

Social Media Usage and the Factors Influencing Academic Use – an Exploratory Study of Higher Education Institution’s Students

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part in the life of millennials. These are the media platforms meant for its users. In the recent years, students are widely using the social media platforms for keeping connected, socializing, sharing information, learning new skills and the like. The main aim of this study is to explore the usage of social media platforms by the Higher education institution’s students in Goa. The study examines the factors influencing the use of social media platforms in academics. Quantitative research design method was used for the study. A survey was conducted and 215 responses were received. The data was analyzed using chi-square analysis and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The results revealed that, students spent almost 2-3 hours per day on social media and the most used platform was Whatsapp. Social media platforms contributes significantly in academics by creating academic awareness, facilitating the networking among academic community and the employer community and provides a great learning support in academics.

Keywords: social media, academics, whatsapp, facebook, career, students

1. Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of life of today’s youngsters. With the advent of Web 2.0 technology and the rise in the use of smart phones, usage of social media has taken a big leap. Social media platforms were launched with an intention of keeping people connected on virtual platform and to socialize. Over the recent years, social media platforms, apart from communicating online have been extensively used for entertainment, sharing knowledge, seeking information (Asiedu & Badu, 2018), gather news updates (Perez-Carballo & Blaszczyński, 2014), to improve learning and academic performance (Ali, Yaacob, Al-Amin Bin Endut, & Langove, 2017), changing the learning style and engaging in online courses (Al-Mukhaini, Al-Qayoudhi, & Al-Badi, 2014). Social media platforms play an important role in academics and supporting academic activities and engagements. Social media incorporates Social networking sites, media sharing sites, instant messaging services and blogging. These incorporate Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Snapchat, You Tube and many more.

The aim of this study is to explore the usage of social media platforms and the factors influencing the use of social media for academic purpose by the students of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Goa, which incorporate Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Professional and Doctoral Students. The study makes an attempt to investigate

- 1) Impact of demographic variables on the usage of Social media platforms [time spent, preferred platform, purpose] by the students of HEIs.
- 2) Factors influencing the use of social media platforms for academic purpose by the students of HEIs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Usage of Social Media among the student community

According to the Global Digital report, January 2019, there are 3.48 billion social media users, with the worldwide total growing by 288 million (9 percent). According to this report, Google continues to dominate the list of most visited websites followed by social media platforms, YouTube and Facebook. In the recent years, with the launch of various new social media platforms and its growing popularity has drawn the attention of the researchers. Studies have been carried out to investigate the most popular social media platforms among the student community. The studies revealed that, the most popular social media platforms used by the students are Whatsapp due to its features like ease of use, low cost and instant messaging, (Ogaji, Okoyeukwu, Wanjiku, Osiro, & Ogutu, 2017), it requires less data to operate and instant responses are received on the messages (Asiedu & Badu, 2018). You Tube follows after Whatsapp, for the purpose of entertainment and to deviate from the traditional classroom learning and improve their academic performance (Al-Mukhaini et al., 2014; Ali et al., 2017; Ogaji et al., 2017). Facebook is the third most preferred platform by the student community (Mathiyalakan, Heilman, White, & Brusa, 2016; Ogaji et al., 2017) (Wang, Niiya, Mark, Reich, & Warschauer, 2015), followed by Twitter (Alwagait, Shahzad, & Alim, 2015) and Instagram (Al-Bahrani, Patel, & Sheridan, 2015). Men use Twitter significantly more often than the women and women use Facebook more often than men (Perez-Carballo & Blaszczyński, 2014).

The studies have further explored the time spent on social media platforms and the purpose for which it is used. The results reveal that, students spend longer time on YouTube and Whatsapp (10 hours daily) (Ogaji et al., 2017) for the purpose of sharing information, leaning, communication, entertainment and socialising (Ali et al., 2017). Social media gives the student community an out of the class learning experience, that improves the learning outcomes (Al-Bahrani et al., 2015). The factors responsible for the continuance usage of social media platforms are ease of use, usefulness and satisfaction of social media (Idemudia, Raisinghani, & Samuel-Ojo, 2018). Social media platforms facilitates knowledge sharing, thereby it influences students creativity and improves the research and innovation in Higher Educational Institutions (Arif, Nunes, Qaisar, & Kanwal, 2019).

In the present study, we explore unique research question, the impact of demographics on the usage of social media covering the **time spent on social media, preferred social media platform and the purpose for which the social media platform** is used by the students from Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Goa. The research question (RQ) and the hypothesis (H1) formulated are as under:

RQ 1: Is there any impact of demographic variables on the usage of social media [Time Spent, Preferred Platform and Purpose] among the students of HEIs in Goa.

H1: There is no significant difference between the usage of social media [*Time Spent, Preferred Platform and Purpose*] and the demographic variables [*age, gender, degree pursuing and the faculty/discipline*] among the students of HEIs in Goa.

2.2 Usage of social media and academics

Since the advent of Social Media platforms, and social networking sites, the online population has been growing as well as youngsters spending more time in socialising on these platforms. Role of social media and its relation with academics have been a topic of research interest in the recent years as the diversity in education sector and learning behaviour is transforming with the changes in technology. The researchers have studied the relationship between the usage of social media and its impact on the performance of the students in academics (Al-Yafi, El-Masri, & Tsai, 2018; Alwagait et al., 2015; Giunchiglia, Zeni, Gobbi, Bignotti, & Bison, 2018; Lau, 2017; Ogaji et al., 2017; Perez-Carballo & Blaszczyński, 2014). The results revealed that, there exists a negative relationship between the usage of social media and academic performance. Gender-wise usage of social media and its impact on academic performance revealed that, males are more addicted to social media than females, but the academic performance of females is negatively influenced by social media (Alnjadat, Hmaid, Samha, Kilani, & Hasswan, 2019). According to (Alwagait et al., 2015), increasing use of social networking sites do not display the decline in the academic performance of the students. Other factors like time management and sports contribute to the negative academic performance of the students besides the excessive social media use. Students prefer to use social media on weekends as there exists lot of academic pressure during weekdays (Ogaji et al., 2017). Effective management of time contributes to the best performance in academics.

Social media has proven to be an effective tool to communicate with many students. The students use social media more frequently than the email or learning management system. Students are concerned with the privacy but are willing to connect with the faculty on social media (Al-Bahrani et al., 2015). Using social media for non-academic purposes and multitasking proved to have negative impact on the academic performance of the students (Lau, 2017). In a study done by (Mathiyalakan et al., 2016) African American and Hispanic students perceptions of the use of Facebook for academics was compared. The

results stated that, though they perceive it to have a negative impact on academics, it's not directly reflected into their academic grades.

The flip side of social media is, it could be a distraction in the learning activities of students (Ali et al., 2017). Some of the factors extracted from this study were individual psychological characteristics such as personality, social influence, information quality, system usefulness, satisfaction, age and gender. (Alshuaibi, Alshuaibi, Shamsudin, & Arshad, 2018) study indicated cognitive engagement mediated the relationship between social media and academic performance. According to this study, social media has a potential to be used in learning environment as it promotes cognitive engagement of students in class and subsequently their academic performance and success. (Al-Mukhaini et al., 2014) stated that, students are fully engaged in the new technologies of Web 2.0, and they find it very attractive, enjoyable and useful to understand the topic better. Students prefer to transit from a traditional learning style of isolated environments to more dynamic and social environment of online learning. Students were affected positively by using social networking tools, as it gave them a chance to control their own leaning environment. (Lim, Agostinho, Harper, & Chicharo, 2014) investigated the perceptions, acceptance, usage and access to social media by the students and academics in higher education. The results reveal a closed match of the ownership, amount of hours spent online, types of social media technologies used and the pattern of usage. (Bharucha, 2018) study revealed four clear themes from the in-depth interviews of business students. These include; wide-spread usage of social media, definite usage in business education, strengths of social media in business education and the flip side of learning on social media.

To summarise, plenty studies have been carried out to understand the impact of social media usage on academic performance and the results revealed it has not impact on the academic performance. Other factors like participation in sports, miss-management of time, use of social media for non-academic purposes has a negative impact on the student's academic performance. The literature does not make a mention on the factors that cause students to use social media for academic purposes. In this study, an attempt is made to identify the factors that cause students to use social media for academic purpose. The research question (**RQ**) is formulated as under:

RQ 2: What factors cause the students of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to use social media for the academic purposes?

3. Methodology

This study employed the quantitative research design as a method of study. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire prepared using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of three sections; the first section collected the data on the demographic variables viz; age, gender, degree pursued and the name of the discipline/faculty the student belongs to. The second section dealt with three aspects viz; time spent on social media platforms, preferred social media platform and the purpose for which the social media platform is used by the student. The third section consisted of 28

statements related to the factors influencing the use of social media in academics. These statements were author's compilation. The respondents were asked to rate the statements on a 5-point Likert scale with a rating of 1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree. The data was retrieved from the students of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Goa pursuing graduation, post graduation, doctoral degree and professional courses from January to March 2020. The Google forms were circulated via Social Media platforms (Whatsapp and Facebook) to the respondents. 215 responses were collected based on convenience sampling method. The response rate was 100%.

Research questions and hypothesis formulated based on the previous related works have been presented in the earlier sections. The data gathers was analysed using SPSS software version 20. The statistical techniques applied to the formulated research questions are as follows:

RQ 1: Chi-square test was applied to study the relationship between the demographics and the usage of social media platforms by the students of HEIs in Goa. Further, the time spent on social media, preferred social media platform among the students and the purpose of using social media platforms have been presented in the form of charts to give a graphical presentation.

RQ 2: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) has been used to investigate the factors that influence the usage of social media platforms in academics. This technique would bring up few significant factors that are influencing the usage of social media in academics by the students of HEIs.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Demographic profile of the HEIs students and the usage of social media

The demographic profile of the students from HEIs and the time spent on social media platform is displayed in Table 1. The major share of demographic variables is as under: 125 (58.13%) respondents belong to the age group of 22 to 25 years, 118 (54.88%) respondents are females, 84 (39%) respondents are pursuing post-graduation degree and 125 (58.13%) respondents belong to the faculty of commerce and management studies.

There exists no significant association/ relationship between the time spent on social media and the demographics age ($\chi^2=17.26$, $p>0.05$) and gender ($\chi^2=2.25$, $p>0.05$). There exists a significant association/ relationship between the time spent on social media platform and the degree pursued ($\chi^2=32.65$, $p<0.05$) as well as the discipline of studies ($\chi^2=37.94$, $p<0.05$).

Table 1. Demographic Distribution and Time Spent on Social Media

Variable	Group	Frequency of using Social Media						Total	χ^2 (p)
		< 1 hr	1-2 hrs	2-3 hrs	3-4 hrs	4-5 hrs	> 5 hrs		
Age	15-18 yrs	0	1	0	1	1	0	3	17.26 (0.30)
	19-21 yrs	5	17	35	9	6	4	76	
	22-25 yrs	12	24	35	22	15	18	126	

	25 and above	1	2	4	2	0	0	9	
Gender	Male	7	18	35	18	8	10	96	2.25 (0.81)
	Female	11	26	39	16	14	12	118	
Pursuing Programme	Graduation	5	17	35	12	7	4	80	32.65* (0.03)
	Post Graduation	7	12	28	13	12	12	84	
	PhD	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	
	Professional Degree	0	2	4	2	0	3	11	
	Others	6	10	7	7	3	3	36	
Faculty	Commerce and Management	10	29	32	20	17	17	125	37.94* (0.04)
	Science	1	3	13	3	2	0	22	
	Social Science	0	1	6	2	0	1	10	
	Languages	1	2	14	1	1	0	19	
	Professional Courses	4	4	6	4	1	2	21	
	Others	2	5	3	4	1	2	17	

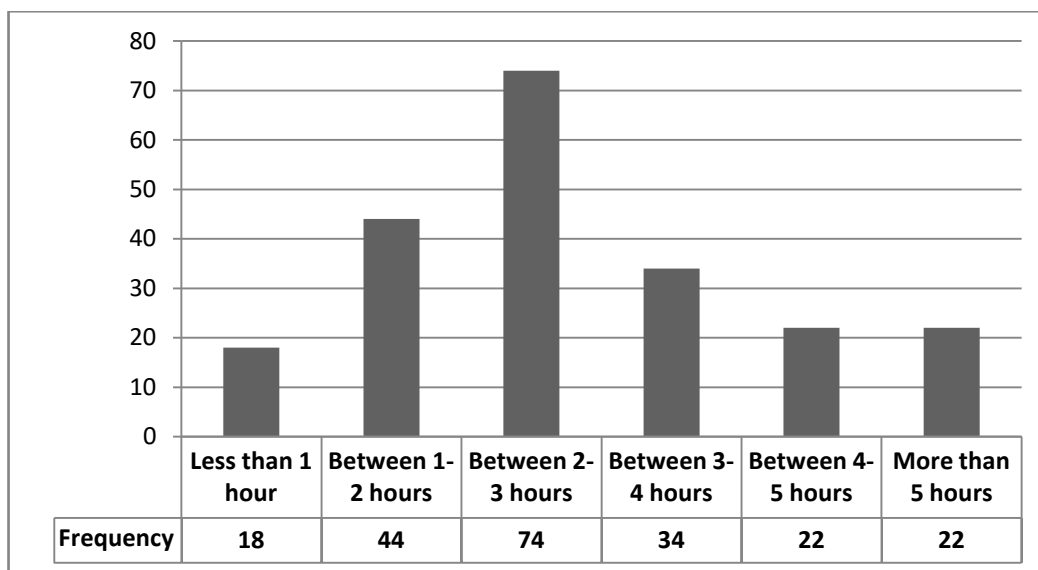


Figure 1. Time Spent (daily) on Social Media

Figure 1 exhibits the time spent by the students of HEIs on various social media platforms on daily basis. 74 respondents (35%) reported that, they spent between 2-3 hours daily on social media, followed by 44 respondents (20%) said that, they spent 1-2 hours on social media.

Table 2 displays the association of demographic variables with the preferred social media platform. There exists no significant association / relationship between the preferred social media platform and age ($\chi^2=29.28$, $p>0.05$), degree pursued ($\chi^2=31.57$, $p>0.05$) and the faculty/discipline ($\chi^2=44.16$, $p>0.05$). There

exists significant association / relationship between the preferred social media platform and gender ($\chi^2=20.61, p<0.05$).

Table 2. Demographic Distribution and the Preferred Social Media Platform

Variable	Group	Preferred Social Media Platform							χ^2 (p)
		T	WA	FB	YT	LI	SC	IG	
Age	15-18 yrs	0	3	1	1	0	0	2	29.28 (0.10)
	19-21 yrs	6	71	41	65	19	17	38	
	22-25 yrs	17	122	85	107	34	22	56	
	25 and above	0	8	7	5	1	0	3	
Gender	Male	14	91	69	83	27	10	39	20.61* (0.00)
	Female	9	113	65	95	27	29	60	
Pursuing Programme	Graduation	10	75	44	65	18	19	40	31.57 (0.29)
	Post Graduation	8	81	60	73	27	15	38	
	PhD	1	3	2	3	0	0	2	
	Professional Degree	3	11	7	9	4	3	4	
	Others	1	34	21	28	5	2	15	
Faculty	Commerce & Management	10	120	71	103	27	26	56	44.16 (0.13)
	Science	5	21	18	18	11	4	9	
	Social Science	2	8	9	7	4	0	4	
	Languages	3	18	14	17	5	5	10	
	Professional Courses	2	20	12	17	4	2	9	
	Others	1	17	10	16	3	2	11	

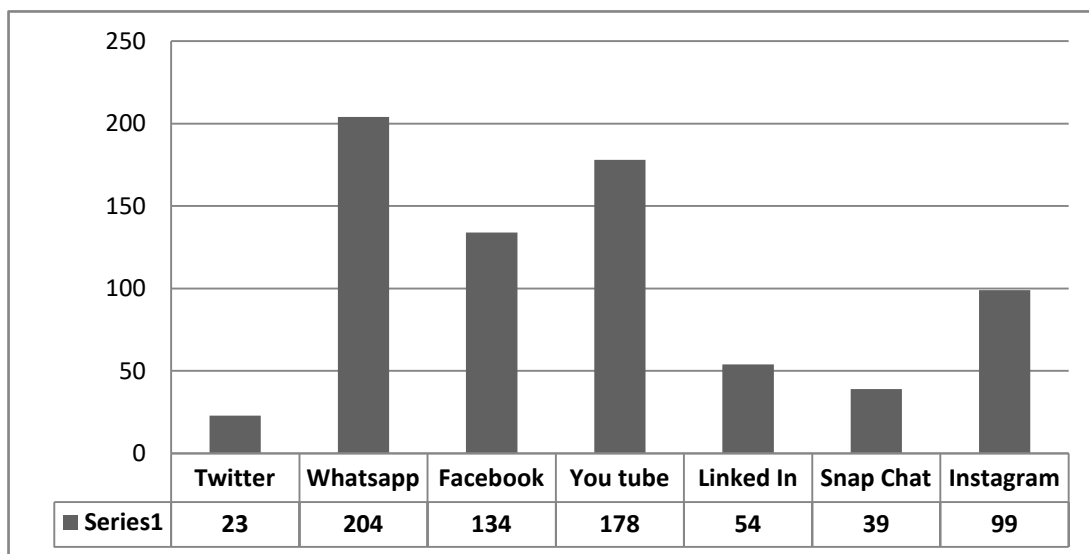


Figure 2. Preferred Social Media Platform

Figure 2 demonstrates the most preferred social media platform among the HEIs students in Goa. 204 respondents (95%) used Whatsapp for instant messaging, sharing media, communicating with students. Whatsapp groups of students are being used extensively to remain updated with the academics and academic related activities. These groups are used to share study materials, to connect with the faculty and to plan, to discuss the academic and other extra-curricular activities. 83% of the respondents use YouTube followed by Facebook (63%) and Instagram (46%) user accounts. Twitter seemed least popular platform among the students recording usage by 10% respondents. The findings are in par with (Asiedu & Badu, 2018) and (Ogaji et al., 2017)'s findings.

Table 3 indicates the association of demographic variables with the purpose for which the social media platform is used. There exists significant association / relationship between the purpose of using social media platform and gender ($\chi^2=24.03$, $p<0.05$), degree pursued ($\chi^2=39.41$, $p<0.05$) and the faculty/discipline ($\chi^2=37.53$, $p<0.05$). There exists no significant association / relationship between the age and the purpose of using social media ($\chi^2=21.76$, $p>0.05$).

Table 3. Demographic Distribution and the Purpose of Using Social Media

Variable	Group	Purpose of using Social Media					χ^2 (p)
		Academic	Gaming & Entertainment	News & Updates	Information search	Socializing	
Age	15-18 yrs	1	2	0	1	3	21.76 (0.11)
	19-21 yrs	46	65	36	57	57	
	22-25 yrs	74	102	80	92	93	
	25 and above	2	7	5	6	5	
Gender	Male	50	83	65	60	67	24.03* (0.00)
	Female	73	93	56	96	91	
Pursuing Programme	Graduation	49	65	40	59	60	39.41* (0.00)
	Post Graduation	57	71	49	59	60	
	PhD	3	2	1	3	3	
	Professional Degree	6	10	7	9	11	
	Others	8	28	24	26	24	
Faculty	Commerce & Management	62	99	71	93	88	37.53* (0.05)
	Science	18	21	13	16	20	
	Social Science	8	9	7	6	8	
	Languages	15	16	6	14	15	
	Professional Courses	12	14	13	15	15	

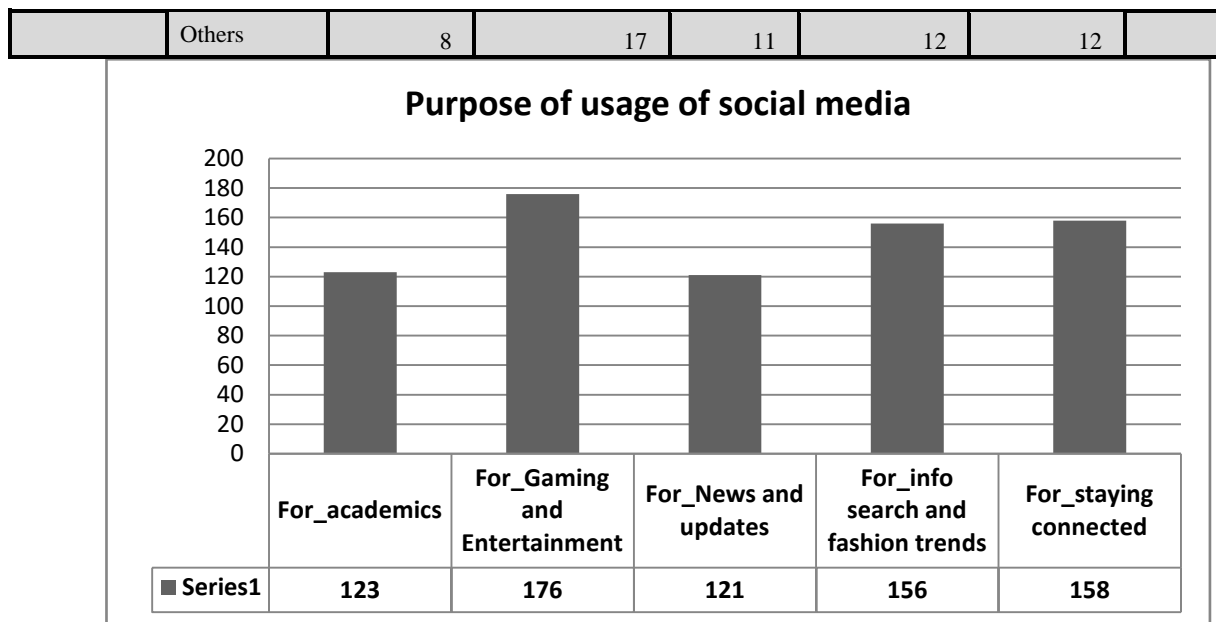


Figure 3. Purpose of usage of Social Media

Figure 3 summarises the results of the purpose of using social media platforms. 83% of the respondents used it for the purpose of Entertainment and gaming, followed by 74% respondents use it to stay connected with their family and friends, 73% said that, they use social media for searching for information, exploring new things and to keep up-to-date with current fashion trends.

With reference to the RQ1 and the hypothesis formulated, there exists a significant difference between usage of social media and certain demographic variables viz., time spent on social media and degree pursued and the discipline of studies. Based on the faculty/discipline a student belongs to, he/she is spending more time [2-3 hours daily] on the social media, gender has a significant association with the preferred social media platform. Whatsapp is the most preferred social media platform used by male and female category, followed by YouTube and Facebook. Whatsapp occupies the first rank among the preferred social media due to its instant messaging service. Thirdly, there exists a significant relationship between the gender, degree pursued, faculty/discipline and the purpose of using social media.

4.2 Factor analysis of the usage of Social media in academics

The factors influencing the students to use social media for academic purposes are examined using Exploratory factor analysis. The results extracted four significant factors [see Table 4] viz., **Factor 1 (F1): Academic awareness, Factor 2 (F2): Academic Networking and Career Opportunities, Factor 3 (F3): Learning support in Academics, Factor 4 (F4): Ease of use.** These four factors explained 56.85% of the total variance. KMO measure of sampling os 0.87 indicates that, the data is good for factor analysis. KMO value of more than 0.60 is the indication that, Exploratory factor analysis can be performed on the dataset and the data is useful at 1% significance level.

Factor Analysis (Overall $\alpha = 0.87$, $n=28$)		F1	F2	F3	F4
F1: Academic Awareness ($\alpha=0.71$)	Awareness on online educational platforms.	0.77			
	Awareness on Career opportunities available.	0.65			
	Awareness about conferences/seminars/workshops.	0.64			
	Provides updated knowledge in the area of specialization.	0.52			
F2: Academic Networking and Career Opportunities ($\alpha=0.74$)	Helps in knowing prospective employer.		0.77		
	Helps me in finding a suitable job.		0.76		
	Helps to create identity in the digital world.		0.63		
	Helps to network with academic community.		0.62		
F3: Learning support in Academics ($\alpha=0.66$)	Gather additional information on the courses learnt on social media.			0.78	
	Use social media to excel in academics.			0.71	
	Use social media for preparing assignments and seminar presentations.			0.58	
F4: Ease of Use ($\alpha=0.64$)	Prefer e-learning than traditional classroom learning				0.79
	Learning on social media gives a wide variety of courses to choose.				0.61
	Learning is easier and simpler on social media platforms.				0.50
KMO measure of sampling adequacy		0.87			
Eigen Values		5.565	1.367	1.144	1.021
Total Variance Explained		16.552	15.954	12.299	12.052
Cumulative Variance Explained		16.552	32.506	44.805	56.857

The factors that influence students to use social media platforms for academic purpose is;

F1: Academic Awareness - the social media aids in creating academic awareness, it gives exposure to the students about various academic events happening at different places, it helps in providing additional knowledge in the area of specialization. Students use social media platforms in academics to stay up-to-date with the changes happening in the area of specialization. They get to know the information on various workshops, conferences, seminars, events happening at different institutes and places. Social media exposes the students to various online educational platforms, online courses, free courses offered by various platforms like courser, edx, NPTEL, SWAYAM, udemy, unacademy etc.

F2: Academic Networking and Career opportunities - Social media facilitates networking among the academic community through various Whatsapp and Facebook groups. It facilitates the students to find a suitable job thereby assisting them in making a career. Employers look out for profiles on social media platforms before the recruitment. Social media enables the students to connect with the prospective employers. Social media platforms are used by the students for networking and to explore the career opportunities in their respective field. LinkedIn is a professional networking site that helps in findings the prospective employer, connecting with the industry community as well as the academic community. LinkedIn gives exposure to various employers in the industry and helps in finding a suitable employment for the user.

F3: Learning Support in Academics - Social media platforms assist the students in various academic activities and provide a learning support. It aids in preparation of assignments and seminar presentations, thereby helps the student to excel in academics. Students use social media to gather additional information required for preparing their assignments, project reports, seminars and other academic activities. YouTube platform provides such support. It provides enormous online video study material on the respective subject. Facebook groups aids in extension of knowledge in the respective subject.

F4: Ease of Use - Finally, social media platforms are popular due to its navigation and ease of use. These virtual platforms are easy to use and browse, it makes learning easier and simpler. Students stated that, all these social media platforms are easier to use and simple to understand. They prefer e-learning on social media than the traditional mode of learning by attending classes. Learning is more easy and simple with social media.

5. Directions for future research

The present study has contributed to the research of social media and academics by identifying various factors that influence the use of social media platforms among the students of higher educational institutions. This study was limited to the students of Goa, it can be taken up further to a larger sample size

and the use of social media in academics can be studied across different universities in various regions.

The present study bring out the finding that, there exists as association or relationship between the Degree pursued and the usage of social media as well as the Discipline of studies and the usage of social media, this relationship can be further analysed and examined in detail across various disciplines.

6. Conclusion

Social media platforms are been widely used in academics in the recent years. The present study examined the usage of social media and the factors contributing to its usage in academics by the Higher Educational Institution's students from Goa. The present study has contributed to the existing literature on social media and academics by identifying various factors influencing the social media in academic usage.

The study was conducted by retrieving the data from students of Higher Educational Institution's pursuing undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and doctoral degrees. The various parameters involved were time spent on social media platforms on daily basis, most preferred platform of social media used by the students, and the purpose of using various social media platforms. The results revealed that, students spend almost 2-3 hours per day on social media. The main purpose for which they use it is for entertainment and gaming followed by connecting and socialising with friends and family. The most preferred social media platform is Whatsapp followed by YouTube and Facebook. Twitter and Instagram are the least used sites/apps.

The usage of social media was analysed across the demographics and found that, there exists as association between the degree pursued and the usage as well as the Faculty/Discipline studies and the usage of social media platforms.

The study also explored the factors responsible for the use of social media in academics, the findings were social media has a significant role in creating academic awareness among the students about the career opportunities available, making the students aware about the advancements in their field of specialization, helps them in finding a suitable job and a career, helps in networking with the prospective employers. Social media proves to be a great support in academic activities. It aids the students in preparation of project reports and assignments. Students can pursue Massive online open courses (MOOCs) from various education platforms. It can be concluded that, social media has a significant role to play in academics, with the outbreak of COVID-19; the learning on social media has taken a different perspective.

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