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Social Media: Usage and constraints faced by Agricultural Graduates

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ABSTRACT

Social media use has dramatically expanded in India, especially among college students, and is having an impact on both their extracurricular and academic lives.This study surveys 345 agricultural graduates to investigate social media usage patterns, purposes for using social media and challenges. The findings reveal heavy use of WhatsApp and YouTube, moderate use of Instagram and Twitter, and minimal use of blogs. Graduates acknowledge the benefits of social media but face technological and time constraints. They spend considerable time on social media platform, with perceived negative consequences including wasted time on irrelevant activities and health issues.Social media can improve the development, sharing, and socializing of information in higher agricultural education when used appropriately, which will eventually lead to the generation of social capital.

Keywords: *Social media, Agricultural graduates, Usage pattern, Constraints*

INTRODUCTION

Social media encompasses web-based tools for electronic communication that allow users to exchange information individually or in groups, share ideas and opinions, make decisions, and create, store, retrieve, and exchange information. These tools enable the sharing of various forms of content, including text, images, and videos, by anyone in the virtual world (Suchidipata and Saravanan, 2016). Social networking platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Wikis, YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Blogs, and Instagram have become some of the most vital sources of information in today's society (Statista, 2021;Tuckett and Turner, 2016). These platforms allow users to share their views, feelings, activities, events, and interests freely. As of April 2024, approximately 5.44 billion people worldwide were using the internet, representing 67.1 percent of the global population. Among them, 5.07 billion individuals, accounting for 62.6 percent of the world's population, were active users of social media (Statista, 2024). The use of web 2.0-based media facilitates engagement with people in the community, both locally and globally (Baqueeet al., 2020).

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in modern science has been a significant boon to humankind (Gudmundsdottir et al., 2020). Unlike traditional broadcast media, social media uses computer-tailored communication tools that enable users to collaborate, participate, and share content in real-time with others worldwide (Usher et al., 2014; Tuckett & Turner, 2016).Today, social media has become a conventional form of communication worldwide (Thomas et al., 2016). For decades, traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines were the primary sources of information for farmers and others in the agricultural sector. However, in the 21st century, digital tools have revolutionized this landscape, placing control literally in our hands (Lathiya et al., 2015).College students, in particular, are curious and susceptible to the physical, mental, social, and psychological changes they experience as they gain more freedom from parental and familial influences upon leaving school and entering a new phase of life. Most studies on social networking have been conducted in Western countries, where the Internet revolution occurred earlier and the social environment differs significantly from that of India (Saini et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to study the

use of social networking sites (SNSs) in the Indian context.

METHODOLOGY

To analyze the usage of social media and the constraints faced by agricultural graduates, an ex-post-facto study was conducted utilizing a snowball sampling method. This non-probability sampling technique involves current study subjects recruiting future participants from among their acquaintances. This method was chosen to reach a larger and more diverse group of agricultural graduates who use social media.Well-structured questionnaires were designed to collect data. These questionnaires included a range of statements regarding the purposes of social media usage and the constraints faced by the 345 respondents. The statements were derived from a comprehensive review of the literature and inputs from experts in the field. Data collection was conducted through surveys, with respondents completing the structured questionnaires distributed via Google Forms, allowing them to participate at their convenience. This method ensured a broad reach and higher response rates.To determine the severity of the constraints, the Friedman test was employed. Additionally, the Garrett ranking method was used to analyze the various purposes for which agricultural graduates use social media.

The percent position of ranks was calculated using the following formula:

$$Percent\ position\ of\ ranks = \frac{(R - 0.5)100}{N}$$

Where,R= Rank of the individual item in the series.

N= Number of individual items ranked

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Usage pattern of social media platforms among agricultural graduates

Figure 1, titled "Social Media Used by Participants," illustrates the most common social media platforms among participants. Each bar represents a different platform, with the height of the bars indicating the number of participants using each one. The findings show that WhatsApp is the most widely used platform, followed closely by YouTube. Facebook and Instagram also have a high number of users among the participants, while platforms like LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Twitter, and other platforms and blogs have fewer users.

Figure 2 provides insights into the frequency of social media usage among participants across different platforms. It reveals that 316 participants use WhatsApp daily, indicating a high level of engagement with the platform. The figure also includes comparative data for other platforms, highlighting how often participants use YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Twitter, and others. This detailed breakdown of usage patterns helps to understand the daily engagement levels across various social media platforms.

Purposes of using social media by agricultural graduates

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, serving a multitude of purposes for individuals, businesses, and organizations alike. It functions as a powerful tool for personal communication, allowing people to stay connected with family and friends, share experiences, and build relationships across distances.The study aimed to understand the purposes of social media usage among agricultural graduates, using six statements derived from literature reviews and expert opinions. The Henry Garrett Ranking method was employed to determine the most important purposes for which these graduates use social media.

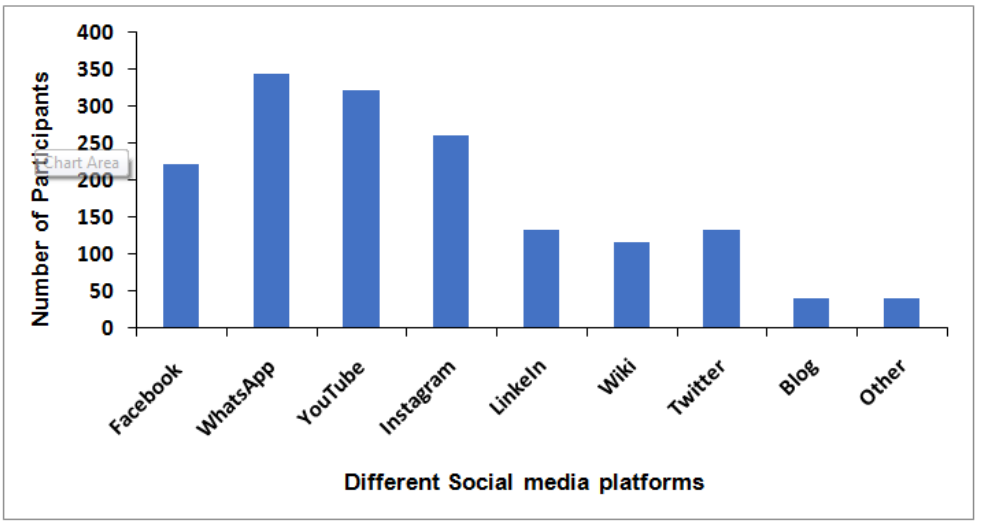


Figure 1. The most common used social media platforms by agricultural graduates

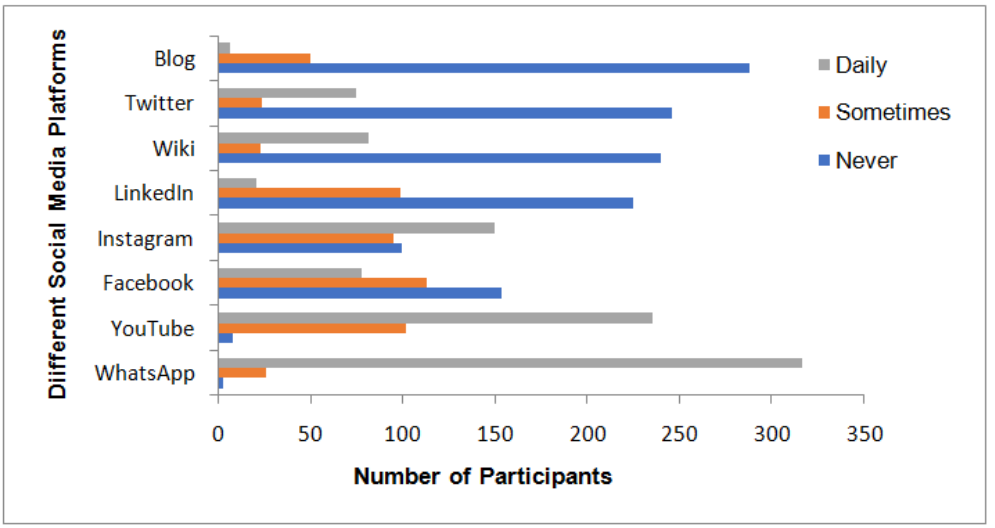


Figure 2. Frequency of social media usage among agricultural graduates

Table 1
Purposes of using social media by agricultural graduates

Sl. No.	Purpose	Mean Score	Rank
1	I use social media sites to connect (chat) with friends and family	60.61	I
2	I visit social media sites to get the latest information on global trend in governance	54.87	II
3	I use social media sites to keep myself occupied when I am bored	48.07	IV
4	I use social media sites to entertain myself	47.74	V
5	I use social media sites for online learning	49.65	III
6	Use to upload status, share ideas, digital photos and videos etc.	38.56	VI

The results presented in Table 1 show that the primary purpose of social media usage among agricultural graduates is to connect (chat) with friends and family. This activity received the highest mean score of 60.61, ranking it first among other purposes. This suggests that social media serves as a crucial tool for maintaining personal relationships and social connections among the respondents.The second most important purpose, with a mean score of 54.87, is using social media to get the latest information on global trends in governance. This highlights the role of social media as a source of current affairs and global knowledge for agricultural graduates.Online learning was ranked third, with a mean score of 49.65. This indicates that social media is also valued for its educational potential, providing access to learning resources and opportunities for academic growth.The fourth and fifth ranks were given to using social media to keep oneself occupied when bored (mean score 48.07) and for entertainment purposes (mean score 47.74), respectively. These scores reflect the recreational aspects of social media usage, showing that it serves as a medium for both engagement and leisure.Lastly, the purpose of using social media to upload status updates, share ideas, and post digital photos and videos was ranked sixth, with the lowest mean score of 38.56. This suggests that while these activities are part of social media usage, they are not as significant for agricultural graduates compared to other purposes.Overall, the findings reveal that social media is predominantly used by agricultural graduates for social interaction and information acquisition, followed by educational and entertainment purposes. The least prioritized use is content sharing, indicating a preference for consumption and interaction over content creation. This insight into the usage patterns can inform strategies to enhance the effectiveness of social media as a tool for agricultural extension and education.

Table 2
Constraints faced by participants while using social media

Sl. No.	Constraints	Mean Score	Rank
1	I feel stressed out due to use of social media	6.65	I
2	Social media applications are highly utilized by me for a lot of non-educational purposes	6.40	II
3	social media networking sites can be a potential distraction to living and learning in the real world	5.09	VIII
4	There are health-related issues like lack of physical exercise and effects on eyes because of continuous usage of social media sites	6.14	III
5	Security and privacy problems related to social media	4.44	X
6	Checking social media sites before doing something else	4.61	IX
7	There is wastage of time in irrelevant activities because of use of social media	5.50	V
8	Feeling academic productivity suffers because of social media	5.86	IV
9	Found myself saying “just a few more minutes” when using a social media	5.11	VII
10	Internet issue	5.22	VI

Constraints faced by agricultural graduates while using social media

The study examined the constraints faced by agricultural graduates while using social media, ranking ten different statements based on their experiences. The respondents' rankings and mean scores for each constraint were analyzed using the Friedman test to determine the most significant challenges which is given in table 2.

Feeling stressed out due to use of social media (Mean Score: 6.65, Rank I):The highest-ranked constraint indicates that social media usage is a significant source of stress for the participants. This stress may stem from the pressure to stay constantly connected, exposure to negative content, or the demands of managing multiple social media accounts.High utilization of social media for non-educational purposes (Mean Score: 6.40, Rank II):The second-ranked constraint highlights the overuse of social media for activities unrelated to education. This suggests that while social media has the potential to be a valuable educational tool, it is often dominated by leisure activities, reducing its effectiveness for academic purposes.Health-related issues (Mean Score: 6.14, Rank III):Continuous use of social media can lead to health problems like lack of physical exercise and eye strain.Academic productivity suffers because of social media (Mean Score: 5.86, Rank IV):Participants reported that their academic performance is negatively impacted by social media use. This could be due to the distractions and time spent on social media that could otherwise be devoted to studying or academic work.Wastage of time in irrelevant activities (Mean Score: 5.50, Rank V): Social media leads to wasting time on irrelevant activities, ranked fifth among the constraints.Internet issues (Mean Score: 5.22, Rank VI):Connectivity problems, such as slow internet speeds or unreliable connections, are a significant barrier to effective social media use. These issues can hinder access to information, communication, and online learning opportunities.Potential distraction to real-life living and learning (Mean Score: 5.09, Rank VIII) and Found myself saying "just a few more minutes" when using a social media (Mean Score: 5.11, Rank VII):These constraints indicate that while social media can be distracting, they are perceived as less problematic compared to other issues.Checking social media sites before doing something else (Mean Score: 4.61, Rank IX): The tendency to check social media before engaging in other activities indicates a habit-forming behavior that prioritizes social media over more important tasks, leading to procrastination and inefficiency.Security and Privacy Problems (Mean Score: 4.44, Rank X):The lowest-ranked constraint indicates that privacy issues are also an important concern when using social media.Overall, the results suggest that stress and non-educational use are the primary constraints for agricultural graduates using social media. To address these issues, it is crucial to develop strategies that encourage balanced and productive use of social media, such as time management training, awareness programs on the negative effects of excessive use, and promoting educational content. Improving internet connectivity and addressing academic productivity concerns can also help in mitigating these constraints. By understanding and addressing these challenges, social media can be better leveraged as a tool for education and professional development in the agricultural sector.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes social media usage and the constraints faced by agricultural graduates in India. The findings show that social media, particularly WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, is integral to their daily lives. These graduates primarily use social media to connect with friends and family, obtain information on global trends, and engage in online learning, alongside recreational use and content sharing.However, the benefits of social media are offset by several challenges, including stress, high engagement in non-educational activities, health issues, and negative impacts on academic productivity. Procrastination and internet connectivity problems are also notable issues.To maximize the benefits of social media in agricultural education, it is essential to address these constraints.

Strategies such as time management training, awareness programs on excessive use, and promoting educational content are crucial. Improving internet infrastructure and addressing academic productivity concerns will further enhance the positive impact of social media.By mitigating these challenges, social media can be effectively leveraged as a tool for education and professional development, contributing to the generation of social capital in the agricultural sector.

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