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Exploring the academic use of social media by medical students of Government Medical College, Kozhikode, Kerala-India

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Abstract

Purpose:-The present study aims to report the academic use of social media by medical students in the government medical college, Kozhikode, Kerala-India.

Methodology:-Electronic questionnaires using Google Forms were distributed to collect data from the targeted participants and data were analysed with the help of IBM-SPSS using descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage methods.

Results:-The results of the study reported the scanty use of social media platforms by medical students for academic purposes and the overuse for entertainment. WhatsApp was the top used social media platform by the participants. Participants opined that the use of social media platforms was convenient and contained the latest information. Respondents cited that they had difficulty in retrieving the relevant information that they required and expressed concern about slow internet. Respondents agreed that the use of these social media platforms escalated their academic pursuit of a medical study.

Research limitations/Future directions:- The study was limited to medical students of a single district and can be conducted across the state.

Value:-The results of the study would give hints for integrating the social media platforms for academic purposes thereby improving the academic productivity of the students.

Keywords: - Academic use, Scholarly use, Social Media, Social networking, Social media platforms, Medical Students, Kozhikode.

Introduction

The introduction of social networking in the late 1990s has helped to diversify the personal social circle by letting to connect across different people spread over the universe(Jahan & Ahmed, 2012). India is reported to have 448 million active social media users as of 2021 with higher patronship logged for YouTube and Facebook(Statista, 2021). Among the users, students have a major share since they actively use social platforms for learning and academic activities(Lau, 2017 & Ashraf & Mohamed Haneefa, 2016). The scholarly use of social platforms among the students, researchers and faculty have been recorded high which they used mainly for online reading, communicating with peers, preparing study material, online forum discussion, citation counting, etc.(Avani & Haneefa, 2019). The academic use of social media among students in India(Utpal,

2017; Bharucha, 2018; Sucharitha et al., 2020 & Babu H et al., 2019) and also in Kerala have been reported in many previous studies(Ashraf & Mohamed Haneefa, 2016; Avani & Haneefa, 2019; Sujith & Deepthi, 2019 & Haneefa K. & Sumitha, 2011). Even though, how medical students made use of social media for their learning is yet to be explored. So, the present study is carried out to fill this gap and the entire study is driven by the following research questions.

RQ:-1 Which is the most used social media among medical students?

RQ:-2 For what purposes, do students use social media?

RQ:-3 What are the major problems faced by the students in using social media?

RQ:-4 Are students satisfied with the information available on social media?

RQ:-5 How has the use of social media affected the academic pursuits of the students?

Scope and Methodology

The study assessed the academic use of social media platforms by medical students including both UG and PG of Kozhikode medical college, Kerala. Government Medical College, Kozhikode, also known as Calicut Medical College, is a school of medicine in Kozhikode in the Indian state of Kerala. The college was established in 1957 as the second medical college in Kerala(Wikipedia, 2021). Since the country and state was reeling under the COVID-19 lockdown, the investigator chose an online questionnaire to collect the needed data. The questionnaire was prepared in English language using Google Forms and distributed to the participants through their mail as well as posting the WhatsApp group. The data collection period was from February 2021 to May 2021. The questionnaire includes 2 sections. The first section asked for information regarding the demographic features and general use of social media by the participants and the second section addressed the academic use of social platforms among the participants. The collected data were analysed by using descriptive statistics including percentage and frequency by using IBM-SPSS and presented in tables and graphs.

Results

(NB:-Number given in parenthesis and inside the graphs can be read with per cent)

General information of the participants on the use of social media

Table 1 shows the general information regarding the participants. Out of the 98 total surveyed medical students, the majority of them were UG with 81.63% followed by PG with 18.36%. It is clear from the table that 97% of UG students and 94% of PG students used social media daily, meanwhile, none of the UG and PG students used it twice a week or once a week. Just 2% of UG students and 5% of PG students used social media 4-5 times a week. Concerning

the period of use of social media, it is evident that the majority of the respondents (75.52%) were using social media above three years. It is estimated that 77% of UG students and 67% of PG students had been using social media for more than three years. None of them were using social media from below one year. An equal percentage of both UG and PG students were using social media sites for 1-2 years. A few UG students (17%) and PG students (28%) used social media for 2-3 years. Regarding the amount of time spent, 34.71% of the participant spent more than 3 hours hooking social media and the majority of them (89.80%) used mobile phones for the use.

Table:-1 General information of the participants on the use of social media			
Samples	UG 80(81.63)	PG 18(18.36)	Total 98
Frequency of access to social media			
Daily	78(97)	17(94)	95(96.93)
Twice in a week	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Once in a week	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
4-5 times in a week	2(2%)	1(5%)	3(3.07)
Period of using social media			
Below one year	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
1-2 years	4(5)	1(5)	5(5.10)
2-3 years	14(17)	5(28)	19(19.38)
Above 3 years	62(77)	12(67)	74(75.52)
Time spend on social media			
Less than one hour	10(12)	4(22)	14(14.27)
1 hour to 2 hour	22(27)	8(44)	30(30.61)
2 hour to 3 hours	16(20)	4(22)	20(20.41)
More than 3 hours	32(40)	2(17)	34(34.71)
Means of access to social media			
Personal computers	4(5)	2(11)	6(6.12)
Tablets	2(2)	2(11)	4(4.08)
Mobile Phones	78(97.5)	10(55.55)	88(89.80)

Preferred Social Media

Figure 1 shows that the most preferred social media by the participants and it is seen that WhatsApp was the most used platform(undergraduate (56%) and postgraduate (83%) students). 37% of UG students and 22% of PG student's preferred Facebook while 36% of UG students and 27% of PG students went for YouTube. The figure indicates that none of the PG students preferred

Instagram whereas 19% of UG students preferred Instagram when they wanted to share something online. It's seen that the second-most preferred social media by PG students was Google+ since it was very helpful in their professional field. At the same time, only 7% of the UG students had chosen Google+. The less preferred social media was Twitter according to the study. Only 2% of the UG students and none of the PG students were using Twitter.

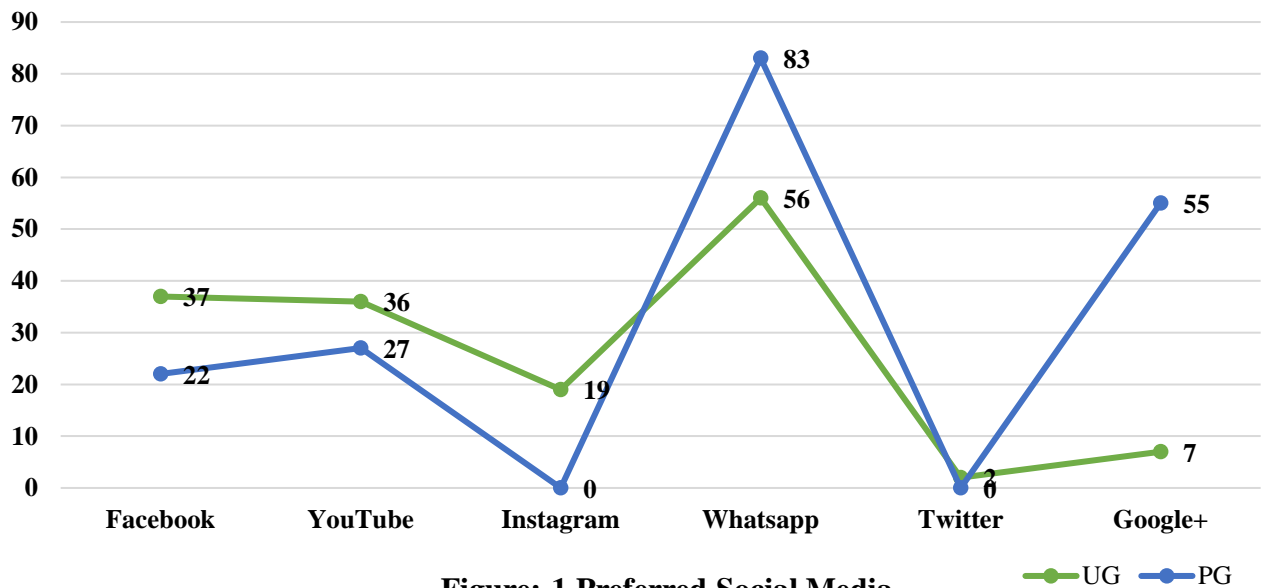


Figure:-1 Preferred Social Media

Purposes of Using Social Media

Figure 2 depicts that most undergraduate and postgraduate students used social media for entertainment. While 94% of the postgraduate students used social media for entertainment, 62% of the undergraduate students used it for this purpose. Apart from entertainment, the main purpose of using social media by undergraduate students was for social awareness(31%), followed by updating academic knowledge (12%), preparing notes for exams (11%), preparing for the seminar(9%, research work(9%) and project work(5%). The second most important purpose chosen by the postgraduate students were similar to that of undergraduate students.ie; social awareness(67%) followed by updating academic knowledge(39%), preparing notes for exam(28%), preparing for seminar(28%), project work(22%) and research work(17%).

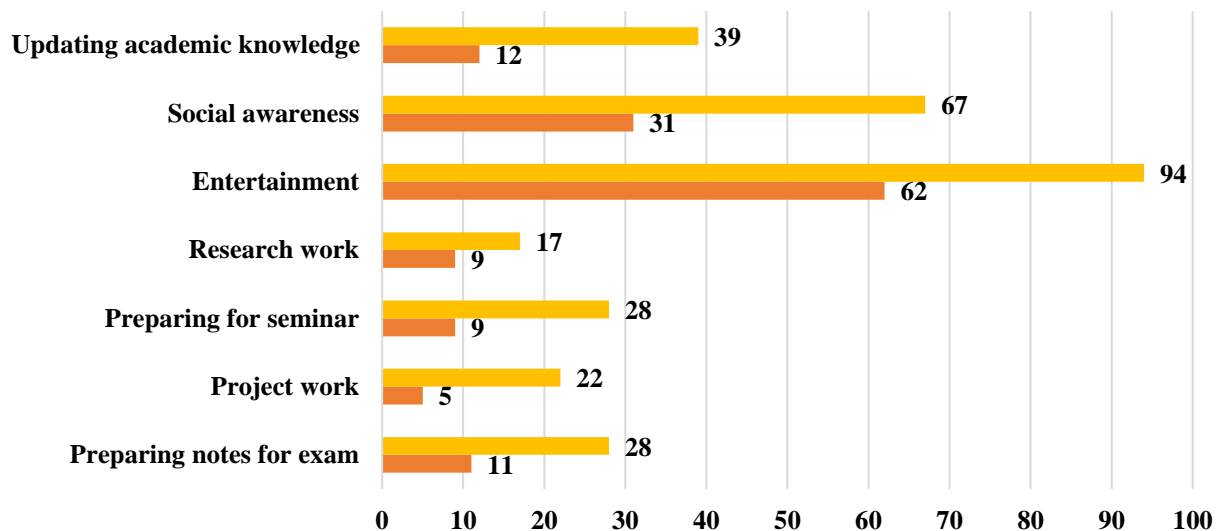


Figure:-2 Purposes of Using Social Media

■ PG ■ UG

Advantages of Using Social Media

Figure 3 illustrates the advantages of using social media as expressed by the participants. A large number of PG medical students (83%) felt it was convenient to use social media while only half the number of UG medical students (56%) felt it was convenient to use. 55% of UG students and 44% of PG students opined that social media contains the latest information. More than one-third of PG students (39%) and one-fourth of UG students (25%) revealed that social media was time-saving. It may be noted that one-fourth of the medical students (26% of UG) and (28% of PG) cited that social media was less expensive.

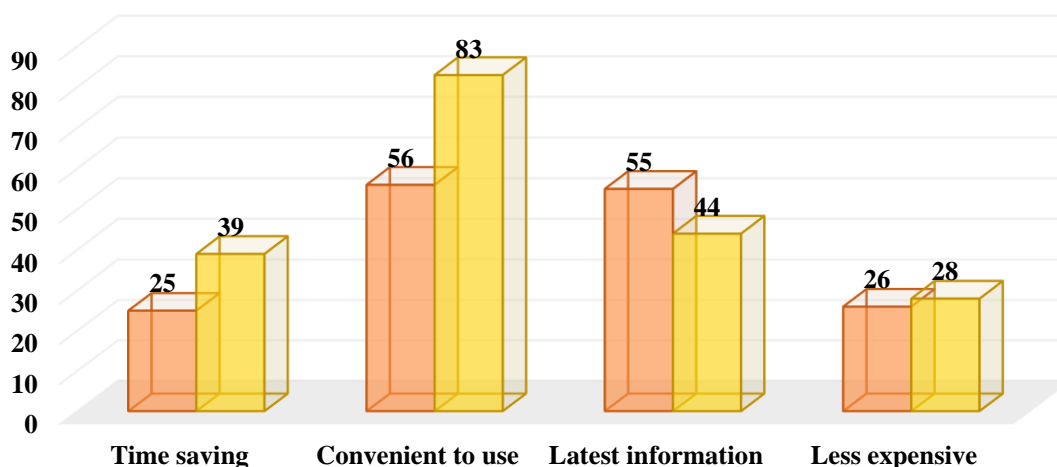
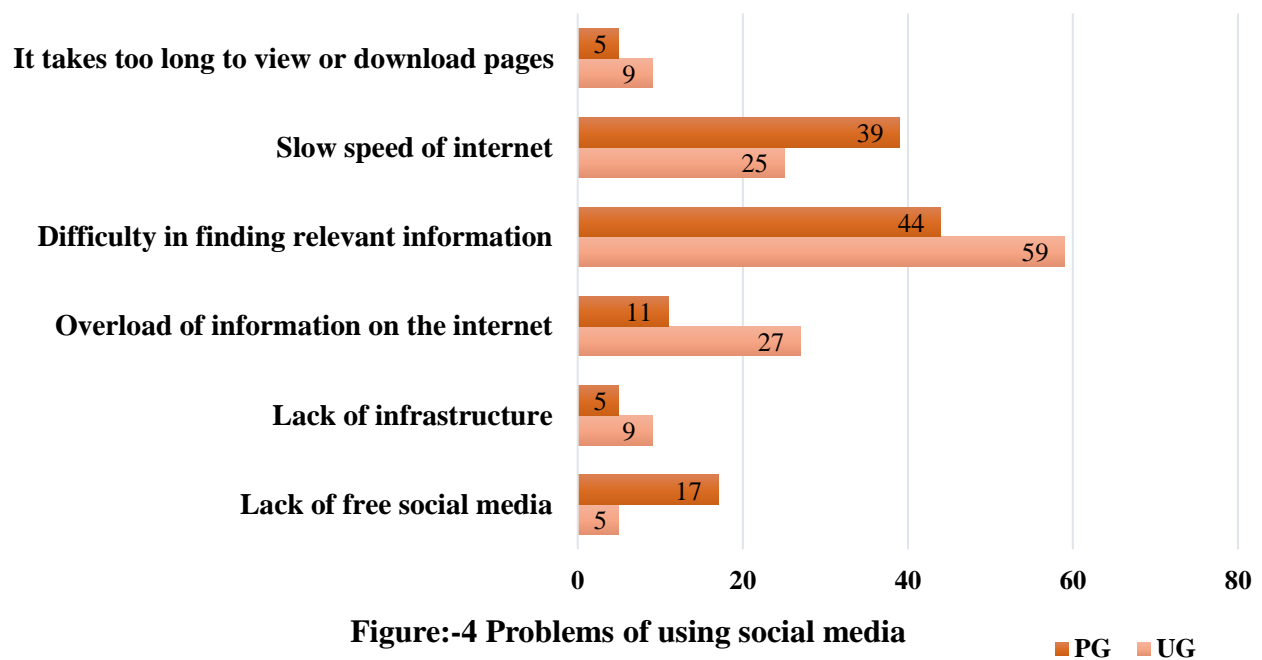


Figure:-3 Advantages of Using Social Media

■ UG ■ PG

Problems faced in using social media

Figure 4 furnishes that the most marked problem while using social media was the difficulty in finding relevant information. 59% of UG students and 44% of PG students admitted that they had difficulty in retrieving the information they need. The slow speed of the internet was the next challenge faced by medical students. 25% of UG students and 39% of PG students expressed this issue. Lack of social free social media UG (5%) and PG (17%), and overload of the information on the internet were other expressed problems. The least bothering problems while facing social media was the lack of infrastructure UG (9%) and PG (5%) and the long time it had taken to view or download pages. A small share, 5% of UG students and 7% of PG students were of this opinion.



Satisfaction with the information available

Figure 5 shows that two-third of the population, regardless of UG (60%) and PG (72%), admitted that they were partially satisfied with the information available through social media sites. A few of them, 15% of UG and 22% of PG said that they were fully satisfied. For a very small percentage of students, 6% of UG and 5% of PG, the resources provided by social media were not satisfactory.

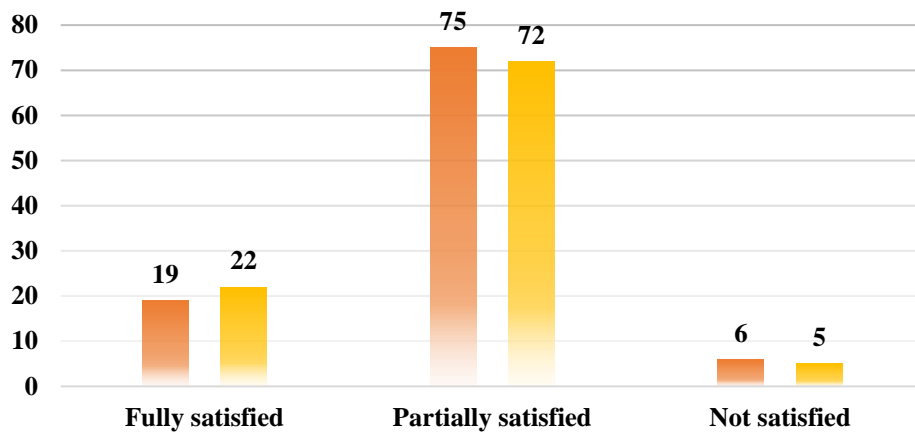


Figure:-5 Satisfaction with the information available ■ UG ■ PG

Boosting of academic pursuits and social media portals

Figure 6 shows that the majority of the PG students (94%) and two-thirds of the UG students (76%) agreed that, these social media portals boosted their academic pursuit of medical study whereas one by fourth of the (24%) of the UG students and 5% of the PG students opined that these sites were not helpful.

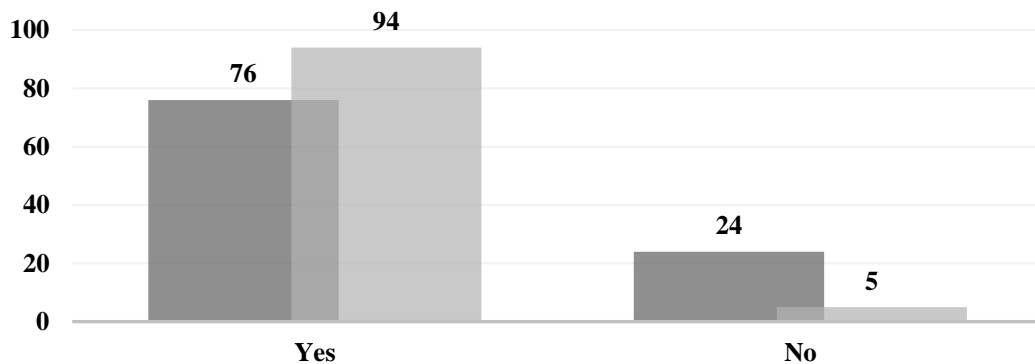


Figure:-6 Boosting of academic pursuits and social media portals ■ UG ■ PG

Findings, Discussion and Conclusion

The study was carried out to assess academic social media usage among the medical students of Kozhikode, Kerala. The study reported interesting findings. The majority of the medical student's preferred the smartphone for accessing social media and the reason behind this might be due to its advantage of portability and convenience of use at one's own pace and comfort. Most undergraduate and postgraduate students used social media for entertainment followed by social awareness, updating academic knowledge, preparing notes for exams, seminars, research

work and project work (RQ 2). The same findings have been reported by Avani & Haneefa (2019) by surveying students at Universities in Kerala. The most preferred social media by undergraduate and postgraduate students were WhatsApp and the less preferred social media was Twitter (RQ 1). A large number of students cited that social media platforms were convenient to use. The most marked problems expressed by the respondents were the difficulty in finding relevant information and the slow speed of the internet (RQ 3). The same findings have been reported in a previous study conducted by Haneefa K (2017) among Kerala students. It was interesting to note that majority of the participants were partially satisfied with the information available on the social platforms (RQ 4). The majority of the students agreed that these social media portals boosted their academic pursuit of medical study and similar kinds of studies from other countries shared similar findings (RQ 5) (Jahan & Ahmed, 2012 & Al-rahmi, 2013).

The use of social platforms among the students has increased drastically especially owing to the COVID-19 lockdown. The present study reported that students hooked social platforms mainly for entertainment purposes and the academic use was reported to be less. So, the researcher would like to suggest the students make use of social platforms for academic purposes more. The major issues like slow internet and lack of infrastructure can be solved by offering space by the respective educational institutions to the users. Furthermore, the students should be trained to use social platforms productively. The wise use of social platforms of course boost the academic performance of the students and a similar kind of study can be conducted to explore the use and academic impact among the students in other domains in the state.

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