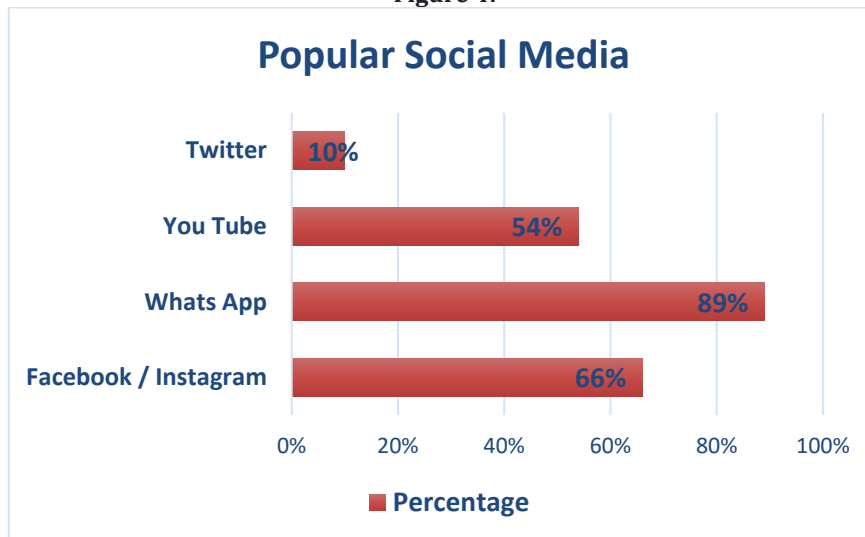
3) Popular social media:

Figure 4:

Figure 4 indicates the most popular social media among the students. WhatsApp tops all with 89% students followed by Facebook / Instagram with 66% users. You Tube is also not far behind with 54%. However, compared to all other, Twitter is less popular with only 10% users.

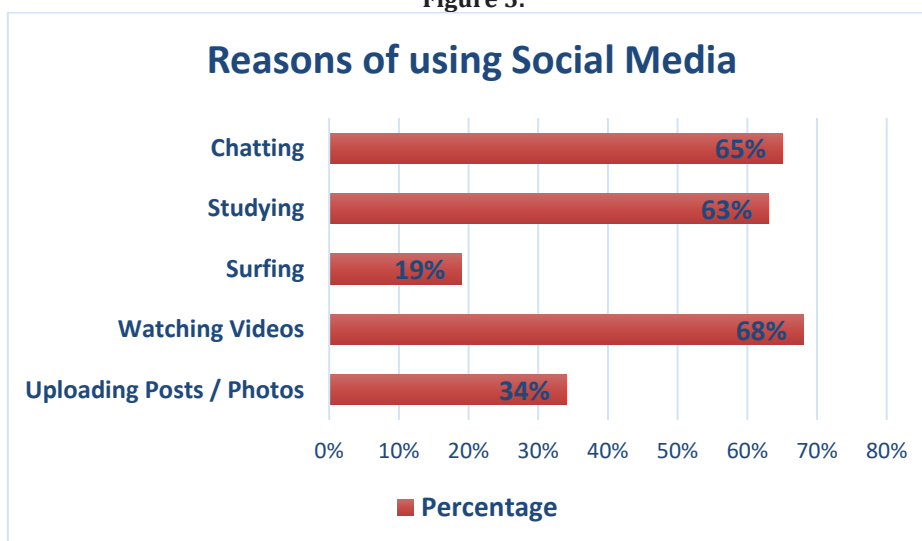## 4) Reasons for using social media:

Figure 5:

Figure 5 indicates the few reasons for using social media. 68% used it for watching videos which can be considered as time consuming activity. Chatting and studying followed it by 65% and 63%. With Online teaching and learning methods used by all colleges during this pandemic, percentage of students using social media for studying is quiet high. Uploading photos and post feature used by only 34% showing that the trend of posting personal information on social media is going down.
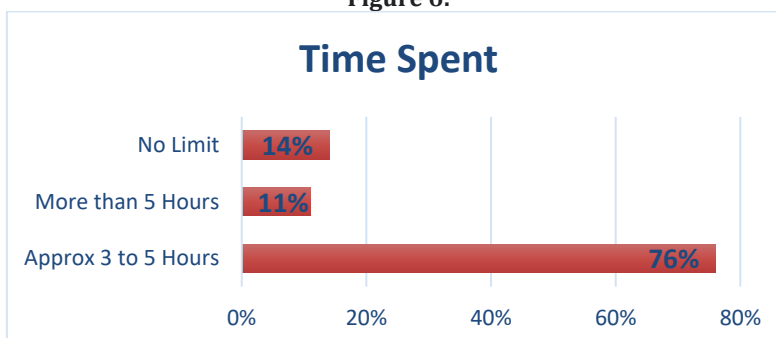
5) Time Spent on social media:

Figure 6:

Figure 6 indicates the average time spent on social media by the students on daily basis. 76% which is the highest one shows students are spending approximately 3 to 5 hours on daily basis on the social media which can be considered as normal with online college lectures. 11% says they spent more than 5 hours daily but almost 14% students says there is no time limit of using social media. Even though this percentage is less it can be an alarming sign.

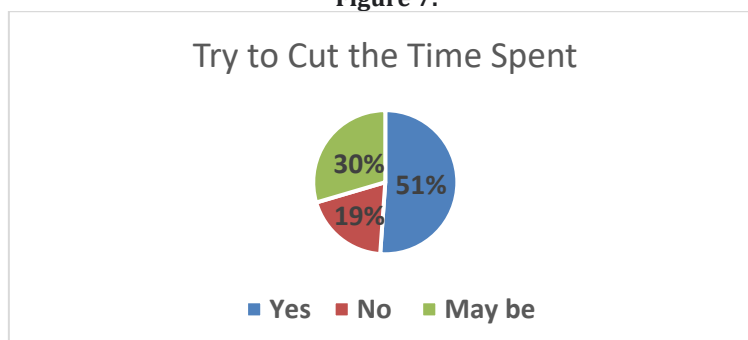**6) Did you try to cut down the time spent on social media?**

Figure 7:

Figure 7 is the answer to question whether students are trying to cut down their time spent on social media after knowing the negative effects. 51% says yes, they are trying hard to cut down their time spent so that it can be

utilised for better purpose. 30% don't think they are spending too much time so no need of any cut offs. 19% says maybe they will try to cut but now not much sure about it/

7) Do you feel stressed while using social media?

Figure 8:

Feeling Stressed

17% | 62% | 21%
Yes | No | May be

Figure 8 is the answer to question whether students feeling stressed while using social media. 62% students denied it as they see the social media from entertainment point of view. They don't think much about other reasons like stress, anxiety, etc. 17% says they do feel stressed some time with all the pressure of likes, dislikes, negative comments, etc. 21% are unsure about their feelings.

8) Do you think you suffered academically due to use of social media?

Figure 9:

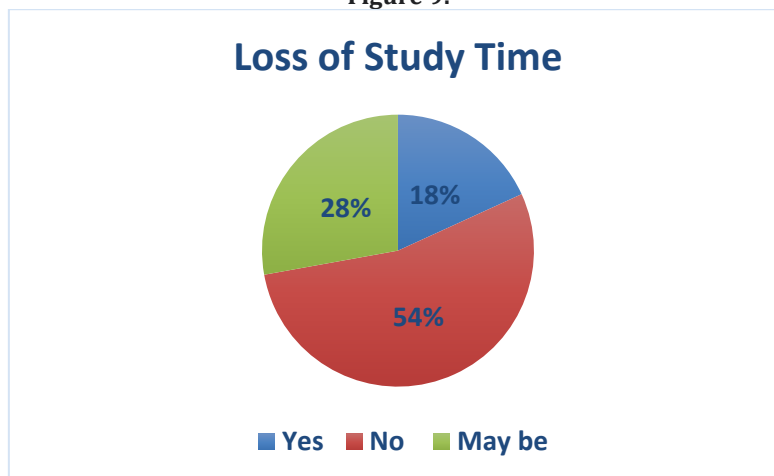**Loss of Study Time**

18% | 54% | 28%
Yes | No | May be

Figure 9 explains whether students feel they are suffering academic loss due to use of social media. Only 18% students feel that they are losing their study time due to internet usage. 54% students do not feel any loss of study time as they are able to maintain the balance properly. 28% are not much sure about it.

9) Are you aware of any negativity on social media like Fake Accounts / Hacking / Harassing?

Figure 10:
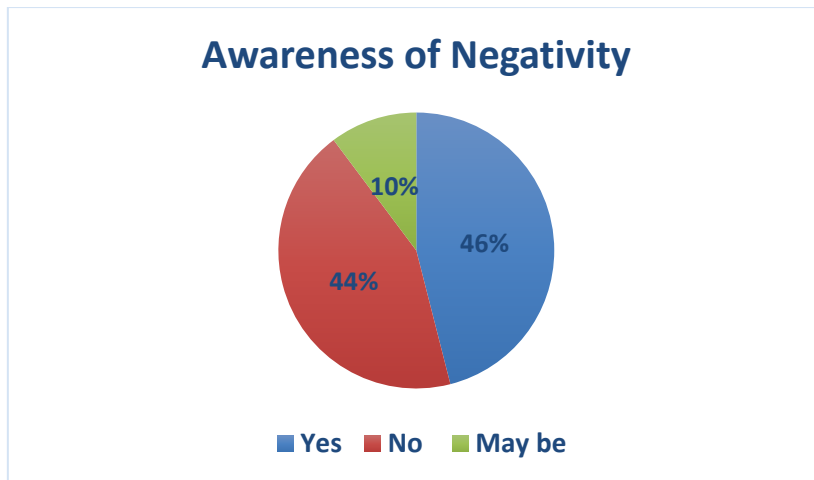
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Figure 10 explains the awareness of negativity on social media among the college students. 46% students responded positively saying they are aware of the negativity such as fake accounts, hacking, harassment, negative comments, etc. As they are aware, they can protect themselves. Surprisingly 44% are not aware of any of such negativity even after almost daily such news flashes on social media. 10% are unsure about it.

7) CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper is to study the usage of social media by undergraduate college students. From the questionnaire responded, following conclusions are drawn:
➢ Almost all students use smart phones for their activities on social media.
➢ The maximum number of students use WhatsApp, Facebook / Instagram so these medias are more popular among the students followed by YouTube. Twitter was not able to attract the younger generation so much.
➢ The major reasons using the social media was watching videos, chatting and studying.
➢ A vey high number of students spent approximately 3 to 5 hours daily on social media but a very less still alarming percentage use internet without giving much thought about the time spent.
➢ However at least they are aware of the time they are wasting on these sites and sincerely trying to cut it down. Still some students do not think that they are spending too much time using internet.
➢ From the point of view of majority of students, internet is for fun and entertainment. Hence, they do not feel any pressure using it. Some do feel stressed some time with all the pressure of likes, dislikes, negative comments, etc.
➢ Students do not feel they are academically suffered due to internet as online learning is a part of their life now a days.
➢ Less than half students are aware of the negativity on the internet which was a good sign. However, those who are not aware need to know about it.
➢ Overall students are aware of how to use social media, time to be spent on it, wastage of time and how to maintain balance by learning positive and negative features of the social media.

8) SUGGESTIONS:

Due to time constraints, the outcome of this research had some limitations that could constitute a future research project. Firstly, it was carried out in only Northern central suburb of Mumbai using a relatively small sample size. Hence, the researchers believe it would be a good idea to conduct the study on a larger scale exploring different areas such as rural, semi urban, urban, etc. from the different income groups. Secondly, the process of analysing the information received from social media was not the main focus of this study. It would be very beneficial if another study focuses on this issue and finds a solution for it that is practical to implement.

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