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Use of Social Networking Sites by Karnatakites for Finding Information Regarding COVID-19 - An Investigation

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to study the usage of social networking sites by the Karnatakites for finding information regarding COVID-19. A web survey was distributed among the targeted participants to collect data for the study. The study findings reported that cent percent of the participants were users of social networking sites in which WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook were the most used SNSs for finding information regarding the COVID-19. The respondents used SNSs mainly to search for information regarding the status of COVID-19 in India as well as at the global level. Most of the respondents (48.8%) agreed that the information available on SNSs regarding COVID-19 was informative and up to date. The study also reported that the majority of respondents found the use of social networking sites satisfiable in finding vital information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is first of its kind to explore the use of SNSs among the Karnatakites for finding information regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. The findings of the study, of course, give proper insights to the digital natives and netizens for using SNSs as information resources, especially during such critical pandemic disease outbreaks.

Keywords: - Social media, Social networking sites, SNSs, COVID-19, Corona, Coronavirus, Karnataka, Karnatakites.

Introduction

People always find new ways and technologies to ease communication. There are multiple channels of communication for the exchange of all sorts of ideas and information. Social media is such one that could be a website or application that acts as a platform to share

photos, videos, files, opinions, and events in real-time. It generates an interactive platform through which people or user groups exchange and modify information in different formats(Kietzmann et al., 2011). It has opened up new vistas of collaboration that are not limited to time, access, place, and funding(Ashraf K, 2016). Social media is changing the vision of the public as all the information related to the environment, latest technologies and politics,etc. are made available through it and also act as major entertainment sources(Asur& Huberman, 2010). Social media are classified into different types based on their features. Some social media are used to share text messages, some to share images and videos, etc. There are social media designed for particular user groups like social media for learning, social media for marketing, and so on.

The main intension of this study is to assess how the people of Karnataka hooked onto social platforms to find needy information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. In December 2019, some patients with pneumonia of unknown etiology were observed in Wuhan city of China(Guarner, 2020). Later it was discovered that pneumonia was caused by new species called coronavirus(SARS-CoV-2)(Phelan et al., 2020) and the official name of COVID-19 was given to it by WHO in February 2020(Guarner, 2020).WHO has monitored and responded to the outbreak of this disease in almost all the countries. So much of information regarding COVID-19 is shared through social media but one can't predict the authenticity of that information. Hence research is required to know to what extent people are depending on social media to get information about COVID-19.

Review of Literature

Social media has penetrated almost all the domains including medicine and here we have discussed how social platforms found implications in medicine, health, and risk management especially during pandemic outbreaks.

Social media enhances the communication of individuals with organizations and can promote communication about public health(Thackeray et al., 2012). Some audiences prefer health information through print materials and some prefer to communicate through networks with health authorities as social media distributes information regarding public health in new routes(Heldman et al., 2013). Social networks are bridging the gap between health authorities and the public for a faster and smoother flow of health-related information(Roy et al., 2020). Health professionals, as well as the public, basically use social media to share queries and

solutions (Antheunis et al., 2013). Some people use Twitter and Facebook to contact fellow patients while professionals use Twitter and LinkedIn to stay connected with their colleagues and health professionals of different institutions(Antheunis et al., 2013).

Social media have strongly influenced awareness of health emergencies and currently, social media contents are now shared through images and videos instead of just text. It disseminates information related to current public health events and topics(Seltzer et al., 2015). The majority of people in southwestern Nigeria were members of social networks and believed that social media would disseminate and improve health-related information(Adebimpe et al., 2015). Adoption of social network extract, analyze, detect, and spot the outbreak of communicable diseases(Al-garadi et al., 2016). Information related to Ebola was shared using multimedia in different social media platforms to bring awareness about spreading-disease to the public with the effort to advertise health in terms of challenge. Now social media is an essential platform in managing pandemic by bringing preparedness and response for the future(Merchant & Lurie, 2020). These platforms have become a critical tool in spreading awareness of health among people. Social media made a positive impact in reaching the individuals of West Africa during the outbreak of EVD(Ebola Virus Disease)(Adebimpe et al., 2015). These social networks helped health organizations in sharing messages on the spread of EVD and its precaution measures to masses(Adebimpe et al., 2015). Huge information regarding the Ebola outbreak was posted on Twitter and Facebook(Roy et al., 2020).

Emerging pandemics need the latest methods of communication and different strategies to educate the public regarding their characteristics and precautions(Strekalova, 2017). Data available on social media offers guidance to track a pandemic and take required actions(Al-garadi et al., 2016). Information on social media about particular health-topic in the required time is highly influential(Seymour et al., 2015). Online audiences decide to get engaged with particular health-related information and hence it becomes easy in interpreting the attitude of consumers towards social media by collecting their feedback(Strekalova, 2017). Communication-related to health is a wide area to conduct research and information seekers are of different categories as information has various effects(Strekalova, 2017). Social Networks disseminate rich information to the public in real-time to fight emerging pandemic(Al-garadi et al., 2016). Social media facilitate research and innovation in public health with up-to-date information services(Seymour et al., 2015). Social media can not replace traditional information sources but support in creating the best information source by their complementary data when

integrated with traditional information(Al-garadi et al., 2016). Data acquired from social media helps to study users' concerns regarding pandemics in a small period (Al-garadi et al., 2016). Social networks played a great role as tools to disseminate information regarding the outbreak of coronavirus(COVID-19) and health organizations are posting guidance to the public via social media(Merchant & Lurie, 2020).

Need for the study

The outbreak of COVID has left many countries to stand still and hit the normal life of the people. Several countries declared lockdown with the effort to reduce the spread of pandemic disease. India being a severely hit area also reeled under the lockdown where people were barred to go outside and insisted on home quarantine. Many people find social media as a stress buster as well as a source for getting and sharing information regarding the outbreak. The information about this virus spread faster in social media as the number of people using social media in the country skyrocketed during this period(Firstpost, 2020). Many of the social platforms found as a hub of fake news regarding the pandemic outbreak(Bhattacharya, 2020). Facebook and WhatsApp had the highest number of users in the sharing of information but also lead to misinformation(Tewari, 2020). So we decided to conduct a study to assess how the people of India utilized social media during this pandemic period for finding facts relating to the outbreak taking Karnataka as a case in point.

Objectives of the study

The major objectives of the study are

1. To know the use of social networking sites among the Karnatakites for finding information regarding COVID-19.
2. To investigate the kind of information searched on social networking sites regarding COVID-19 by the Karnatakites.
3. To assess the quality of the information found on social networking sites regarding COVID-19.
4. To understand the reasons for using social networking sites for finding information regarding COVID-19.
5. To know the parameters considered for evaluating the information on social networking sites regarding the COVID-19.

6. To check the trustworthiness of information on social networking sites regarding COVID-19.
7. To know the overall satisfaction among the Karnatakites in using social networking sites for finding information regarding COVID-19.

Scope and Methodology

This research intended to study the usage of social networking sites by Karnatakites in finding information regarding COVID-19. Karnataka is a state in the southwestern region of India which is popularly known for its IT hubs(Wikipedia, 2020). The people of Karnataka state are often called Karnatakites and this study is conducted among them to explore how social media is used as a source of information by Karnatakites during the COVID-19 outbreak. An online descriptive survey was conducted to collect data for preparing statistical reports through which conclusions can be drawn to fulfill the objectives. A questionnaire was set up in *Google Forms* which consisted of questions with multiple choice and Likert five-point scale. Multiple options were provided in questions to understand the attitudes of different users. The link of this questionnaire was shared with more than 200 people all over Karnataka via *Gmail* and *WhatsApp* with a formal request to participate in the survey. Questionnaires were shared from 5th April 2020 and accepted responses till 5th May 2020. The analysis of the collected data was done with the help of SPSS and Excel. The major findings of the study are discussed in the upcoming section.

Analysis and Interpretation

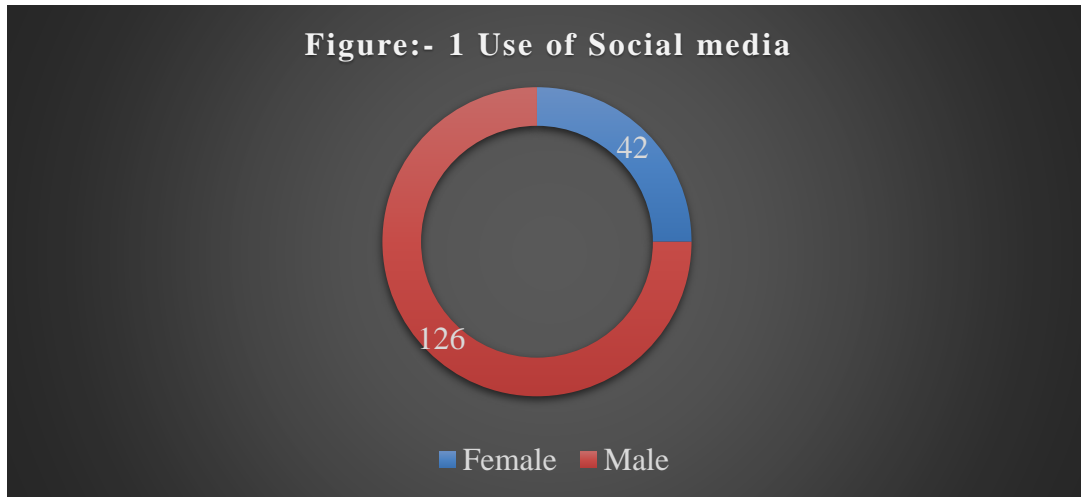
(Note: Data given in parenthesis can be read as a percentage)

Questionnaires were shared with more than 200 people, out of which 174(87%) responses were received in which 168(84%) responses were properly filled and considered for preparing statistical reports so as to draw conclusions. Among the respondents, 75% of them were males and 25% of them were females. The majority(92.26%) of respondents were aged between 19 to 29 years. Because people of this age group were youngsters who used social media more which goes in line with the study finding of Andrew Perrin(2015). 5(2.98%) respondents were of age between 30 to 39 years, 2(1.19%) respondents were aged less than 18 years and only 1(0.59%) respondent was of an age between 50 to 59 years. Concerning the geographical areas of the participants, 69(41.08%) respondents belonged to rural areas, 42(25%) respondents in semi-

urban areas and the remaining 57(33.92%) respondents were in urban areas. We also sought information regarding their use of social media and found that all the respondents(100%) were users of social networks(see figure-1).

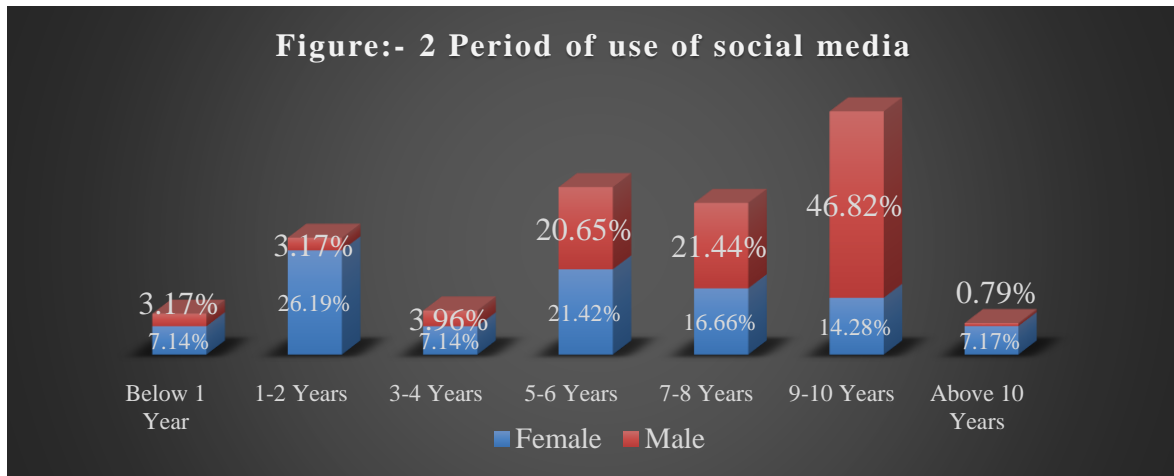
Table: - 1 Demographic information

Response	Female	Male	Total
	42(25)	126(75)	168(100)
Age			
18& less than 18	-	2(1.6)	2(1.19)
19-29	36(85.70)	119(94.4)	155(92.26)
30-39	3(7.1)	2(1.6)	5(2.98)
40-49	2(4.8)	3(2.4)	5(2.98)
50-59	1(2.4)	-	1(0.58)
Geographical Distribution			
Rural	20(47.6)	49(38.8)	69(41.08)
Semi-urban	9(21.4)	33(26.2)	42(25)
Urban	13(31)	44(34.9)	57(33.92)
Total	42(100)	126(100)	168(100)



Respondents were further asked the period since they were using SNSs and the result is given in figure-2. It was found that most(46.82%) of the male respondents were using social media from 9 to 10 years and 21.44% of them were using from 7 to 8 years followed by 20.65% them using from 5 to 6 years. While most(26.19%) of female respondents were using social networks from the last 1 to 2 years, 21.42% of them using from 5 to 6 years followed by 16.66% and 14.28% of them using from 7 to 8 years and 9 to 10 years respectively. Earlier a very rare

number of females used social media because of hesitation and fear to share their profile with the public(Gilbert et al., 2010). The majority of females were using social media in recent years as compared to males as the trend has changed and females are competing equally with males in all the fields and hence social media is also used almost equally by both genders at present.



Participants were asked to highlight the frequency of use of 5 most popular SNSs in the world according to the Statista report (2020) and found significant differences in use among both genders. Much of the respondents i.e 25.4% of males always used and 45.2% of females sometimes used Facebook. Concerning the use of YouTube, 43.7% of males and 23.8% of females always used it. It is clear from the table that most of the males(77%) and females(76.2%)always hooked onto WhatsApp. The underuse of Facebook messenger and Twitter was also noted. 52.4% of females and 33.3% of males never used Twitter while it was 33.3% and 21.4% in Facebook messenger. To check the difference in the use pattern of SNSs for finding information regarding the COVID from general use, we asked separate questions, and responses are analyzed in Table-3.

Table: - 2 Frequency of use of social networking sites

Response	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Facebook	5 (11.9)	32 (25.4)	11 (26.20)	31 (24.6)	19 (45.2)	35 (27.8)	-	16 (12.7)	7 (16.7)	12 (9.5)
YouTube	10 (23.8)	55 (43.7)	16 (38.1)	45 (35.7)	13 (31)	24 (19)	3 (7.1)	1 (0.8)	-	1 (0.8)

WhatsApp	32 (76.2)	97 (77)	7 (16.7)	20 (15.9)	2 (4.8)	6 (4.8)	-	2 (1.6)	1 (2.4)	1 (0.8)
Facebook	1 (2.4)	14 (11.1)	3 (7.1)	14 (11.1)	20 (47.6)	46 (36.5)	4 (9.5)	25 (19.8)	14 (33.3)	27 (21.4)
Messenger	1 (2.4)	9 (7.1)	5 (11.9)	21 (16.7)	13 (31)	35 (27.8)	1 (2.4)	19 (15.1)	22 (52.4)	42 (33.3)
Twitter										

Social media provides a new and powerful platform to avail the required information(Westerman et al., 2014). It has become a platform for infotainment to entertainment. The social media usage in the lockdown period in India recorded a huge jump. When we solicited information regarding the frequency of use of SNSs for finding information regarding the COVID pandemic, we found that WhatsApp and YouTube were the most used SNSs by the participants(Table 3).WhatsApp was always used by 40.5% of males and 47.6% of females. It was also noted that the use of Twitter and Facebook Messenger for finding COVID related information was meager. 54.8% of female participants and 32.5% of male participants never used Twitter for finding facts regarding the outbreak. The use of the same for general purposes was also not satisfactory which is clear from Table-2.

Table: - 3 Frequency of use of social networking sites for finding information regarding COVID

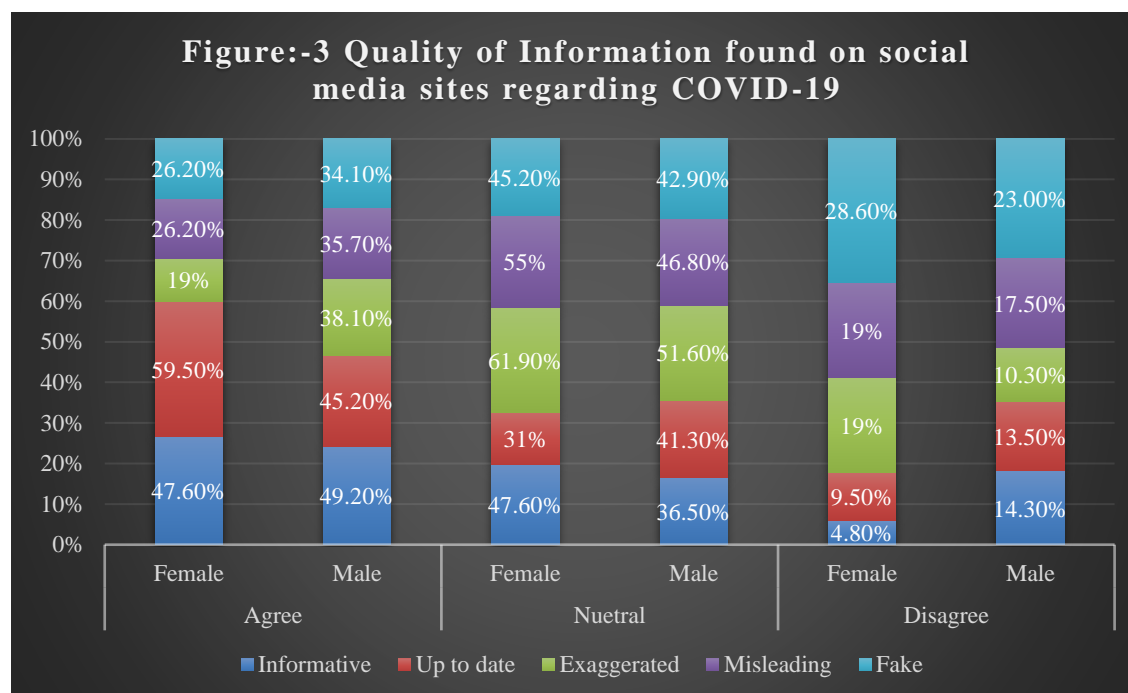
Response	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Facebook	4 (9.5)	22 (17.5)	11 (26.2)	24 (19)	13 (31)	39 (31)	4 (9.5)	14 (11.1)	10 (23.8)	27 (21.4)
WhatsApp	20 (47.6)	51 (40.5)	12 (28.6)	31 (24.6)	7 (16.7)	15 (11.9)	2 (4.8)	13 (10.3)	1 (2.4)	16 (12.7)
YouTube	9 (21.4)	40 (31.7)	14 (33.3)	19 (15.1)	13 (31)	36 (28.6)	2 (4.8)	14 (11.1)	4 (9.5)	17 (13.5)
Facebook Messenger	1 (2.4)	8 (6.3)	2 (4.8)	15 (11.9)	15 (35.7)	34 (27)	5 (11.9)	21 (16.7)	19 (45.2)	48 (38.1)
Twitter	2 (4.8)	14 (11.1)	1 (2.4)	14 (11.1)	15 (35.7)	40 (31.7)	1 (2.4)	17 (13.5)	23 (54.8)	41 (32.5)

Every social media user seeks different kinds of information, hence it remains the same even in the case of COVID-19. According to this survey, the majority of respondents i.e 59.5% of females and 57.9% of males always looked for information about COVID-19 in India. Most(40.5%) of female respondents sometimes searched and most(31.7%) of male respondents always searched for the global status of the COVID-19 outbreak. 62% of female respondents

always and often used social media equally and a good number(32.5%) of male respondents always searched information regarding how it spreads. The highest number of respondents i.e 14(33.3%) of females and 38(30.2%) of males always searched for symptoms of COVID-19 on social media. The majority (85%) of female respondents always, often and sometimes used social media equally and more number(26.2%) of male respondents sometimes searched for information regarding Medicine for COVID-19. More respondents i.e. 16(38.1%) of females always searched and 38(30.2%) of males often looked for information regarding quarantine. The maximum number of respondents i.e. 21(50%) of females and 48(38.1%) of males were always seeking major updates from ministry regarding COVID-19. 35.7% of female respondents always searched and 32.5% of male respondents sometimes searched for other information regarding COVID-19 on social media(Table 4).

Table: - 4 Kind of information searched on social networking sites regarding COVID-19

Responses	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
COVID-19 and India	25 (59.5)	73 (57.9)	8 (19)	21 (16.70)	7 (16.7)	16 (12.7)	-	3 (2.4)	2 (4.80)	13 (10.3)
Global status of COVID-19	7 (16.7)	40 (31.7)	15 (35.7)	36 (28.6)	17 (40.5)	34 (27)	1 (2.4)	1 (0.8)	2 (4.8)	15 (11.9)
The way it spreads	13 (31)	41 (32.5)	13 (31)	34 (27)	10 (23.8)	25 (19.8)	4 (9.5)	11 (8.7)	2 (4.8)	15 (11.9)
Symptoms of COVID-19	14 (33.3)	38 (30.2)	13 (31)	32 (25)	11 (26.2)	34 (27)	1 (2.4)	6 (4.8)	3 (7.1)	16 (12.7)
Medicine for COVID-19	12 (28.6)	32 (25.4)	12 (28.6)	29 (23)	12 (28.6)	33 (26.2)	3 (7.1)	11 (8.7)	3 (7.1)	21 (16.7)
Quarantine information	16 (38.1)	36 (28.6)	7 (16.7)	38 (30.2)	14 (33.3)	24 (19)	4 (9.5)	9 (7.1)	1 (2.4)	19 (15.1)
Major updates from the ministry	21 (50)	48 (38.1)	6 (14.3)	29 (23)	11 (26.2)	25 (19.8)	3 (7.1)	6 (4.8)	1 (2.4)	18 (14.3)
Other information	15 (35.7)	20 (15.9)	8 (19)	27 (21.4)	9 (21.4)	41 (32.5)	3 (7.1)	15 (11.9)	7 (16.7)	23 (18.3)



According to Figure-3, nearly half of respondents i.e. 47.60% of females and 49.20% of males agreed that social media was informative while 59.50% of females and 45.20% of males agreed that information regarding COVID on social media was up-to-date. But respondents of both genders had no opinion in judging whether the information available on social media about COVID-19 was exaggerated, misleading, and fake or not. The opinion of 61.90% of female respondents and 51.60% of male respondents were neutral towards the statement that information on social media was exaggerated. The opinion of 55% of female respondents and 46.80% of male respondents were neutral regarding the statement that information on social media was misleading. The opinion of 45.20% of female respondents and 42.90% of male respondents were also neutral to the statement that information on social media was fake.

Table: -5 Reasons for using social networking sites for finding information regarding COVID-19

Responses	Agree		Strongly agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Up to date information	11 (26.2)	25 (19.8)	4 (9.5)	18 (14.3)	24 (57.1)	44 (3.9)	1 (2.4)	15 (11.9)	2 (4.8)	24 (19.00)
Less cost	12 (28.6)	25 (19.8)	1 (2.4)	12 (9.5)	13 (31)	45 (35.7)	10 (23.8)	19 (15.1)	6 (14.3)	25 (19.8)

Easy to retrieve	14 (33.3)	30 (23.8)	4 (9.5)	13 (10.3)	14 (33.3)	47 (37.3)	8 (19)	16 (12.7)	2 (4.8)	20 (15.9)
Other features like share, comment, tag	9 (21.4)	20 (15.9)	3 (7.1)	11 (8.7)	19 (45.2)	53 (42.1)	7 (16.7)	23 (18.3)	4 (9.5)	19 (15.1)
Variety of media like images, videos, text	13 (31)	30 (23.8)	2 (4.8)	12 (9.5)	19 (45.2)	50 (39.7)	5 (11.9)	17 (13.5)	3 (7.1)	17 (13.5)
Others	9 (21.4)	18 (14.3)	2 (4.8)	9 (7.1)	21 (50)	65 (51.6)	5 (11.9)	18 (14.3)	5 (11.9)	16 (12.7)

When we solicited information regarding the reasons for using SNSs for finding information about COVID-19, the majority(57.1%) of female respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that they used social media for up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 whereas the most(19.8%) of male respondents agreed that they used social media for up-to-date information. Most of the respondents i.e 31% of females and 35.7% of males neither agreed nor disagreed that less cost was the reason to use social media. 33.3% of female respondents agreed but the same percent of them and 37.3% of male respondents had a neutral opinion for the statement that they used social media to get information regarding COVID-19 as it was easy to retrieve. Much of the respondents i.e 45.2% of females and 42.1% of males neither agreed nor disagreed that they used social media because of other features like sharing, commenting and tagging. Most of the respondents i.e 45.2% of females and 39.7% of males neither agreed nor disagreed that they used social media because of the variety of media like texts, images and videos, etc. After all these, the majority of the respondents i.e 50% of females and 51.6% of males neither agreed nor disagreed that they chose social media for other reasons to get information regarding COVID-19(Table 5).

Table: - 6 Parameters considered for evaluating the information on social networking sites

Responses	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number of downloads	7 (16.7)	29 (23)	12 (28.6)	32 (25.4)	14 (33.3)	31 (24.6)	4 (9.5)	17 (13.5)	5 (11.9)	17 (13.5)
Number of comments and shares	3 (7.1)	17 (13.5)	9 (21.4)	32 (25.4)	18 (42.9)	36 (28.6)	4 (9.5)	18 (14.3)	8 (19)	23 (18.3)
Number of likes	7 (16.7)	18 (14.3)	10 (23.8)	32 (25.4)	16 (38.1)	41 (32.5)	3 (7.1)	18 (14.3)	6 (14.3)	17 (13.5)

Period of posting	8 (19)	21 (16.7)	8 (19)	28 (22.2)	14 (33.3)	35 (27.8)	5 (11.9)	18 (14.3)	7 (16.7)	24 (19.00)
Who posted	8 (19)	23 (18.3)	9 (21.4)	41 (32.5)	18 (42.9)	26 (20.6)	3 (7.1)	16 (12.7)	4 (9.5)	20 (15.9)
Number of views	14 (33.3)	40 (31.7)	7 (16.7)	32 (25.4)	13 (31)	28 (22.2)	2 (4.8)	13 (10.3)	6 (14.3)	13 (10.3)

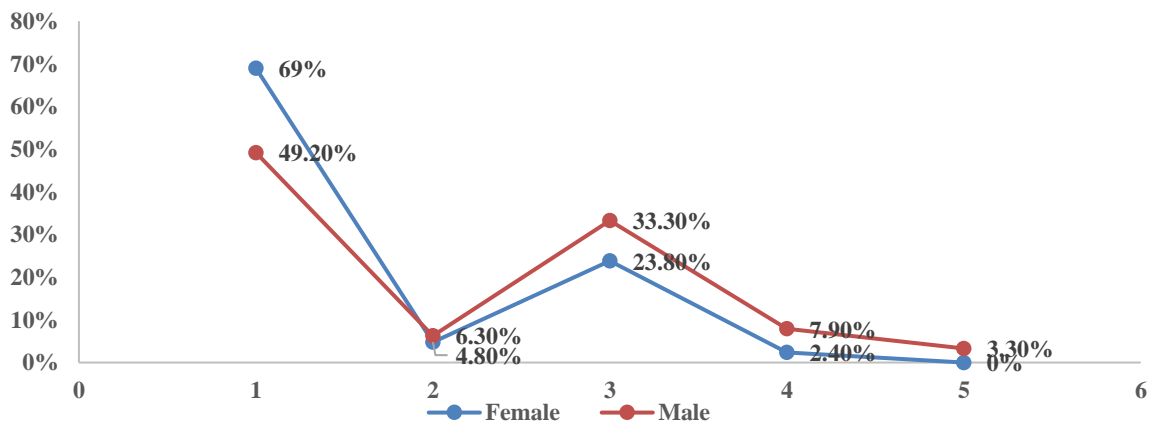
We also asked the parameters considered for evaluating the information on social networking sites regarding the pandemic and it was found that 14(33.3%) of the female respondents sometimes considered the number of downloads whereas 32(25.4%) of the male respondents often considered it. Most of the respondents i.e 18(42.9%) of females and 36(28.6%) of males sometimes considered the number of comments and shares to evaluate information on social media. Most of them i.e 16(38.1%) of females and 41(32.5%) of males sometimes considered the number of likes. More respondents i.e 14(33.3%) of females and 35(27.8%) of males sometimes judge the quality of information posted on social media based on the period of posting. Maximum respondents i.e 18(42.9%) of females sometimes decided whereas 41(32.5%) of males often decided the quality of information based on who had posted it. Most of the respondents i.e 14(33.3%) of females and 40(31.7%) of males always considered the number of views to evaluate information regarding COVID-19 available on social media(Table 6).

Table: - 7Trustworthiness of information on social networking sites regarding COVID-19

Responses	Agree		Strongly agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Found trustworthy when suggested by friends, relatives, and others	10 (23.8)	14 (11.)	1 (2.4)	11 (8.7)	23 (54.8)	66 (52.4)	5 (11.9)	20 (15.9)	3 (7.1)	15 (11.9)
Found trustworthy when posted by govt.	17 (40.5)	31 (24.6)	4 (9.5)	31 (24.6)	15 (35.7)	36 (28.6)	4 (9.5)	13 (10.3)	2 (4.8)	15 (11.9)
Found trustworthy when posted by media	12 (28.6)	18 (14.3)	1 (2.4)	9 (7.1)	20 (47.6)	57 (45.2)	7 (16.7)	29 (23)	2 (4.8)	13 (10.3)
All the information found trustworthy	7 (16.7)	11 (8.7)	0	6 (4.8)	18 (42.9)	44 (34.9)	10 (23.8)	34 (27)	7 (16.7)	31 (24.6)
I didn't find any relevant information	3 (7.1)	6 (4.8)	0	5 (4.0)	18 (42.9)	49 (38.9)	14 (33.3)	40 (31.7)	7 (16.7)	26 (20.6)

According to Table-7, it was clear that the opinions of most of the respondents of both genders i.e 23(54.8%) of females and 66(52.4%) of males were neutral for trusting information on social media when suggested by friends, relatives, and others. A good number of female respondents i.e 17(40.5%) agreed that they trust the information on social media when posted by the government whereas male respondents i.e 36(28.6%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Most of the respondents i.e 20(47.6%) of females and 57(45.2%) of males had a neutral opinion in trusting information posted by media. Nearly half of the respondents i.e 18(42.9%) of females and 44(34.9%) of males neither agreed nor disagreed that all the information on social media regarding COVID-19 is trustworthy. The opinion of most of the respondents i.e 18(42.9%) of females and 49(38.9%) of males was neutral for the unavailability of relevant information regarding COVID-19 on social media.

Figure:- 4 Overall Satisfaction with Social media use



(1-Satisfied, 2-Highly satisfied, 3-Neutral, 4-Dissatisfied, 5-Highly dissatisfied)

The majority of respondents i.e. 69% of females and 49.20% of males were satisfied with the use of social media, followed by 33.30% of female respondents and 23.80% of male respondents having no opinion, as they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the use of social media. It was reported that only 3.30% of male respondents were highly unsatisfied with the use of social media. Only a few numbers of female respondents were unsatisfied with the use of social media because most of the females were happy and comfortable with existing features in them.

Findings and Conclusion

The study found that youngsters were large users of social media(El-Berry, 2015). No much difference was found in the usage statistics of social media when it was categorized according to genders. But it was clear that most of the females in Karnataka were familiar with

social media in recent years and were new to its use. Almost all the people in Karnataka were regularly using WhatsApp and most of the males were regularly using YouTube for seeking information. The frequency of the general use of SNSs and for COVID purposes did not find any major difference. Most of the people were receiving information regarding COVID-19 through WhatsApp and also searching on YouTube. In the case of COVID-19, social media users in Karnataka were seeking information regarding COVID-19 in India, the way it spreads, symptoms, precautions, and also major updates from ministry at large. The majority of Karnatakites opined that social media were informative and up-to-date which can make them aware of current events occurring in any part of the world and hence even in the case of COVID-19. They chose social media to get information regarding COVID-19 as it is easy to retrieve information by examining the quality of information on considering the number of views, shares, comments, and who has posted it. The majority of Karnatakites trusted information on social media when it was posted by the government and media. Finally, the study made it clear that most of the people were satisfied with the use of social media in extracting information about COVID-19 (Subedi et al., 2020) but to not that extent.

The authenticity and quality of information shared in social media remain unpredictable as most of the users share their ideas and some rumors. The government uses social media like Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook most of the time and these are enough to sufficiently reach all the citizens, but government social media accounts are less subscribed or followed by users (Mainka et al., 2014). Social networking sites spread the information regarding COVID-19 in a faster way so that its control measures can be shared with public and community panic can be reduced. The latest information regarding this disease is available on the WHO webpage and this can also be shared with the public through social media (Depoux et al., 2020). Free and faster access to information on social media is essential in acquiring universal medical response to the dispersion of COVID-19 (Chan et al., 2020). The public can be directed to fight COVID-19 by guiding and sieving out the wrong information to release exact information via collaborations (Gao et al., 2020). The cause for misinformation about COVID-19 is that people fail to check the accuracy of information before they share (Pennycook et al., 2020). So we suggest an effective mechanism to filter fake information regarding the pandemic in social media. The study will be extended to the whole country in the future and a similar kind of study can be undertaken in other COVID hit countries.

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