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## **The Importance of Social Media in Education during COVID-19**

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### **Introduction**

Today, we can see education institutions adapting technological developments into their systems and relying on group resources and mechanisms to improve student life. The use of social media in education helps students, teachers and parents to get more useful information, to connect with learning groups and other educational systems that make education convenient.

Social network tools afford students and institutions with multiple opportunities to improve learning methods. Through these networks, you can incorporate social media plugins that enable sharing and interaction. Students can benefit from online tutorials through YouTube, online courses delivered by universities abroad through Skype and a wide array of resources that are shared through social networks.

There is valuable knowledge to be gained through social media such as analytics and insights on various topics or issues for study purposes. As an educational institution, it is crucial to be active in many social platforms possible, this helps create better student training strategies and shapes student culture.

As a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, most educational institutions shifted to online education. Students and faculty members in many public institutions, particularly those in developing countries, are hampered by the absence of formal online learning management systems. Responding to COVID-19, many institutions in developing countries adopted social media sites to maintain e-learning and sustain education process. The distinction between online and real-world communities is becoming increasingly narrow, especially among the younger generations who have grown up with social media at their fingertips.

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Social media is used in a variety of different sectors by different people. Social media is used for informal social networking or improving social capital and for online engagement and marketing, establishing customer relationships, problem-solving, and grievance resolution [1]. Performance in the industry is due to the successful use of information and communication technologies in today's digital economy. Higher education institutions are not excluded from these continually advancing changes in technology. They should, therefore, not afford to fall behind these innovations since they can not only provide the academic community with useful insights but potentially enhance learning.

According to Hamid et al. [2], social networking can be used for content creation, sharing, engagement, and collective socialization in higher education. Social networking can be enabled to provide instructional materials, educational data, update and promote contact and collaboration. In the same vein, various researchers argued that social media could encourage communication among faculty members and students, support students, strengthen self-confidence and develop a strong partnership and community [4]. Specifically, Mc Carroll and Curran [3] stated that the use of social media is "beneficial to students on a number of levels, facilitating knowledge exchange, alleviating apprehension, enabling socialization and building- community". Moreover, findings of previous studies [5] showed that social media has a great potential to improve the learning experience via active communication and cooperation.

The use of social media in higher education continues to increase and change as supporters discuss its merits and demerits. According to the literature, the use of social media also has some drawbacks. The first disadvantage while using social media is the difficulty to ensure personal privacy. It is easy to keep track of people's online activities through advanced technology, whose security and privacy may be threatened [6]. Moran et al.'s study supported that faculty members had great concerns about keeping their personal lives and profiles safe. In the same vein, students can be discriminated against because of social media usage [7], being negatively or positively biased by their teachers [9], or facing bullying by their peers who are



not friendly [8]. At the same time, the complexity of online communication makes misinterpretations possible and may lead to conflicts. Moreover, some advocated that social media leads to antisocial behavior because all the actions occur in a virtual student world, which is sometimes very different from the real one [10]. Another disadvantage is the difficulty in controlling and monitoring the quality of learning and teaching [11]. Since various external open social media sources are available, it is difficult for academics to monitor each tool to guarantee that the students use them appropriately. Moreover, according to Phillips, social media can interfere with studying time. In other words, the student's attention may be diverted so that valuable study time is left behind. Lastly, there is a possibility of either no Internet access at home or constraints on data downloading from mobile devices [12], a fact that would make the educational process very difficult. Similarly, ref. [13] illustrated the mobility weaknesses of Learning Management Systems since some of them are only available for selected mobile devices.

Academics are responsible for supporting the process of learning by teaching. The role of the teacher is important in providing material, guiding, consolidating, interpreting, and giving feedback to the students to optimize learning [14]. Social media can be used to send course-related information to students; to provide a space where students' academic successes and failures can be shared and discussed; to improve interactions between teachers and students and provide a forum where the teacher can answer any educational question, providing an open-ended way of consulting that may produce interesting or unexpected points of view [15]. Academics can also make content available for future reflection and review through the use of social media, enabling students to revisit and revise their artefacts, enriching the learning experience. The ability to comment on students' creative work, as well as the fact that blogs can be commented on, provide opportunities for input, which helps a learner in his or her search for constructing knowledge [16]. Moreover, the learning process is facilitated by motivating and supporting students. According to Ryan and Deci, motivation refers to doing something interesting or enjoyable. Considering student motivation, they argued that motivation happens when a student is attracted to undertake an assignment for its good, the learning it gains, and

the feelings he/she may have. Motivation is related to students' support. Support can take many forms, including mental, physical, financial, academic, and spiritual, and it is one of the most important factors in student success in education. The instructor must do everything possible to help the student achieve a higher degree of need satisfaction so that he or she can concentrate on learning [17]. Motivation and student dispositions, can affect students' desire to participate in immersive learning [18]. According to the existing research, students want to be encouraged to be less distracted during lectures [19]. It is important to understand the various behaviors, motives, and approaches to learning by this new generation in adult classes in order to improve learning for all students [20]. Researchers identified that social media plays an important role in student motivation, improving the student-learning environment with creative forms of education, and changing the essence of learning boundaries, resulting in student learning growth.

Below new relevant research on the benefits of social networks in the learning processes of Higher Education students is added. The access to knowledge is fundamental [21]. According to Lifelong Learning Agenda (CEC, 2000) information skills as well as motivation and knowledge are of major importance in order to improve and enhance competitiveness and increase employability. Nowadays there is an ongoing argument among academicians as well as in the academic literature that the use of social media and social networking sites would enable collaborative learning and scholarship [22]. Use of social media, social networking sites and smart phones have advantages as well as unique challenges regarding retrieving course material and course subjects, video, applications and so forth. Social networking and social media for collaborative learning have an enormous impact on student academic achievements [23]. Collaborative learning syndicates can improve knowledge and teaching in many educational domains and lead to advanced learning outcomes [24]. In addition, Facebook and Youtube channels use similarly enlarged learning capabilities and understandings of outcomes [25]. Authors in their study [106] argued that ease of internet use can develop cognitive competences through social media availability. In their study, the authors of [24] found that the use of social network and platforms for collaborative learning drives communication and

collaboration with peers, and instructors touch academic achievement in a positive manner. The authors of [26] argued that the social media practice shows an enormous positive impact regarding students' achievements and academic performance due to the fact that networking sites enhance interaction, collaboration, inspiration and creativity as well as facilitate their learning outcomes. Facebook, Youtube, Twitter and Instagram have revealed new forms of communication patterns with enormous possibilities for information and communication channels [27]. In [27] the authors argued that the use of social media platforms and virtual reality in tertiary education produces a sustainable and worth while procedure of technology heightened instruction. The authors of [29] stated that learning management systems simplifies instruction in an online situation. In the current situation of the pandemic the need for online instruction with the application of more sophisticated communication technology and digital interaction in real time by sharing teaching information is more necessary than ever before and the use of the internet for e-learning procedures is favored [31]. Moreover, in [32], the authors have stated that aside from entertainment reasons and societal commitments, social media has increased in the instruction area.

So far, we have presented the social media advantages, and now we are presenting some negative aspects of the digitalization of education, to make the analysis more complete, reflective and realistic. During the pandemic of COVID-19, distance education replaced in person education. There are many benefits of using social media in education and especially those that have to do with limiting the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. We put emphasis on the strengths of the use of social media in education, but it is good to highlight some weaknesses and shortcomings, such as: (a) the huge amount of information, including fake news, which makes it difficult for students to sift through the true information; (b) the long time that students stay in front of computers and laptops; (c) the reduction or even lack of social connections and contacts, which affects the mental health of young people; (d) various health problems resulting from the prolonged use of computers; (e) the additional social divisions resulting from digitalization. Without a doubt, the huge amount of information, including fake news, makes it difficult for students to sift through the true information. Anyone can post any

information on social media. Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter are examples of such social media. Posts on these platforms transmit information very quickly, and it is not easy to determine its validity [33]. They are formulated in such a way as to attract the attention of online friends and constitute an appropriate framework for the dissemination of false news [31].

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed digital platforms as the only means for people to maintain socio-emotional connection [34]. The COVID-19 pandemic came with severe restrictions on social contacts and mandatory lockdowns. As a result, the use of digital devices has multiplied around the world. Consequently, people are being pushed to rely on digital platforms. Education, social contact, education and work, as well as socialization, can only occur online with incredible implications for mental health and user balance. While careful use of digital devices is associated with well-being, excessive screen time is reported to be closely associated with a number of negative mental health outcomes, low emotional stability, isolation, depression and anxiety [35]. It is not strange that the reduction or even lack of social connections and contacts affects the mental health of younger people as well as older people. On a daily basis and around the world people of all ages connect to social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter to communicate with their friends and connect with new online friends. Online friends often do not know each other through their social and professional life. Their connection is through the internet and is not identical to real social life. Social contact brings people closer, they share contact, people can hug each other in joy or sorrow, take a walk together, travel, have a meal, and so forth. In the case of the internet, where the question is communication, people feel indeed alone. Feelings of loneliness, anxiety and stress are not removed. Studies show that social media raises feelings of inadequacy for your life or appearance, fear of loss (FOMO), isolation, depression and anxiety, cyberbullying, self-absorption, and so forth. Learning or tele-learning with the help of Zoom, Teams, WebEx, Google meetings and so forth causes great stress; stress about the conversation, about the appearance, the crisis, the communication and so forth, which affects mental health, especially of young people [36]. In [37], the authors report that very young people have realized

the negative dimensions and negative effects of social media. Young people think that they are addicted to social media and resort to it because they are hunting something that was true, especially during the lockdown period in the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, they report that the lessons and online meetings through Zoom, Teams and WebEx were compulsory and long and exhausting.

### **Discussion**

Social media platforms are among the simplest and most effective means of disseminating information [38]. Over the past decade, social media has become the primary method of mass digital communication across different organizations. The ability to connect with individuals who share similar values, interests, or aspirations is becoming increasingly commonplace because of the internet's ability to facilitate networking. Since students are responsible for their own education in online environments, self-regulation of learning is important for dealing with e-learning[47]. Nevertheless, in the last few years, the world has seen a rise in social media websites, which are "becoming increasingly pervasive in higher education" [39] and have established a new phenomenon on the internet. Students' personal lives have grown increasingly intertwined with their academic pursuits because of remarkable technical breakthroughs and the rapid expansion of social media websites [40]. With the advent of new educational technologies, such as social media, educators can better engage students both inside and outside of the classroom, ultimately affecting their academic performance [41]. However, social media can be a boon for one reason and bane for another, and the educational benefits of incorporating social media into learning situations are debatable. A number of research works [42] in the field have highlighted that the use of social media websites can have a beneficial or negative impact on students' academic performance. Self-motivation is fostered by the informal and autonomous nature of social media. In light of the rapid proliferation of social media platforms in educational systems, scholars and educators have been compelled to examine how these platforms have impacted their education. Many university students and faculty members use social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to share ideas and resources for classroom instruction [43]. The popularity and frequency with which students use

social media shows that, when used effectively, these networks may encourage out-of-class participation, which may ultimately boost academic success [23]. In light of these findings, it appears that students' sense of community in the classroom is intertwined with other aspects of the classroom. Empirical evidence in the field of online education also supports this line of thinking [44].

The negative facets of social media websites have also been elaborately discussed. Using social media in educational settings has come under fire from researchers for its potential impacts on academic performance. Roux and Parry emphasized that time spent on social media can be troublesome and has a detrimental impact on academic achievement, because students spend very little time socializing face to face or in person with other people as they spend more time on social media, and this reduces their communication abilities. Some studies [29,45] concentrated on the impact of social media on Pakistani students' education and on their lifestyles. The study indicated that teenagers' and children's usage of social media could damage their lives and have a detrimental impact on their education [30]. Students' college grades suffered as a result of their excessive use of Facebook. Students' use of Facebook while carrying out schoolwork was found to have a negative impact on their grade average. Researchers found that extracurricular social media use by students, particularly weaker ones, was detrimental to academic performance [25,31]. It is difficult for many educators to implement social media in education because of privacy concerns [4]. Using social media as a teaching tool is more difficult for educators because they must uphold a duty to protect students' privacy [32,33]. Mental health is harmed among pupils who are addicted to social media [34]; they are becoming increasingly depressed and engaging in self-harming behavior because of excessive use of both their smartphones and social media

## Conclusion

COVID-19 raised the value of online learning for higher education institutions. Online learning in higher education is likely to undergo further changes post COVID-19, with the rapid acceleration of digital technology in learning and teaching. This study is one of many current

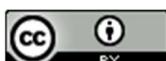
attempts examining the value of online learning amid COVID-19 in developing countries, with a particular focus on the use of social media for e-learning in India. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear that virtual learning is essential for the present and the future. A post-pandemic educational paradigm shift will require more than just infrastructure improvements. It is possible that this paradigm represents a shift away from traditional teaching methods such as lectures and group activities toward more student-centered methods, such as discussions and hands-on activities. The present is an opportune moment to examine and analyse the theoretical benefits of social media and consider their relative advantages for education through technology's ability to improve student learning. Using social media is seen as critical for modern competency by both students and educators alike. The use of social media in educational contexts can promote learning, increase participation and engagement, disseminate content well and improve pedagogy. Additionally, social media websites could be a way for students to build social networks with other students of the same level to support each other globally. It could partially be adopted within the conventional classroom to enhance learning outcomes.

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