Advantageous and adversative impacts of social media on undergraduate law students

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Abstract

[This article is an empirical attempt to map the advantageous and adversative impacts of social media on undergraduate law students of a national law university in India. Over the years, the connection between university students and social media has been tremendously increased across the world. Consequentially, social media has put several creative and adverse impacts on college and university students pertaining to their academic performance, wellbeing, health, personal interaction, etc. As per the current statistics released in January 2021, India has 320 million Facebook users which is the highest number among all countries in the world. Almost 71 percent of the Indian Facebook users belong to the age group of 18-34 years. YouTube happens to be the second most popular social media with 2 billion-plus users in the world and India contributes 225 million-plus active YouTube users. This trend speaks a volume about the usefulness of these online platforms. Undoubtedly, social media which is more often recognized as Social Networking Sites (SNS) have created a space for a virtual community feeling for its users. SNS provides a platform to make new friends and contacts, not only on own campus but also outside the university and college campus, and through which the students involved in the process of social capital formation for their future motive and career.]

Keywords: 1 social media, 2 SNS, adversative impact,3 advantageous impact,4 undergraduate law students,5 interaction

Introduction

In the recent era, India has advanced its communication technology that significantly booms internet-based media and cyber communication. Internet-based media is usually interpreted as tantamount to social media, new media, online media, and/or social networking sites. Nowadays often social media play a vital role in communication and social interactions and have multidimensional effects on people's everyday lives. Utility and use of these forms of media among the students have been tremendously increased across the world. Over a period, networking and interaction through social media among college students has become a common practice and widespread. Through social media, students make friendships with unknowns beyond the national territory on one hand, and on the other, they also realize various positive and negative conditions and consequences of that new connection or interaction. Some SNS like WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn are very popular among college students in this era of Information Communication Technology (ICT). Due to the increased popularity and growth of these sites in the whole world, the scientific communities across disciplines engaged in doing research in this field. Recent data on the most popular SNS in the world is given below which was released by Statista. Several pieces of research have been conducted across the globe to explore the effects and relations of the new media/social media on students' academics in colleges and universities.

Most Popular Social Networking Sites in the World by January 2021

Users in Million
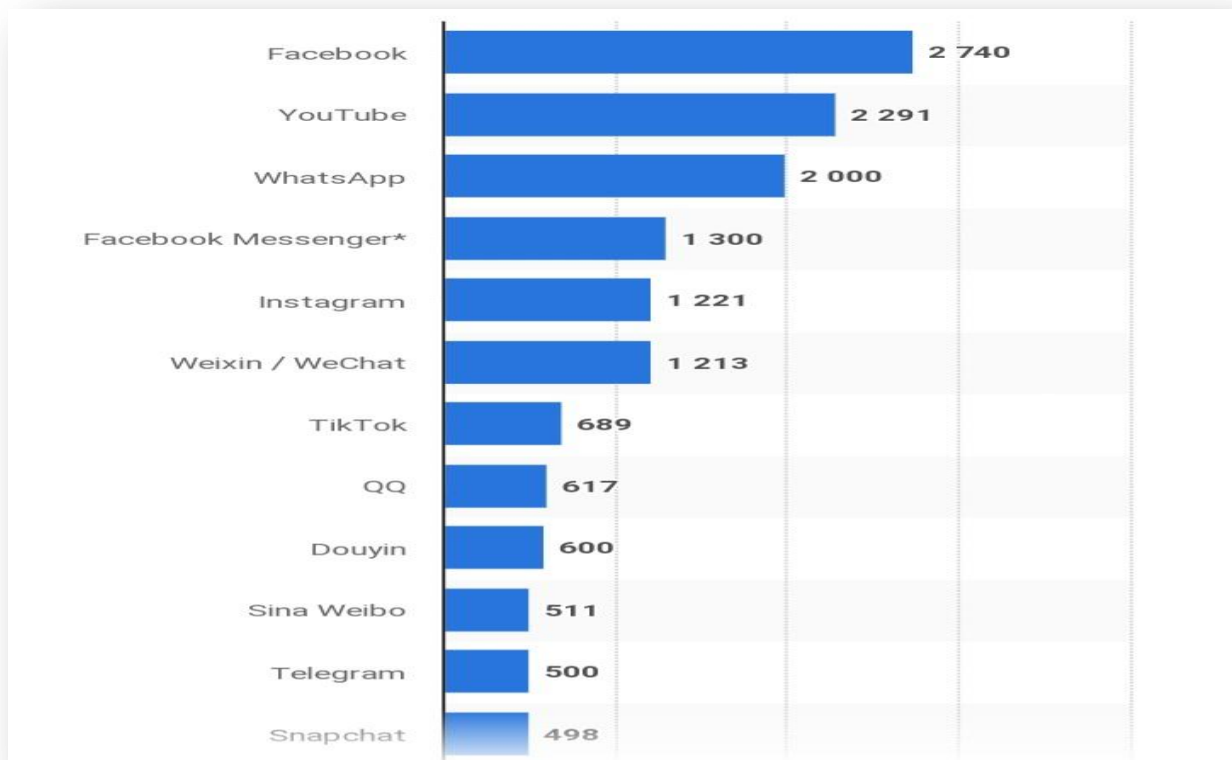
Source: Statista, 2021

An Overview

The studies of Kist (2008), Choney (2010), Jacobsen &Forste (2011), Mehmood, and Taswir (2013) observed that the use of the internet and social media has affected students' performance both adversely and positively on some. The adverse upshots of SNS on students create worries in the parents since their children spend disproportionate time on SNS mostly on Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube. However, in some cases, students happen to utilize these sites regularly for finding and sharing study materials for academic purposes.

Amin, &Mansoor et al. (2016) conducted a study to see the changes in academic performance of those who had spent most of their time on SNS for any reason. They observed some positive results in the students who spent time regularly on SNS had developed an ability to share new ideas relevant to their studies. Akram, W. & Kumar, R (2017), in their study found that currently, youth are using multiple social networking sites such as Google+, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Flickr, and WhatsApp, etc. The said sites have many positive impacts on them like socialization, sharing of knowledge, updating oneself, learning new cultures and on the other side there are several negative effects on them as they have reduced human contact, improper time management, lower academic grades, harassment, cyberbullying, hacking, addiction, and victim of cyber frauds and scams, etc.

Patiyal&Bala (2018) affirmed that social networking sites help students in building their career, personal and professional relationships. According to the "Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube are the most commonly used SNS by the students in India. These sites help the students in getting information, sharing their experiences, and most importantly helped in keeping in touch with family, friends, and communities. SNS has been found as a good communication tool which helps in making interpersonal and professional relations." Mushtaq &Benraghd (2018) identifiedpositive and negativeimpacts of social media on students' personal and public lives. They conducted a study on the students of Alberoni University in Afghanistan to see the impact of social media on the academic performance of the students. The results of their study found no significant difference in academic achievement and use of social media. They admitted that social media has become a learning method and source for the students.

Koranteng, Wiafe&Kuada (2019) pointed out the fact that the use of SNS has increased students' engagement in knowledge and idea-sharing among themselves. Students are so much connected to SNS and that's how they enhance their concentration in sharing information and knowledge with their friends. Further, social media platforms are becoming helpful in catering to the academic needs of the students. Peled (2019)revealed the existence of cyberbullying in colleges and universities. There observed a relationship between "cyberbullying through instant messaging, and the academic, social and emotional development of undergraduate students. This study indicated that cyberbullying has a negative influence on the academic, social, and emotional development of undergraduate students." In addition to that, they said that the students are benefited academically and intellectually.

Rationale

Amongst the fast-growing nations in the world, India is one of them in terms of the internet, computer, mobile phones, and ICT. The Government of India works with the mission and vision to make India a digitally enabled country. Many political parties in India strategically commit in their party agenda to provide laptops and smartphones to students if they vote for them in general elections. After winning elections, as per their agenda/manifesto, they also implement them accordingly as a policy of digitalization. With the advent of cheaper high-speed internet data packages, students increase accessibility to the internet and the huge number of student users of the internet is increasing every year. Online media, otherwise Social Media/SNS like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc. have influenced the youth in general including college students. Prior to the period of SNS, students were using internet services via their laptops and computers. Time spent on these sites was limited, therefore virtual interaction was limited, but as the telecommunication industry is booming it has helped to introduce cheaper smartphones which have successfully increased the number of users. It is very often observed that the students give more time to social media platforms for finding out study materials to cater to their academic needs through their smartphones or computers. This paper has focused on the effects of social media on the academic performance of the students, their personal interaction, and how social media helps the information of social capital.

Theoretical connection

This study corroborates with the theory of Social Capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Robert Putnam, and Portes. This era of ICT has widened its scope for the students to link themselves with various useful contacts, resources, and institutions for their careers and prospects. Social networking sites are contributing positively at large on academic and non-academic fronts. Though there are adversaries in the social media domain, those can be tackled if a user is conscious of the dos and don'ts aspects of the virtual domain.

Objectives

This study was conducted keeping the following objectives in mind,

      1. To know the positive and negative impacts of social media on undergraduate law students, and

      2.To find out the usefulness of social media on students' social capital formation.

Methodology

This is a field-based empirical study conducted in 2017-18 at Raipur city taking the undergraduate law students of Hidayatullah National Law University to see how social media is putting its adversative and positive impacts on the law students. The sample size was about 100. The respondents were selected randomly from a population of 862 undergraduate students. A simple random sampling method was employed due to the homogeneity of the population since they were all undergraduate students of law from the same university. Interview and observation techniques were used for data collection. A semi-structured interview schedule as a tool was used for gathering relevant information and facts for the study. The study used social media and SNS interchangeably.

Presentation of field data

In this section, data pertaining to the fieldwork conducted at Hidayatullah National Law University is presented in tabular form. Data related to respondents' age, gender, and answers to the objective-based questions are analyzed.

Table 1: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-21	55	55%
22-25	45	45%
Total	N=100	100%

Source: Field Data

The above distribution (Table 1) presents the age distribution of the undergraduate law students or respondents. The respondents' age was classified under two categories like age group 18-21 years and the other was 22-25 years. Around 55% of the students belong to 18-21 years of age and 45% of them were 22-25 years of age. All the respondents were students of undergraduate 5 years Law Programme.

Table 2: Do you use Social Networking Sites (SNS) for sharing of information and knowledge?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	94	94%
No	6	6%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Data

The above distribution mentioned in Table 2 provides the information pertaining to the use of social networking sites by the students with respect to sharing of information and knowledge. Most of the respondents (94%) believed that they use Social Networking Sites (SNS) for knowledge gaining and information sharing among friends. Only a very few respondents (6%) disagreed that they had been using SNS for the purpose sharing of information and knowledge. Thus, it is evidenced that SNSs have been playing a major role in disseminating information and knowledge among university students. Hence, this is witnessed as a positive impact of SNS/social media on undergraduate students.

Table3: Whether social media has contributed on your cognitive ability and public sharing skills?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	97	97%
No	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Data

The distribution mentioned in Table 3 explains development of cognitive ability of students through social media activities. People join social networking sites for various reasons. Some join for networking, some for entertainment, some for academic purposes, some for posting their accomplishments, and some do a mixture of activities. People communicate with each other and show their skills of expression, attitude, and exercise their constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of expression as well. Many studies have explored that social media platforms help their users positively in terms of enhancing their thinking and expression abilities. As per the data mentioned in Table 3, around 97 % of the undergraduate law students believed that social media has positively contributed to their cognitive growth and aspects of public expression. Only a rare number of students (3 %) had disagreed that if at all, social media had played any positive role in the amelioration of their cognitive and public expression ability. The overall impact of social media on thinking and public expression ability is advantageous for the students.

Table 4: Do you believe that social media as an advantage to find out good contacts through which you strengthen your social capital?

Source: Field Data

This

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	90	90%
No	10	10%
total	100	100%

distribution (Table 4) discusses thatabout 90% of the students viewed that social media helps them in finding good contacts which certainly helps them in the creation of social capital. A small number of students (10%) told that social media did not help them in social capital formation. But, the majority consider social media on a positive note. So, it could be generalized that students see social media as an advantage for them because they get chances to connect themselves with potential and powerful individuals beyond their institution, city, and nation.

Table 5: Have you ever benefited through your SNS contacts?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	72%
No	28	28%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Data

The distribution presented in Table 5 tried to see whether any respondent had ever benefited by his/her social media contacts or not. Most of them (72%) stated that they got benefits from their SNS contacts. On the other hand, 28% of the respondents told that they had never benefited from their contacts on social networking sites. The students get benefits through these contacts in terms of getting internship opportunities with senior advocates, judges, law firms, corporates, various commissions, and academics, etc. This distribution approves the idea that social media is a powerful platform for students through which they can explore advantages and social media helps the university students in the social capital formation.

Table 6: Whether your attachment with SNS resulted into social media addiction and lower grade points in examinations?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	38	38%
No	62	62%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Data

The distribution mentioned in the Table 6 admitted that there is something called social media addiction. It is a consequence of too much time spent on the social networking sites. A good percentage of law students (38%) agreed that they could not score good grades in their examinations due to excess time spending on the social networking sites. However, 62% of them had no issues related to their academic performance and time spending on SNS platforms. It will not be wrong to say that excess use of SNS does not have negative impacts. Because 38% of the undergraduate students admitted that they were not performing well in their examinations due to SNS addiction.

Table 7: Whether your parents had ever felt that you spend excess time on SNS?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	58	58%
No	42	42%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Data

Data presented in Table 7 signifies the worries of the parents since they feel their children spend excess time on SNS. Many studies have revealed that parents are worried due to their children spend excess time on social media unnecessarily which has adversative impacts on their studies, interaction, health and interpersonal lives. In this study, when the respondents were asked whether their parents had ever felt that they spend excess time on SNS or not; 58% of them admitted that their parents feel that their children would be spending excess time on SNS and 42% of them said that their parents did not feel the same about their children. Here, it can be derived that the social media affects the parental mental peace and academics of their children students in both ways.

Table 8: Have you ever been victimized due to cyberbullying?

Response	Yes	No	Total
Male	05 (10%)	45 (90%)	50
Female	20 (40%)	30 (60%)	50
Total	25 (25%)	75 (75%)	100

Source: Field Data

Cyberbullying is also a common problem in this era of technology. Distribution presented in Table 8 reveals that around 40% of the female students and 5% male students accepted that one or the other form they had experienced cyberbullying in their lives. Out of a total of 100 respondents, 25 of them had faced cyberbullying. So, this is a serious issue in this cyber world. Government must bring some more stringent punishment provisions through the amendment of Information Technology Act, 2000 in the best interest of the public and to the users of the internet and internet-based sites.

Table 9Do you feel that social media has somehow reduced your face to face interaction with others and on the other side you have been addicted to virtual interaction?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	64	64%
No	36	36%
Total	100	100%

Field Data

The distribution mentioned in Table 9 presents a clear picture of the participating students that how they have been distancing themselves from face-to-face interaction in this virtual age. Around 64% percent of the undergraduate law students admitted that somehow, they had reduced their face-to-face interaction due to the virtual interactions through Facebook, WhatsApp and other SNS, etc. Reduction of face-to-face interaction cannot be considered as a good social trend. Because face-to-face personal interaction helps a person in the all-round development of the personality of an individual. People can experience human emotions in personal interaction, but the same cannot be experienced well in the virtual model of interactions.

Results and Discussion

After undergoing relevant literature and analyzing field data collected from one hundred undergraduate students for primary information with a view to know the effects of social media on students; it could be stated that social media has both advantageous and adverse impacts. Students mostly use social networking websites due to the influence of their friends which could be peer pressure otherwise. In the last two decades, social media gained a wider popularity across the world is the reason why that there was technological advancement, the adequate response from the target population like students, worldwide connectivity and free of cost service.

a. Advantageous Impacts

Due to the growth of social networking sites and their free services to their users; college/university students have been taking advantage in many ways such as enhancing their freedom of expression, public opinion, knowledge sharing, well-being, and entertainment etc. In this study, a good number of student respondents which was around 97% of them agreed that social media has offered many advantages in terms of freedom of expression, public opinion and knowledge sharing, etc. Most of the respondent students (72%) approved that social media has helped them in their social capital formation through establishing links with good contacts, students and professors of same and other universities, and reputed persons from various professions, etc. Around 86 percent of the respondents agreed that social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp were useful in finding study materials both in video and textual forms. No society offers full access to the traditional electronic and print media to the students for opinion sharing, discussion, and other discourses whereas social media offer that scope to all. As stated by the respondents, this scope has helped the 98 percent of students in enhancing their

public participation and enabled their skills of public dealing. It was also identified that the students who had low self-esteem could increase their confidence and self-esteem through activities

b. Adversative Impacts

Many respondents around 58 of them agreed that their parents and guardians were worried for them as the parents feel that their children spend too much time on Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and other social media sites and their children had not enough time to concentrate on their studies. Some research studies have found that most teenagers post their private information on networking sites and sometimes pornographic content. This could lead to embarrassing situations of unwanted self-disclosure, which could decrease their well-being and legal action. Around 64 percent of the respondents admitted that due to excess use of SNS, they have reduced their interaction in person with their classmates, friends, and family members. Some students responded that they were victimized due to cyberbullying happening on social media. Around 20% of the female students and 5% of male students accepted that in one or the other form they had experienced cyberbullying in their lives. Out of a total of 100 respondents, 34 of them had experienced cyberbullying. So, this is a serious concern to make cyber laws more stringent.

Conclusion

This is evident that social media has demonstrated as a potential source of information, knowledge, interaction, socialization, social capital formation of the students in colleges and universities. However, many challenges are noticeable in social media. Students spend excess time on the virtual platforms which deteriorates their academic grades, disconnects them from physical interaction, and at times trapped in online frauds and harassments. These platforms are required to strengthen their safety features to protect the users from cyber harassments, frauds, and crimes. Based on the data and facts, it was derived that more female students had experienced cyberbullying/harassment as compared to male students. The adversative effects of social media are required to checked and regulated more without compromising basic freedoms. The Government of India must try to bring some more stringent punishment provisions by amending the Information Technology Act, 2000 in the best interest of the public and to the users of the internet and internet-based sites.

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