

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SELF-INITIATED LEARNING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS- WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PALAYAMKOTTAI AREA

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has significantly influenced the learning patterns of college students, transforming these platforms into important tools for academic engagement and self-development. This study examines the role of social media in promoting self-initiated learning among college students, with special reference to Palayamkottai. The research explores how students utilize platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, and Facebook for accessing educational resources, participating in academic discussions, collaborating with peers, and enhancing their knowledge beyond classroom instruction.

The study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze students' usage patterns, influencing factors, benefits, and challenges associated with social media as a learning tool. Findings indicate that social media plays a vital role in encouraging independent learning, improving access to information, and fostering collaborative knowledge sharing. However, issues such as distraction, misinformation, and time management concerns were also identified. The study concludes that while social media has significant potential to support self-initiated learning, its effective utilization requires proper guidance, digital literacy, and structured integration into higher education practices.

Key Words: Social Media, usage, Impact, Self-generated learning, Motivating factors, Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid extensive use of social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram, the educational landscape has undergone a significant transformation due to the quick development of digital technology. These platforms are now valuable resources for academic communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing, having developed beyond their original purpose of social interaction. Social media is being used by college students more and more to connect with peers and subject matter experts, watch instructional videos, access study materials, and take part in online discussions. The growing significance of self-initiated learning, in which

students take charge of determining their own learning needs, looking for pertinent resources, and developing their skills outside of the traditional classroom, is reflected in this trend. Social media is essential for promoting students' self-directed learning habits in areas like Palayamkottai, which is renowned for having a high concentration of higher education institutions. Students in this area actively use digital platforms for career development, competitive exam preparation, and academic enrichment due to the growing availability of smartphones and reasonably priced internet services. But even though social media provides a wealth of educational opportunities, it also has drawbacks like distraction and false information. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how social media can encourage self-initiated learning among Palayamkottai college students, evaluating both its advantages and disadvantages within the framework of higher education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dabbagh & Kitsantas (2012)- in their study they concluded that social media facilitates the formation of online communities and peer networks that motivate skill-building. Communities on Reddit, Facebook Groups, and LinkedIn provide platforms for users to share resources, solve problems collaboratively, and receive mentorship.

K.M.H (2017) in his study he concluded that Social media is rapidly changing formal and informal learning. It offers a wide variety of tools, applications and platforms for collective intelligence. It can be used to improve the students' formal and informal learning. It is found that most of the students use social media for learning. The results of the test show that there is a statistically significant association between the gender and the frequency of use of social media for learning. Majority of the students use educational videos for their formal classroom learning.

Otchie, W. O., & Pedaste, M. (2020). In their study they concluded that the Social Media tools and Social media as an environment could be applied through different approaches for learning both subject-specific knowledge lessons and social skills in all phases of the learning process.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the level of social media use among Palayamkottai college students.
2. To determine which social media sites are most frequently used by students for learning.
3. To examine how social media helps college students engage in self-initiated learning.
4. To identify the factors that motivate the College students in using social media for self-initiated learning
5. To evaluate the challenges of using social media for academic and independent learning.

HYPOTHESIS

Ho1: Opinion regarding the statement on role of social media creates impact in the field of education are equal to average level.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between male and female regarding the factors that motivate them to use social media for Self-initiated learning.

Ho3: There is no significant difference among age group with respect to the challenges faced by them while using social media for Self-initiated learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted for the role of social media in skill building among Genz. The research approach is qualitative in nature. It is based on subjectivity rather than objectivity on processorientation rather than results and on content. Since the role of social media is involved and the situation is based on experience formation. Questionnaire was created to collect the required data, and it was accumulated in an efficient way. The data has been collected by primary and secondary data and other sources. Convenient research design is conducted for studying and analysing role of social media in self-initiated learning among college students in Palayamkottai Area. The sample size of study is 88. The technique used to decide on sample size was convenient sampling technique. While analysing the primary data tools such as table, percentage analysis, Garrett's ranking analysis and weighted average methods. one same T-test, independent sample T-test and ANOVA were used to analysis the role of social media in self-initiated learning among College students in Palayamkottai Region.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic Profile:

- The survey revealed that 72% of the respondents are female.
- 61% of the respondents are under the age category of 20-25.
- 41% of the respondents are currently engaged in postgraduate studies.
- 67% of the respondents are students, reflecting the student demographic's strong representation.
- 39% of the respondents spent 4-6 hours on social media.
- 97% of the respondents access social media via smartphones, highlighting the platform's mobile accessibility.
- 50% of the respondents primarily use You Tube as their preferred social media platform.
- 97% of the respondents engage with social media platforms daily.
- 47% of the respondents utilize social media self-initiated learning purpose.

FACTORS MOTIVATES TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SELF INITIATE LEARNING

S.NO	FACTORS	5	4	3	2	1	TOTAL SCORE	MEAN SCORE	RANK
1	Accessibility	45 (225)	25 (100)	10 (30)	2 (4)	6 (6)	365/88	4.15	I
2	Free resources	38 (190)	30 (120)	11 (33)	5 (10)	4 (4)	357/88	4.05	II
3	Engaging and fun content	35 (175)	31 (124)	17 (51)	1 (2)	4 (4)	356/88	4.04	III

4	Peer recommendations	16 (80)	37 (148)	21 (63)	10 (20)	4 (4)	315/88	3.60	VI
5	Interactive feedback	23 (115)	29 (116)	20 (60)	9 (18)	7 (7)	316/88	3.59	VII
6	Real –time updates	28 (140)	31 (124)	18 (54)	4 (8)	7 (7)	333/88	3.78	V
7	Collaboration opportunities	25 (125)	23 (92)	22 (66)	11 (22)	7 (7)	312/88	3.54	VIII
8	Trend Awareness	28 (140)	37 (148)	11 (33)	6 (12)	6 (6)	339/88	3.85	IV

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

The above table Sheds light on the factors motivates to use social media for Self-initiated learning. The Weighted Average Method is used to evaluate the factors motivates to use social media for Self-initiated learning. Majority of the respondents says that accessibility is the factors influence them to use social media for skill development because it offers free, on-demand, and diverse learning resources anytime, anywhere followed by free resources because they provide cost-effective, diverse, and easily accessible learning opportunities without financial barriers followed by Engaging and fun content because it makes learning enjoyable, interactive, and easier to retain compared to traditional methods.

CHALLENGES FACED WHILE USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SELF-INITIATED LEARNING

S.NO	FACTORS	5	4	3	2	1	TOTAL SCORE	MEAN SCORE	RANK
1	Distractions from unrelated content	53 (265)	15 (60)	13 (39)	6 (12)	1 (1)	377/88	4.28	I
2	Lack of credible sources	15 (75)	39 (156)	26 (78)	4 (8)	4 (4)	321/88	3.65	IV
3	Superficial learning	17 (85)	33 (132)	30 (90)	5 (10)	3 (3)	320/88	3.63	V
4	Difficulty in application	13 (65)	31 (124)	28 (84)	13 (26)	3 (3)	302/88	3.43	X
5	Time management issues	23 (115)	25 (100)	29 (87)	6 (12)	5 (5)	319/88	3.62	VI
6	Network issues	17 (85)	23 (92)	36 (108)	7 (14)	5 (5)	304/88	3.45	IX
7	Information overloaded	17 (85)	33 (132)	27 (81)	9 (18)	2 (2)	318/88	3.61	VII
8	Monetization barriers	14	26	33	10	5	298/88	3.38	XI

		(70)	(104)	(99)	(20)	(5)			
9	Culture & Language barrier	22 (110)	31 (124)	24 (72)	8 (16)	3 (3)	325/88	3.69	II
10	Privacy & Security	29 (145)	21 (84)	21 (63)	13 (26)	4 (4)	322/88	3.66	III
11	Limited Depth of learning	19 (95)	23 (92)	35 (105)	9 (18)	2 (2)	312/88	3.54	VIII

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

The above table assesses about the challenges faced while using social media for self-initiated learning. The Weighted Average Method is used to evaluate the Majority of the respondents says that distractions from unrelated content is the challenge they face while using social media for self-initiated learning because the endless stream of entertainment and notifications makes it hard to stay focused on learning followed by Culture & Language barrier because content is often tailored to specific regions, making it harder to access relevant or understandable learning materials and Privacy & Security is also considered as a challenge because of sharing personal information and engaging with online platforms can expose them to data breaches, scams, and cyber threats.

HYPOTHESIS

H₀1: Opinion regarding the statement on role of social media creates impact in the field of education are equal to average level.

One sample t test for specified value (average = 3) of statements on role of social media creating impact in the field of education

Statement on role of social media	Mean	SD	T Value	P Value
Enhancing assessable	4.23	.893	12.885	.001
Collaborative Learning	3.81	.800	9.458	.001
Engagement & Interactive	3.92	.925	9.334	.001
Skill development & Professional ground	3.82	.917	8.374	.001
Bridging Gap in formal education	3.74	1.034	6.702	.001
Encouraging Creativity & innovation	3.93	.944	9.256	.001
Global networking & exposure	3.81	1.049	7.216	.001

Note: Denotes significant at 1% level

Interpretation

Since P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level of significance with regard to all the Statements on role of social media creates impact in the field of education. Hence the opinion regard to all the Statements on role of social media creates impact in the field of education is not equal to average level. Based on mean score, opinion regard to all the Statements is above average level because the use of social media in education has become increasingly integrated and widely accepted. Social media platforms offer a wealth of resources,

interactive learning opportunities, and the ability to connect students and educators across different geographical locations. The integration of these platforms enhances collaborative learning, allows for the sharing of educational content, and provides students with real-time access to information and expert opinions. Additionally, the flexibility and convenience that social media provides make it an appealing tool for students to engage with educational material outside of traditional classroom settings. This overall positive perception of social media's role in education likely contributes to the opinion being above the average level

H₀2: There is no significant difference between male and female regarding the factors that motivate them to use social media for self-initiated learning.

Independent sample t test is used to analysis the significant difference between male and female regarding the factors that motivate them to use social media for self-initiated learning

Statements	Male		Female		T Value	P Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Easy Accessibility	4.16	1.281	4.14	1.105	0.063	0.950
Free resources	4.32	.945	3.95	1.142	1.426	0.157
Engaging and fun content	4.04	1.020	4.05	1.038	0.031	0.975
Peer recommendations	3.68	1.145	3.54	1.029	0.559	0.578
Interactive feedback	3.68	1.435	3.56	1.118	0.433	0.666
Real –time updates	3.92	1.256	3.73	1.153	0.679	0.499
Collaboration opportunities	3.84	1.405	3.43	1.174	1.401	0.165
Trend Awareness	3.96	1.274	3.79	1.109	0.608	0.545

Note: Denotes Significance at 5% level

Interpretation

Since the P value of all the statements are greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance regarding factors that motivate them to use social media for self-initiated learning. There is no significance difference between male and female regarding factors that motivate them to use social media for self- initiated learning because the factors might include ease of access, learning opportunities, or the ability to engage with diverse content, and they are equally important to both genders. Therefore, the lack of significant differences suggests that gender does not play a substantial role in shaping motivations for using social media for self-initiated learning.

H₀3: There is no significant difference among age group with respect to the challenges faced by them while using social media for self- initiated learning.

Anova is used to analyse the significant difference among age group with respect to the challenges faced by them while using social media for self-initiated learning.

Statements	Age Group			F value	P value
	17 - 20	21 -23	23 - 28		
Distractions from unrelated content	3.95 (1.177)	4.31 (1.025)	4.60 (.737)	1.784	.174
Lack of credible sources	3.11 (.950)	3.70 (.983)	4.13 (.640)	5.429	.056
Superficial learning	3.37 (.955)	3.63 (1.015)	4.00 (.756)	1.802	.171
Difficulty in application	3.05 (.970)	3.52 (1.059)	3.60 (.910)	1.720	.185
Time management issues	3.32 (.885)	3.72 (1.156)	3.67 (1.234)	.941	.394
Network issues	3.00 (1.000)	3.57 (1.109)	3.60 (.980)	2.248	.112
Information overloaded	3.11 (1.049)	3.74 (.975)	3.80 (.775)	3.410	.038
Monetization barriers	2.89 (1.100)	3.48 (1.077)	3.67 (.816)	2.873	.062
Culture & Language barrier	3.32 (.946)	3.78 (1.093)	3.87 (.990)	1.617	.205
Privacy & Security	3.32 (1.057)	3.65 (1.261)	4.07 (1.100)	1.655	.197
Limited Depth of learning	3.37 (1.165)	3.57 (1.021)	3.67 (.816)	.411	.664

Note: Denotes significance at 5% level

Interpretation

Since the P value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance with respect to the challenges faced by the respondents while using social media for self-initiate learning. Therefore, there is no significance difference among age group of the respondents with respect to the challenges faced by the respondents while using social media for self-initiated learning because issues such as technological accessibility, content relevance, time management, overwhelm from too much information, engagement and motivation difficulties, privacy and security concerns, limited interaction and feedback, lack of a structured learning environment, and the need for technical support are common across age groups. While there may be slight variations in how different age groups perceive or handle these challenges, the overall perception does not differ significantly. This lack of distinction suggests that the challenges do not vary enough by age to reject the null hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that there is no significant difference among the age groups in terms of the challenges they face while using social media for learning.

FINDING

- Majority of the respondents says that distractions from unrelated content is the challenge they face while using social media for learning.
- Most respondents expressed a desire for the inclusion of structured learning paths to improve the effectiveness of social media platforms in learning.
- A significant number of respondents view participation and active engagement as the most notable impact that social media has on education.
- Respondents commonly believe that fostering interactive and two-way communication is a crucial impact social media has on the field of education.
- 44% of the respondents prefer video tutorials over text-based content for acquiring new skills.
- 43% of the respondents have participated in live sessions or webinars hosted on social media platforms at least occasionally.
- 43% of the respondents manage the overwhelming influx of content on social media by limiting their overall screen time.
- 61% of the respondents foresee social media platforms eventually replacing traditional educational methods for certain skill sets.
- 45% of the respondents evaluate the credibility of skill-building content on social media based on the creator's demonstrated expertise.
- 40% of the respondents consider engagement-driven content styles to be an essential quality they look for in self- initiated learning.
- 43% of the respondents feel highly confident in applying the skills they have acquired through social media.
- 60% of the respondents believe that social media platforms will partially replace traditional learning methods.
- 85% of the respondents would recommend using social media as an effective tool for learning to others in their social circles.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the study, it is evident that social media plays a significant role in promoting self-initiated learning among college students in the Palayamkottai area. Social media platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram serve as accessible tools for acquiring knowledge, collaborating with peers, and developing skills beyond the classroom. Students are motivated to explore topics independently, engage in discussions, and utilize educational resources, which enhances their learning experience. However, responsible usage is crucial, as distractions and misinformation can hinder effective learning. Overall, social media, when used purposefully, acts as a valuable supplement to traditional education, fostering curiosity, autonomy, and continuous learning among students.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of social media in fostering self-initiate learning among College students, emphasizing their active engagement with platforms such as you tube and their strong preference for video-based tutorials as a primary mode of learning. The findings reveal that social media serves as a widely accessible and effective medium for acquiring new skills, offering flexibility, convenience, and exposure to diverse learning resources. However, the study also identifies key challenges, including distractions from non-educational content and the absence of structured learning pathways, which may limit the overall effectiveness of these platforms for systematic Self-initiated learning

To address these concerns, the study recommends integrating personalized learning recommendations, enhancing content discovery algorithms, and providing offline access to educational materials to improve accessibility and user experience. Additionally, incorporating interactive features such as live sessions, quizzes, and community-driven discussion forums can strengthen engagement, collaboration, and peer support. The research further suggests that partnerships between social media platforms and educational institutions to offer certifications and credentials would add credibility and formal recognition to skills acquired online. Overall, the study concludes that with thoughtful improvements and strategic integration, social media has the potential to play a transformative role in shaping the future of skill-building and lifelong learning.

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