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Adoption of social media among students before COVID-19

Preeti Rani and Dr. Jatesh Kathpalia

Abstract

Before COVID-19, social media adoption was already on the rise. It had become an integral part of daily life for people of all ages, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat serving as tools for communication, entertainment, and information-sharing. Businesses and organizations had also recognized the power of social media for marketing and engagement. The pre-pandemic era witnessed a gradual shift toward increased online connectivity and digital interaction, setting the stage for its pivotal role during the pandemic and beyond. This study was planned to investigate the level of adoption of social media and its association with socio-economic variables before COVID-19. Data was analyzed by applying chi-square test and it was found that level of adoption is directly associated with certain socio-economic variables like family type (13.23*), education (14.80*), land holding (16.08*) and mass media exposure (10.89*). This study also enlighten the complexity of factors influencing the adoption of social media before pre pandemic landscape of digital engagement.

Keywords: Social media, socio-economic, digital, and COVID-19

Introduction

With the advance of technological era, the web-based services like social media help individuals to maintain their social connections beyond cultural and geographical boundaries. The term social media, the word Social refers to the social interaction by sharing information and the word Media indicates the tool for social interaction like internet. So, one can define Social media as web-based application that plays a central role in content sharing. In recent years it was found that adolescent age group constitutes the major group among the users of social media (Calancie *et al.*, 2017) ^[4]. Among the adolescents, the students lie on the bigger part, who use social media and pass their unstructured time. With the growth of electronic gadgets like smartphones and laptops, provides ease for students to access social media for different purposes (Gupta and D'Silva 2020) ^[12].

In 2019, India ranked as the second-largest country in the world in terms of internet users, following closely behind China. According to reported data, there were approximately 573 million internet users in India during that year. Predictions indicated that this number was expected to increase to around 639 million by the year 2020, highlighting the rapid growth of internet adoption in the country. Furthermore, the average time spent by Indian users on social media sites was estimated at 2.4 hours per day and 17 hours per week, as reported in the study (Varun, 2019) ^[28]. This statistic underscores the significant role that social media plays in the lives of Indian internet users, reflecting the country's active online engagement. Overall, India's position as the second-largest online market in 2019, according to Statista.com, illustrates the immense potential and influence of the internet in India's digital landscape, with a burgeoning number of users and a substantial presence in the global online community.

The outbreak of COVID-19 engulfed the globe in a short period of time and the whole world was under lockdown like a fantasy movie. During that period social media played a crucial role in connecting people under home arrest conditions, helped students to continue their studies and others in many more ways. People adopt social media as an indistinguishable part of their life during COVID-19 and after that. This side of social media shows its positive impact on the students and society. But there lies a dark side of social media upon its users, especially on students. Many studies shows that students suffer from many physical and psychological problems (Valkenburg *et al.*, 2009, Wanajak, 2011; Gurusamy, 2014; Bhargava & Rani, 2015; Utz & Breuer, 2016; Singh *et al.*, 2017; Saini *et al.*, 2019; Ngien & Jiang, 2021; Ayyıldız & Şahin, 2022; & Dhiman, 2022) ^[27, 29, 13, 3, 26, 24, 22, 20, 1]. We all know that after COVID-19 use of social blooms in a way like never before.

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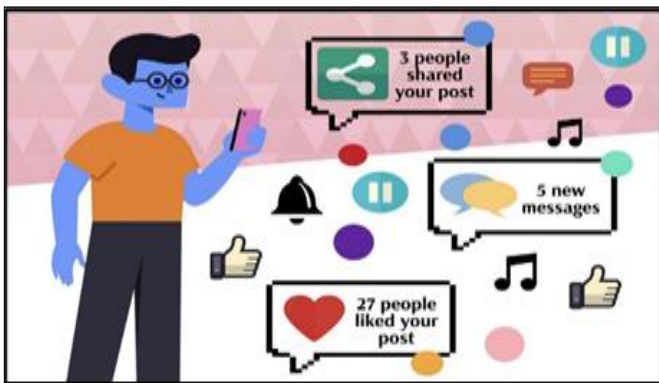
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So, this study was targeted to find the extent of use, level of adoption and its association with socio-economic variables among students before COVID-19.



https://www.google.com/search?q=social+media&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwiG9dXAwuaBAxWrz6ACHZQeARsQ2-cCegQIABAA&oeq=social+media&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAZIECCMQJzIECCMQJzIICAAQgAQQsQMycAgAEIAEELEDmggIABCABBBCxAzIHCAAQigUQQzIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMggIABCABBBCxAzIICAAQgAQQsQNQzwVY5hJg9BV0AXAAeACAAbcBiAHjB5IBAZuNpgBAKABAaoBC2d3cy13aXotaW1nwAEB&scclient=img&ei=IKkiZYbbG6ufg8UPIL2E2AE&bih=715&biw=1519&rlz=1C1CHBF_enIN851IN851&hl=en#imgrc=Ou27GkXCd1uybM



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Materials and Methods

A sample of 300 students, among them 75 students from school and 75 students from college, from two districts, Hisar and Karnal of state Haryana was selected. The data was collected by distributing a questionnaire and conducting interviews of sample students. The questionnaire was prepared to know about the impact of social media on students from farming families. A part of this questionnaire targets the level of adoption of social media by students. Data was analyzed using appropriate statistical methods like frequency and percentage to capture distributions and for association assessment, chi-square test was applied.

Results and Discussion

Among 300 respondents, 39.7% were male while remaining 60.3% were female respondents (Table 1). Respondents were

categorized in to 3 groups based on age, 50% of respondents belongs to age group of 14-17 years, 30.7% respondents belong to age group 18-21 years and the last age group 22-25 years contained 19.3% respondents (Table 1).

Table 1: Gender and Age-wise distribution of respondents

(n=300)			
Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age	14-17 Years	150	50%
	18-21 Years	92	30.7%
	22-25 Years	58	19.3%
Gender	Male	119	39.7%
	Female	181	60.3%
	Transgender	00	00%

Data also revealed that 67.7% respondents belong to nuclear family and remaining 32.3% belong to joint families as shown in figure 1.

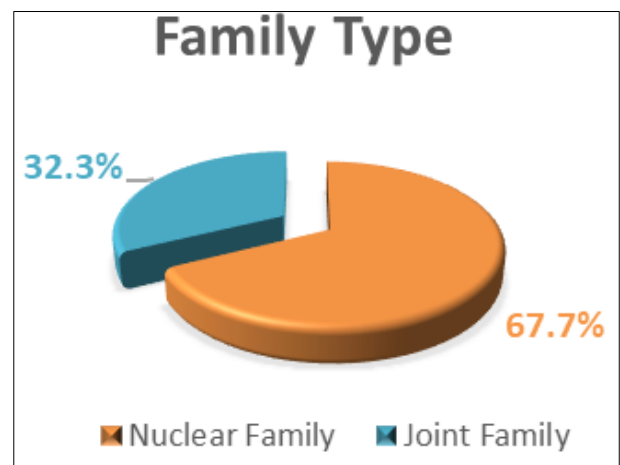


Fig 1: Family type of respondents.

During COVID-19, with no doubt the use of social media increased at an alarming rate. Students use social media sites for different purposes (Cinelli *et al.*, 2020; Dutta 2020; Nallamothu and Bhimaraju, 2020; Luo *et al.*, 2021; Khan *et al.*, 2022) [6, 9, 19, 16, 15]. Data from this study showed that even before COVID-19 students have accounts on more than one platform. Data revealed that 32.6% respondents had accounts on one to four platforms, 53.4 % respondents had accounts on up to 6 platforms and 14% respondents had accounts on more than 6 platforms (Table 2). This might be due to that a student gathers information from everywhere or this might be due to FOMO (fear of missing out). Many past studies have shown that the web of social media among the students. Students use access to the social media site according to each other, the content searched, viewed, or shared totally varies from student to student. Social media proved itself a powerful tool for students in various ways. (Junco *et al.*, 2010; Madden and Zickuhr 2011; Ezumah, 2013; Manjunatha, 2013 and Utpal, 2016) [14, 17, 11, 18, 25].

Table 2: Number of applications used by respondents

(n=300)			
S.No.	Number of applications (social media app)	Frequency	Percentage
1	1-4 Applications	98	32.6
2	5-6 Applications	160	53.4
3	More than 6 applications	42	14.0

To find the level of adoption of social media by respondents was another objective of this study. Level of adoption was calculated on 3 bases, in which first was number of years of adoption, second was number of social media applications used and third was the time spent on social media applications. Data revealed that 38% of respondents showed a high level of adoption, 33% respondent showed medium level of adoption and remaining 29% of respondents showed low level of adoption of social media (Table 3).

Table 3: Level of adoption of the respondents regarding social media before covid-19

(n=300)			
S.No.	Level of adoption	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (23-45)	87	29.0
2	Medium (46-69)	99	33.0
3	High (70-93)	114	38.0

The last and most important aspect of this study was to examine the correlation between socio-economic variables and level of adoption before COVID-19 and several significant findings emerged from the analysis (Table 4). Firstly, age was identified as a significant factor, with a chi-square value of 12.02*. This suggests that different age groups had varying levels of adoption, indicating that younger respondents might have been more inclined to adopt social media compared to older individuals. In contrast, factors such as gender (Dzandu *et al.*, 2016) [10] and caste were found to be non-significant, meaning that they did not have a discernible influence on the adoption level. This implies that social media adoption was not significantly affected by these demographic characteristics.

Family type and family size both exhibited significance in relation to adoption, as evidenced by chi-square values of 8.54* and 13.23* respectively. This suggests that the structure and size of the family played a role in determining the adoption level, with certain family dynamics possibly encouraging or inhibiting social media adoption (Correa, 2016) [7].

Education emerged as a crucial factor, with a chi-square value of 14.80*. This finding indicates that higher levels of education were associated with higher levels of social media adoption, suggesting that individuals with more education

were more likely to adopt these platforms (Chugh and Ruhi, 2018; Shepherd and Lane, 2019) [5, 23].

The number of siblings also showed a significant association with adoption, as indicated by a chi-square value of 15.77. This implies that as the number of siblings in a family increased, so did the adoption level of social media platforms, highlighting a potential influence of family dynamics on adoption decisions.

Subsidiary occupation was found to be significant, suggesting that individuals engaged in such occupations had a higher level of social media adoption compared to those in other types of work.

Annual income displayed a direct relationship with adoption levels, with 43.7% of respondents earning more than 2 lacs annually exhibiting a high adoption level. This indicates that higher income was associated with a greater propensity to adopt social media. Landholding also showed significance, with a chi-square value of 16.08*, suggesting that individuals with larger landholdings were more likely to adopt social media platforms (Bandiera, and Rasul, 2006; Ramirez, 2013) [2, 21].

Social participation was identified as significant, with 52.5% of respondents who were part of more than one organization exhibiting a high adoption level. This underscores the role of social engagement and community involvement in influencing social media adoption.

Mass media exposure was found to be influential, as indicated by a chi-square value of 10.89*, highlighting the impact of exposure to various media outlets on the likelihood of adopting social media. Lastly, socio-economic status was significant, with 41.9% of respondents with a high socio-economic status exhibiting a high adoption level. This suggests that individuals with higher socio-economic status were more inclined to adopt social media. This analysis indicates that a range of socio-economic factors including age, family type, family size, and education, number of siblings, subsidiary occupation, annual income, landholding, social participation, mass media exposure, and socio-economic status were all connected to the level of adoption of social media among respondents before the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of socio-economic factors in shaping social media adoption patterns in the pre-pandemic era.

Table 4: Association between socio-economic variables and level of adoption of the respondents about social media before covid-19

Socio-economic variable	Particulars	Level of knowledge			
		Low	Medium	High	Total
Age (years)	14-17	54 (36.0)	49 (32.7)	47 (31.3)	150 (50.0)
	18-21	24 (26.1)	32 (34.8)	36 (39.2)	92 (30.7)
	22-25	9 (15.5)	18 (31.1)	31 (53.4)	58 (19.3)
	Total	87 (29.0)	99 (33.0)	114 (38.0)	300 (100)
$\chi^2=12.02^*$					
Gender	Male	31 (26.1)	37 (31.1)	51 (42.8)	119 (39.7)
	Female	56 (30.9)	62 (34.3)	63 (34.8)	181 (60.3)
$\chi^2=2.03$					
Caste	General	57 (28.2)	71 (35.2)	74 (36.6)	202 (67.4)
	Backward class	20 (32.8)	17 (27.8)	24 (39.4)	61 (20.3)
	Scheduled caste	10 (27.1)	11 (29.7)	16 (43.2)	37 (12.3)
$\chi^2=1.67$					
Family type	Nuclear	68 (33.5)	68 (33.5)	67 (33.0)	203 (67.7)
	Joint	19 (19.5)	31 (31.9)	47 (48.5)	97 (32.3)
$\chi^2=8.54^*$					
Family size	Up to 4 members	66 (34.7)	63 (33.2)	61 (32.1)	190 (63.3)
	5-8 members	11 (14.8)	24 (32.5)	39 (52.7)	74 (24.7)

	Above 8 members	10 (27.8)	12 (33.3)	14 (38.9)	36 (12.0)
	$\chi^2=13.23^*$				
Education of the respondents	Secondary	27 (46.5)	19 (32.8)	12 (20.7)	58 (19.3)
	Senior secondary	23 (25.0)	34 (36.9)	35 (38.1)	92 (30.7)
	Graduation	23 (25.8)	27 (30.4)	39 (43.8)	89 (29.7)
	Post-graduation	14 (22.9)	19 (31.2)	28 (45.9)	61 (20.3)
	$\chi^2=14.80^*$				
Number of siblings	Single child	27 (46.5)	19 (32.8)	12 (20.7)	58 (19.3)
	One siblings	24 (23.2)	40 (38.4)	40 (38.4)	104 (34.7)
	Two siblings	19 (26.4)	21 (29.2)	32 (44.4)	72 (24.0)
	Three or more	17 (25.8)	19 (28.8)	30 (45.4)	66 (22.0)
	$\chi^2=15.77^*$				
Subsidiary occupation	Nil	57 (35.6)	50 (31.3)	53 (33.1)	160 (53.3)
	Service	21 (25.6)	31 (37.8)	30 (36.6)	82 (27.34)
	Small scale enterprise	9 (15.5)	18 (31.1)	31 (53.4)	58 (19.3)
	$\chi^2=11.85^*$				
Income	Up to 1 lac	48 (36.9)	42 (32.3)	40 (30.8)	130 (43.3)
	1 - 2 lac	27 (27.3)	29 (29.3)	43 (43.43)	99 (33.0)
	More than 2 lac	12 (16.9)	28 (39.4)	31 (43.7)	71 (23.7)
	$\chi^2=10.97^*$				
Land holding	Marginal (up to 1 ha)	49 (36.6)	43 (32.1)	42 (31.3)	134 (44.7)
	Small (1-2 ha)	24 (30.0)	26 (32.5)	30 (37.5)	80 (26.7)
	Semi medium (2-4 ha)	3 (6.7)	18 (40.0)	24 (53.3)	45 (15.0)
	Medium (4-10 ha)	11 (26.8)	12 (29.3)	18 (43.9)	41 (13.6)
	$\chi^2=16.08^*$				
Social participation of family members	Not a member	61 (34.5)	60 (33.9)	56 (31.5)	177 (59.0)
	Member of one organization	13 (16.2)	25 (31.3)	42 (52.5)	80 (26.7)
	Member of more than one organization	13 (30.2)	14 (32.6)	16 (37.2)	43 (14.3)
	$\chi^2=12.76^*$				
Mass media exposure of the respondents	Low	42 (39.6)	34 (32.1)	30 (28.3)	106 (35.3)
	Medium	25 (25.3)	32 (32.3)	42 (42.4)	99 (33.0)
	High	20 (21.1)	33 (34.7)	42 (44.2)	95 (31.7)
	$\chi^2=10.89^*$				
Socio-economic status of the respondents	Low	45 (36.3)	40 (32.3)	39 (31.4)	124 (41.3)
	Medium	32 (29.9)	31 (28.9)	44 (41.2)	107 (35.7)
	High	10 (14.5)	28 (40.6)	31 (44.9)	69 (23.0)
	$\chi^2=11.60^*$				

*Significant at a 5% level of significance

Conclusion

In conclusion, the level of adoption of social media before the COVID-19 pandemic was influenced by a combination of socio-economic factors. Age, education, family type, family size, subsidiary occupation, annual income, landholding, social participation, mass media exposure, and socio-economic status all played significant roles in determining the extent to which individuals embraced social media. Younger age, higher education, certain family dynamics, specific occupations, higher income levels, larger landholdings, active social engagement, exposure to mass media, and a higher socio-economic status were associated with higher levels of social media adoption. These findings highlight the complexity of the factors influencing social media adoption and provide valuable insights into the pre-pandemic landscape of digital connectivity and engagement.

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