



Use of Social Media platforms for Academic Information by the students of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

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Abstract

The current article investigates the use of social media platforms by the students of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar for getting a variety of academic information in their day-to-day life. The study has made use of Google Forms to create an online questionnaire for collecting the data to complete this research. 102 responses have been received from 150 students for a response rate of 68%. Results showed that 51% respondents use social media platforms on a 'Daily basis' followed by 31.4% respondents who use social media platforms 'As and when required' for getting desired academic information. 73.5% of respondents said they utilised social media for understanding concepts, with YouTube and Wikipedia being the most popular choices, listed by 93.1% and 61.8% of respondents, respectively. Preparing notes, searching for new information, and supplement classroom learning were the primary academic uses of social media among respondents.

Keywords: Social media, Academic information, Guru Nanak Dev University, Information needs.

1. Introduction

With the advancement of technology, offline modes of communication and interaction have given way to online communication platforms known as social media. According to Merriam-Webster, social media are "forms of electronic communication in which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)." Social media refers to digital technologies and activities that allow for online communication and sharing.

This media has enabled people to generate and easily transmit content in the form of images, videos, audios, and words. Social media services include blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, social networking sites, virtual world content (online gaming sites), and media sharing sites such as YouTube and Instagram. Mayfield (2008) outlined five distinct traits that underpin all social media operations: participation, openness, discussion, community, and connectedness. As a result, we may claim that this media has broadened the participation of communication in discourse, sparking a sense of connectivity among persons.

Gone are the days when libraries and printed materials were the sole repositories of academic information (Kohl, n.d.). The advent of social media platforms has revolutionised how students, researchers, and academicians' access and share knowledge. Embracing the digital era, these platforms offer an ocean of information at one's fingertips, transcending geographical barriers and time constraints (Chen & Xiao, 2022).

The emergence of academic communities on social media has fostered an environment conducive to intellectual growth and collaboration. Scholars from diverse backgrounds can now connect, exchange ideas, and engage in thought-provoking discussions (Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi, & Bano, 2019). This interconnectedness not only expands one's horizons but also fosters an inclusive space where knowledge knows no bounds.

The dynamic nature of social media allows for real-time updates and instant dissemination of information (Shahbaznezhad, Dolan, & Rashidirad, 2021). Academic institutions and educators leverage these platforms to share important announcements, research findings, and event details with a broader audience. Such engagement ensures that the academic community stays well-informed and up-to-date with the latest developments in their respective fields (Dunlosky, J. et al. 2013).

It is essential to acknowledge the potential downsides of using social media for academic information (Kolhar, Kazi, & Alameen 2021). The abundance of data available can sometimes lead to information overload and hinder critical thinking. Therefore, it becomes imperative for users to exercise discretion and discernment while navigating through the vast virtual expanse ("Information Overload, Why It Matters and How to Combat It," 2020).

The use of social media platforms for academic information has become an integral part of the modern learning experience. With their capacity to promote knowledge sharing, foster collaboration, and provide real-time updates, these platforms have reshaped the academic landscape (Ashraf, et al. 2021). Nevertheless, it is essential to approach these digital resources with a discerning eye to harness their full potential for intellectual growth and academic advancement.

Both benefits and drawbacks come with using social media and mobile devices, with the majority of the former being related to obtaining course materials, videos, transferring instructional notes, etc. Overall, students believe that social media and mobile devices are the most accessible and affordable means of learning about current topics (Willbold, 2019). Studies conducted in western nations have revealed that the use of online social media for collaborative learning significantly affects students' academic success and satisfaction (Zhu, 2012).

1.1 About Guru Nanak Dev University

Guru Nanak Dev University, in Amritsar, Punjab, India, is a well-known and respected school of higher study that is profoundly founded in Sikh philosophy and ideals. The university was named after Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism and a promoter of social equality and spiritual enlightenment. Guru Nanak Dev University, with a vision to cultivate academic brilliance, ethical values, and a spirit of service, provides a varied range of academic programs across numerous disciplines, catering to the educational aspirations of students from across India and beyond. The campus of the university is a thriving hub of academic pursuits, research undertakings, and cultural events, reflecting the university's commitment to holistic development. Known for its emphasis on research and innovation, Guru Nanak Dev University has contributed significantly to advancements in knowledge and has produced generations of skilled professionals, scholars, and leaders who carry forward the legacy of Guru Nanak's teachings. The institution's dedication to academic excellence, social responsibility, and the promotion of Sikh values has solidified its position as a beacon of education and enlightenment in the region.

2. Review of Literature

As previously said, social media has been quite helpful in the educational setting, particularly for academic reasons, as evidenced by several studies showing that students have taken use of the opportunities presented by this platform to facilitate their learning and research. Murire and Cilliers (2017) examined the usage of social media in higher education in South Africa and found that university instructors have to accept it due to its popularity among students. Due to its continuous dominance in the vast majority (90%) of higher education classes, Facebook was deemed to have a significant potential for involving students (Blattner and Lomicka,

2012). Manca and Ranieri (2016) also found that video-sharing websites like YouTube and Vimeo have a significant potential for university communications. Stutzman (2012) investigated the virtual learning environments that students and researchers frequently used and published their plans on, especially Facebook and YouTube. It was discovered that Facebook was used as a resource for pupils to share knowledge. Mitchell and Watstein (2007) discovered that lecturers' interaction with students through social media networking sites, particularly Facebook, was shown to have a favourable impact on students' learning and teaching methods in a previous study on students' use of Facebook at the University of Cape Town. This was because students could share useful information with people all around the world using social media. Irwin et al. (2007) studied four university courses using Facebook as a useful learning tool that improved conversation, interaction, and access to posted evaluations and lecture notes.

3. Objectives of the study

1. To determine the number of students who heavily rely on social media sites for academic knowledge.
2. To determine the academic level of students who use social media the most for academic information.
3. To identify the age group of students who heavily use social media sites for academic information.
4. To learn about the academic purposes for which students utilise social media platforms
5. To identify the most popular social media sites for academic information among students.

4. Methodology

A questionnaire as a tool for data collection was used to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. The questionnaire was framed using Google Forms and randomly distributed among 150 students who were regularly using library services. It was a structured and brief questionnaire to save the time of library readers. The data was collected in the month of July 2023 and 102 responses were received for a response rate of 68%.

5. Results

The analysis results are discussed below in relation to the study's research objectives. Based on the responses of the students, a link has established between social media platforms and the academic information requirements of the students.

5.1 Age group of the respondents

The respondents in this study were drawn from a diverse range of age groups. Maximum number of respondents (66.7%) were found in the age group of 17-20 years followed by 24.5% respondents in the age group of 21-23 years. This finding provides a valuable insight that students of these age groups frequently use the social media sites for the academic information.

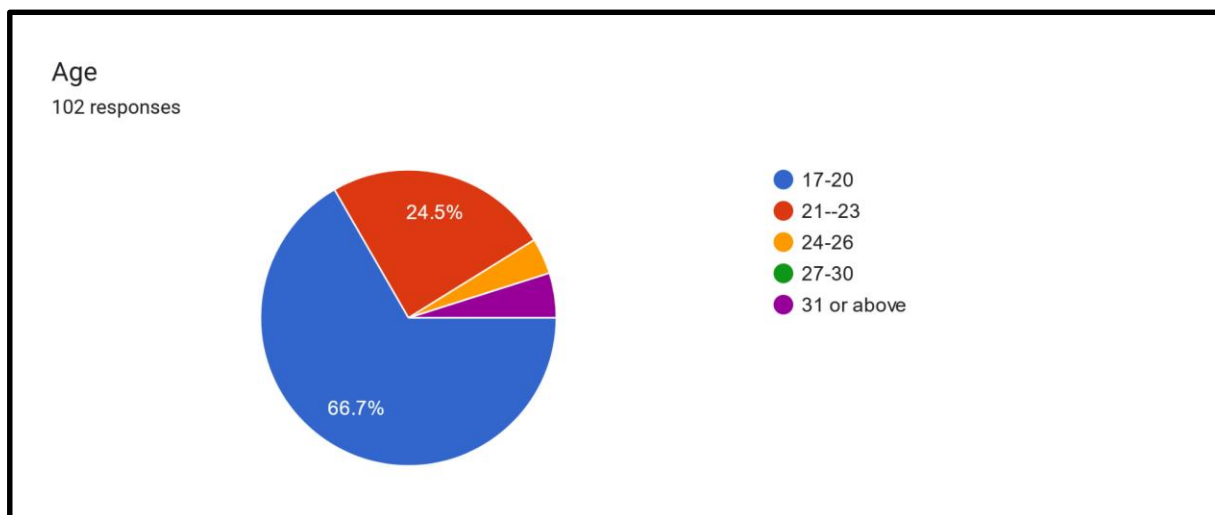


Figure 5.1: Age group of the respondents

5.2 Gender of the respondents

The respondents in this study represented a balanced and inclusive mix of genders, reflecting the diverse tapestry of the institution. There were 85.3% male and 14.7% female respondents.

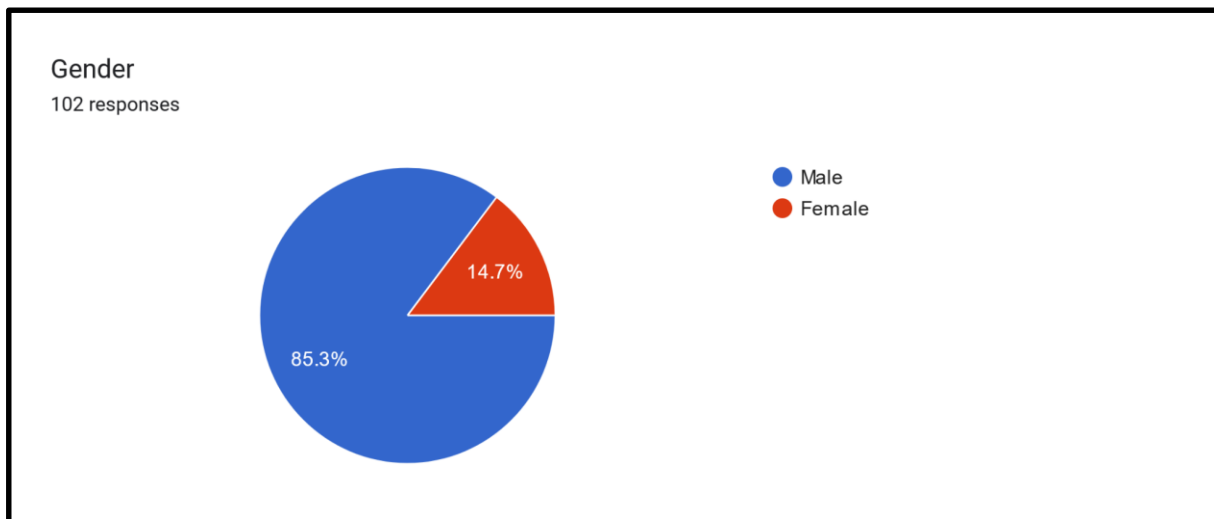


Figure 5.2: Gender of the respondents

5.3 Student category of the respondents

The respondents in this study exhibited a wide spectrum of academic qualifications, such as undergraduate, post-graduate and researchers. It is observed that the maximum number of respondents (80.4%) were undergraduate students followed by postgraduate students (14.7%) and Research scholars (4.9%).

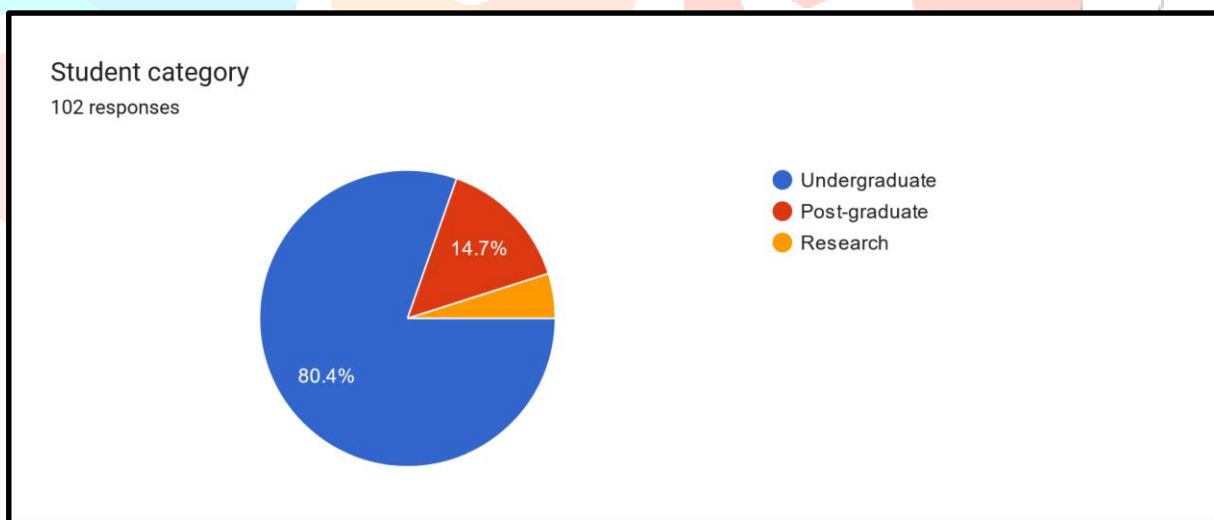


Figure 5.3: Student category of the respondents

5.4 Frequency of using social media platforms for accessing and sharing academic information.

The frequency of utilising social media platforms for accessing and sharing academic information varies significantly among respondents. Nearly half of the participants (51%) reported a consistent and active engagement with these platforms on a daily basis, relying on them as a primary source for academic resources and updates. In contrast, others like 31.4% (As and when required) and 12.7% (once a week) expressed a more sporadic use of social media for academic purposes. The factors such as personal preferences, familiarity with technology, and the nature of one's academic pursuits might influence the extent to which social media platforms are integrated into the information-seeking and sharing process.

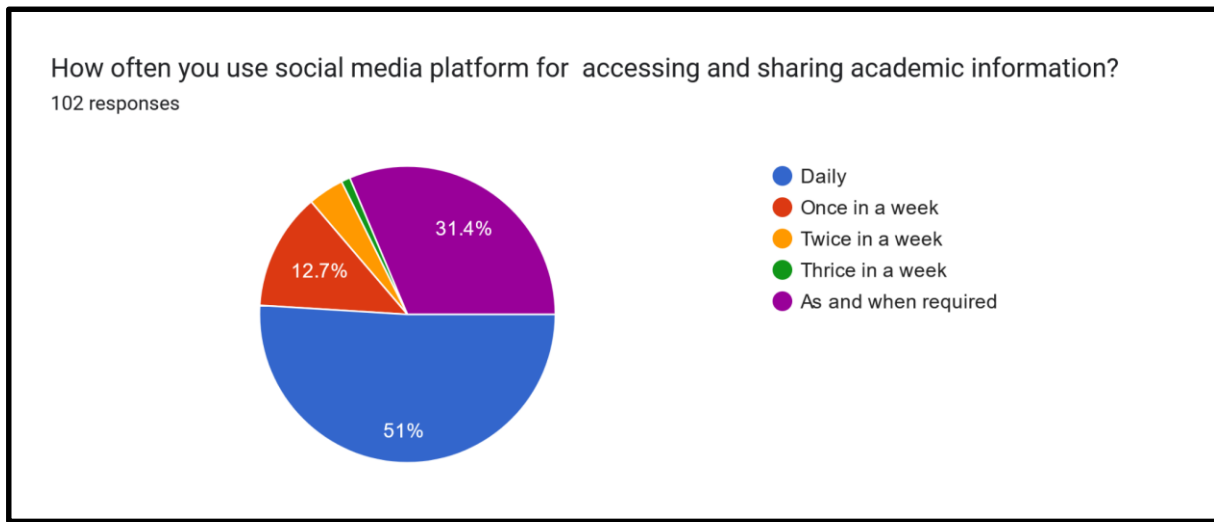


Figure 5.3: Frequency of using social media platforms

5.5 Use of social media platforms for academic purposes

Social media platforms are utilized by respondents for a multitude of academic purposes, reflecting their evolving role in modern education. Participants reported using these platforms to Understand concepts (73.5%); Searching for new information (63.7%); Preparing notes (58.8%); Preparation of exams (55.9%); Collection of information (49%); Supplement classroom learning (38.2%). Besides, respondents also said that they access and share academic resources, such as research articles, scholarly papers, and educational videos. Additionally, social media serves as a forum for engaging in academic discussions and exchanging ideas with peers and experts from diverse fields.

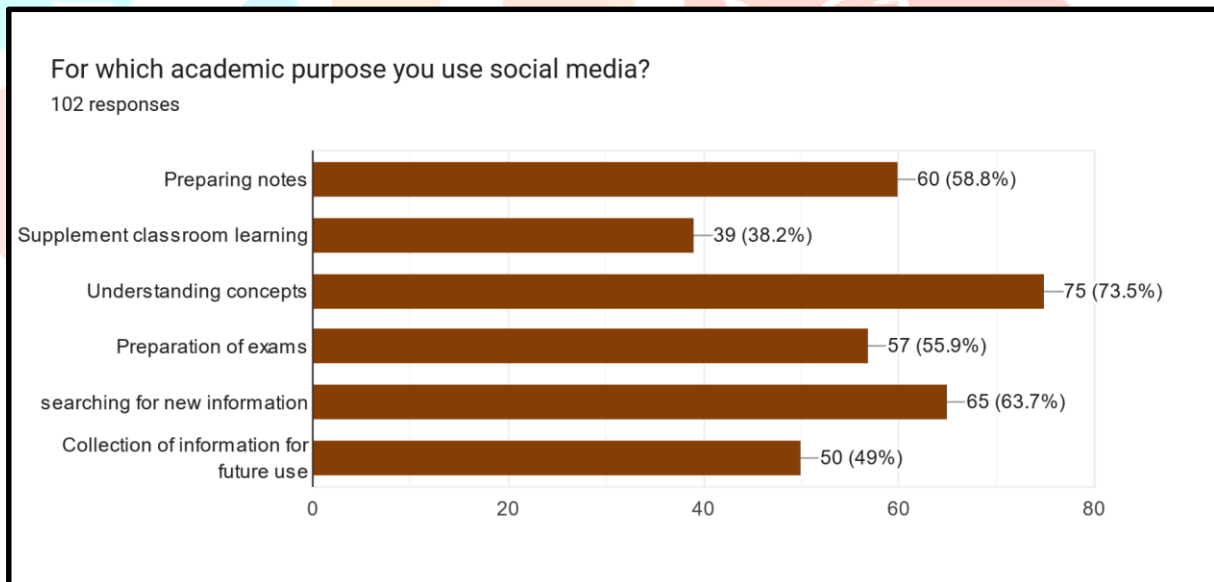


Figure 5.5: Use of social media platforms for academic purposes

5.6 Preferred social media platform for accessing academic information

Among the respondents, a range of preferred social media platforms emerged for accessing academic information. Notably, platforms such as YouTube (93.1%); Wikipedia (61.8%); WhatsApp (56.9%); Telegram (38.2%); Wiki Answers (20.6%); LinkedIn (49%); and Twitter (17.6%) were popular choices, valued for their ability to connect users with academics, researchers, and institutions. YouTube, with its vast repository of educational videos and tutorials, was favoured by those seeking visual and interactive learning experiences. Wikipedia's and WhatsApp's succinct nature allows for real-time updates on scholarly trends, while LinkedIn offers a professional space for networking and sharing academic achievements. Additionally, platforms like Telegram and Facebook were also mentioned, often chosen for their diverse communities and specialised groups where participants can engage in in-depth discussions and knowledge exchange. These preferences highlight the adaptability of social media platforms to cater to various learning styles and academic interests,

emphasizing the role of digital spaces in reshaping how academic information is accessed and shared in today's interconnected world.

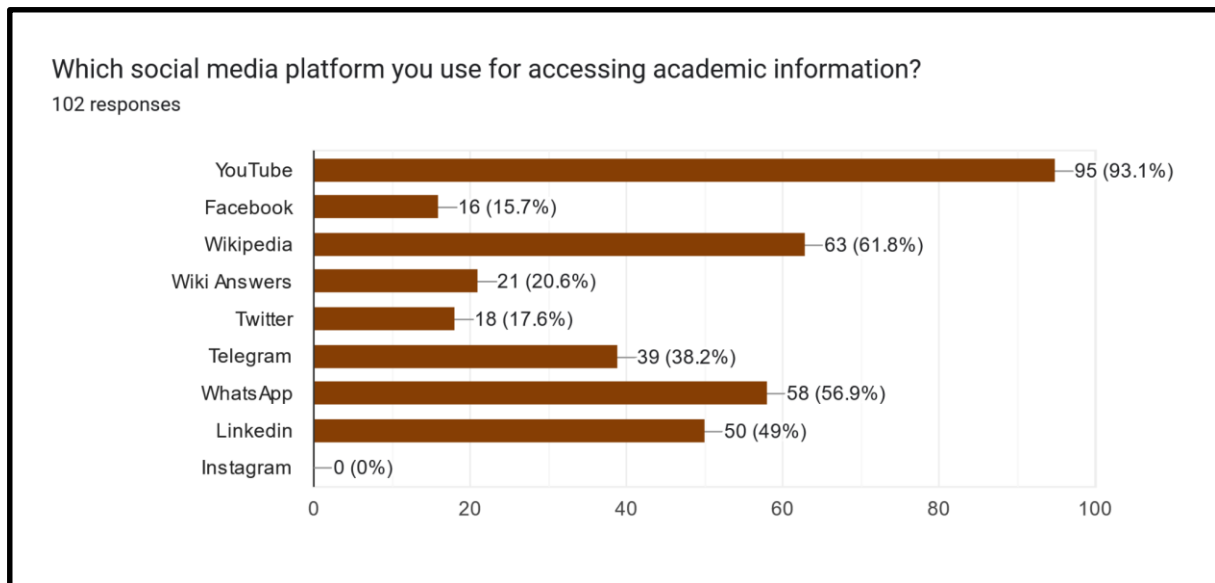


Figure 5.6: Preferred social media platform for accessing academic information

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the multifaceted role of social media platforms in modern academia. Through a diverse pool of respondents spanning different age groups, genders, academic categories, and qualifications, we have gained a comprehensive understanding of how these digital spaces are harnessed for academic purposes. The findings underscore the versatility of social media in providing access to a wide array of academic resources, facilitating meaningful interactions, and fostering a sense of global academic community. From real-time updates and collaborative projects to networking and knowledge sharing, social media has proven its ability to complement traditional educational methods and transcend geographical boundaries.

The preferences expressed by respondents for specific platforms reflect the evolving landscape of digital learning, where platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Telegram, and YouTube each offer unique avenues for academic engagement. This diversity of choices caters to a spectrum of learning styles and preferences, ensuring that individuals can tailor their academic interactions to suit their specific needs.

As the educational landscape continues to evolve, it is evident that social media's influence on academia will only continue to grow. However, it is important to recognize the need for responsible and critical engagement with these platforms, as well as the importance of striking a balance between digital and offline academic pursuits. The insights gained from this study contribute to a deeper awareness of the opportunities and challenges presented by social media in the realm of academia. Moving forward, educators, researchers, and institutions can leverage these insights to harness the potential of social media platforms effectively, enhancing the learning experience and fostering a global community of scholars united by the pursuit of knowledge.

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