

Social Media Use During the Pandemic: Students' Reasons for Usage

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Abstract — The impact of social media usage on the behavior of students is the core of this study. It shows that the students use social media to do academic works, get information about current events, read recent news, and many more. Furthermore, students also use it for their enjoyment and pleasure, such as watching movies, communicating with their friends and relatives, and looking at funny media. General inductive qualitative analysis of participants' answers yielded four principal themes: COVID-related stresses notably around health, finances, and daily hassles; social media's emergence early-on as a modern communication system; drawbacks of social media engagement that included promoting different interpretations of social distancing recommendations; and diminishing returns from social media engagement as social isolation persisted. The results of the data analysis showed four (4) themes were extracted: problems in socializing; problems in resiliency; weakness in problem solving skills; and lack of friends or making friends. Students came up with positive and negative insights in the use of social media. These are the advantages: It is their means of social communications; It is part of their digital footprint; It is where their friends are; It is where they want teachers and experts; It is how they want to learn; It is their reference desks; Social Media engages communication. The disadvantages are: It is damaging; It is distracting; It is hard to monitor; It can affect the students' communication skills; It can become addictive; Inability of learners to become independent; and it can lead to distraction. This study concluded that social media usage has negative and positive effect on students' behavior based on students' remarks and insights. This proves that social media has an impact on the environment, especially students, during the pandemic.

Keywords — *Social Media, Uses, Pandemic, Reasons, Insights, Means Of Communication*

I. Introduction

Since students are highly motivated to use social media sites most of them use these to satisfy their social needs more than their academic needs. They have the freedom to do whatever they want – they can upload or download data, they can make new friends and comment on other people's lives, and they can even create other online identities the real world does not allow. It has been observed too that most of the students nowadays, particularly those in the secondary level, spend most of their time chatting with their acquaintances, playing online games, and watching videos instead of reading their lessons, making their assignments, and other academic requirements. The main reason is when they work or search their materials online, they get attracted to social networking sites to kill boredom during study time, diverting their attention from their work. The darker side of this that has gained the attention of many parents is that some

students are getting lazier and are no longer interested in going to school. This is probably due to being extensively indulged to get global access and therefore leading them to perform less academically.

I have observed from my Grades 11 and 12 students at the Ateneo De Davao University, Senior High School Department the same positive and negative impact of using social media inside and outside the classroom. I found these social sites helpful when one time I needed to communicate with my students, reminding them of their assignments and urgent requirements. In addition, I also used these social sites to refer my students to helpful resources that could fetch them higher grades in academics. I tried to encourage the students, particularly the teens with gadgets having internet facilities, to use it to supplement their research in the library rather than the usual chatting with friends all the time.

As a result, almost 85 percent of them were able to cope with their academic difficulties and at least 65 to 75 percent of the class obtained the average level of performance. However, students should be encouraged to limit the time they spend on social media sites and be advised to rather substitute those hours with reading some learning materials – short stories, novels, etc. to improve their vocabulary. Since the use of social media sites may have affected the academic performance of students positively or negatively, there is a need to introduce the students to other information resources or materials that would motivate and help them perform well in their academics.

We can't deny the fact that as years pass by, the demand for internet usage keeps increasing because it is already a necessity among end users, particularly students. Developers have created online social media sites where people can have more advanced, more reliable, and more creative ways of communicating. This shows we, humans, are social animals. We always want to belong in a group where we also prefer what the group does.

According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center, as of 2015 the largest social networking company, *Facebook* for example, has 1.49 billion active users and the number of users is increasing every year. As part of the said survey, 72 percent of high school students and 78 percent college students spend time on these social networking sites – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, Viber, E-mail, etc. These numbers evidently indicate how much the student community is involved in this virtual world of networking.

Students prefer social media sites as reliable sources of information because everything is a package. Research conducted by Gagne sometime in 2003 defined media in general as some kind of component in a students' environment that can stimulate them to study better. Researchers also found that the use of some types of social media has beneficial effects to students, not only on their academic needs but also to help them establish a sense of identity and build and enhance networking skills.

This study focuses on the experiences of senior high students in a private institution on their use or effects of social media during pandemic. We have similar studies on the effects of social media on public high school learners. Thus, this study contributes to the dearth of studies involving senior high students from the private sector.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influences of social media usage on students' academic life amidst the pandemic and subsequently, the new normal of education in the Philippines. The study centers around the lives of fifteen (15) Grade 12 students of the Senior High Department of the Ateneo de Davao University in Davao City. The results of the study may not necessarily apply to other students of public and private secondary schools. However, this limitation does not include the lessons learned by teachers who wish to improve their instructional delivery using social media.

Almost overnight, the COVID-19 reshaped the nature of social interaction around the world. Global fear and uncertainty about the virus sparked an unprecedented need for up-to-the-minute information, expert recommendations, and virtual engagement with family, friends, clients, students, and teachers. Risk reduction in the form of school, business, and workplace closures resulted in fewer opportunities for individuals to engage in face-to-face informational and support transactions. As individuals sheltered at home for days, weeks, and then months, computer-mediated communication assumed a central role in keeping individuals informed, connected, and safe. As these new forms of connection took hold, their long-term impact on perceived stress and other hardships was uncertain.

Experiences of Students in the Use of Social Media During the Pandemic

Research shows that stress stemming from societal disasters can lead to a host of negative outcomes, including anxiety, depression, role overload, isolation, fear, and substance misuse (Freedy et al., 1994; Galea et al., 2005; Psychological and Emotion, 2001; Weems et al., 2007). Stress following disasters is exacerbated by disrupted social ties and loss of access to social supports like family, church, and neighborhood (Kaniasty et al., 1990; Kaniasty & Norris, 1993; Weems et al., 2007). Moreover, stress resulting from disaster can be exacerbated by mitigation strategies, including quarantine. One study conducted in 2004 following the SARS outbreak in Toronto, found that quarantine increased rates of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (Hawryluck et al., 2004).

When faced with stressful life events, supportive interactions can help to reduce stress and bolster health by providing access to information, advice, and resources, as well as access to a broader sense of community connection (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Kaniasty et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 1977; Uchino, 2004, 2006). Early in the internet era, research pointed to the value of online support groups for improving coping with that stress (White & Dorman, 2001). Subsequently, many studies demonstrated the value of health information and support shared via the internet (Cline & Haynes, 2001; Coulson, 2005; Sendra et al., 2020; Shaw & Gant, 2004).

Extensive research shows that computer-mediated communication via social media intermediaries can be an optimal way for people to transfer advice, information, and resources in response to stressful events (Baker & Yang, 2018; De Choudhury & Kıcıman, 2017; DeAndrea et al., 2012; Haslam et al., 2017; Myrick et al., 2016). Online social engagement can also provide an important sense of continuity when face-to-face routines and social networks are disrupted (Mikal et al., 2013), and boasts several advantages over face-to-face support including diminished barriers to support access (Wellman et al., 2001), increased control and privacy (Malik & Coulson, 2008; Rains & Keating, 2011), better fitting support (Rainie & Wellman, 2012), and reduced reciprocal obligations (Walther & Boyd, 2002). Nevertheless, there are notable drawbacks to social media-enabled support, including the inadvertent sharing of false information (Zannettou et al., 2019) and issues of social media fatigue and anxiety (Dhir et al., 2018).

While the term “social media” may be evocative of juggernaut platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, the term social media is broadly defined as mobile and web-based technologies that allow users to engage socially or to create and share content (Dictionary & Street, 2019; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Mikal, 2021). This broad definition means that the term includes not only the web giants above, but smaller content-, video- or image-sharing platforms or online discussion boards - each with different features and affordances. Given the focus of this study is online platforms that can be leveraged to bridge social distance, we use the broad definition of social media.

Reasons Students use the Social Media During the Pandemic

According to Baker (2016), 67% of the people between the ages of 18 and 29 actively use social media. In addition, 22% of all people use social media for a specific reason. According to WERSM (2016), individuals use social media to be aware of what their friends are doing, stay up to date with news and events, evaluate leisure time, find entertaining and funny content, share ideas, share videos and pictures, share information with people, meet new people.

Bridgestock (2016) compared the students’ reasons for using Facebook according to the continent they lived in. The most important reason for using Facebook was determined as catching up with the current developments. Other reasons in the importance order were to be interesting, to express what they think, and to have useful connections. Internet usage consists of various addiction types such as game addiction, social media addiction. Social media dependence is perceived as a more specific form or subdivision of Internet addiction (Stavropoulos, Kuss, Griffiths, Wilson & Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). The aim of this study was to determine the social media usage characteristics and reasons of the individuals who are social media users.

Problems in socializing. For many students, weakness in social interactions is a factor that leads them to use SM. Two forms of problems in communicating and escaping loneliness were seen using this approach.

Problems in communicating. According to the participants' experiences, one of the reasons for their addictive tendency to SM is their inability to communicate properly. They have trouble even in establishing a simple relationship, avoid face to face communication, and often fail to gain experience in social activities. Thus, harmful social behaviors and beliefs replace learning useful social behaviors and beliefs. To make up for the lack of real world effective and useful relationships, they become more inclined to SM and indulge themselves in unreasonable tendencies and hence suffer a great deal of damages.

Escaping loneliness. Another important reason for most participants was feeling loneliness. Being the only child of a family, being the last child of a family, immigrating, divorcing, and so on were among the factors for their feeling lonely. They were looking for an easy and convenient solution to save themselves from loneliness. Since SM was easily accessible and did not require any specific planning, it was the best available way for them to escape loneliness.

Problems in resiliency. Based on the recorded experiences, problems in resiliency were another major reason for usage tending towards SM and getting addicted to it. The bulk of the problems and the lack of proper support, on the one hand, and the ease of access to SM, on the other hand, have made SM a haven of safety to escape from the crises and to continue their activities there. The use of this reason is examined in two forms: Devastation in harsh conditions and inability to recover oneself.

Devastation in harsh conditions. People's experiences showed that because they lacked self management skills, they were vulnerable to adverse conditions and get devastated quickly. Most of these people cannot properly manage their problems and fail in maintaining their biopsychological balance. Hence, they commit more mistakes in escaping the crises.

Inability to recover oneself (inner distress). Most SM users have failed in dealing properly with their life problems. They could not recover from those difficulties and could not heal themselves. Such failure has prevented them from successfully going through adverse events and attaining social, educational, and occupational achievements. Most of them have not been able to properly recover from their lives' adverse events and heal their wounds. Hence, they have succumbed to social harms and may undergo serious hurts such as poor health behaviors.

Lack of problem solving skills. According to participants' experiences, lack of problem solving skills has been one of the key factors in individuals' addiction to SM. These individuals could not easily solve their problems and consequently suffered from other problems such as depression, lack of concentration and attention, anxiety, and the like. These problems made them more likely to become addicted to SM. The use of this reason is examined in two forms: Weaknesses in analysis and disorganization in planning.

Weaknesses in analysis and decision making. Based on the experiences of the participants, they seemed to lack mature defense mechanisms to defend themselves against life crises. As they were unable to analyze them and find logical solutions, they preferred to choose the easiest way to

forget and solve their problems. That is why they went to SM. However, the easiest way is not always the best. As being already vulnerable, they were easily hurt by their wrong decisions.

Disorganization in planning. Based on the experiences of the participants, disorganization in life has been one of their major reasons for addiction to SM. Most of them stated that not only have they been purposeless in their lives, but they have been unable to plan properly and rescue themselves from their problems. Hence, they prefer to go aimlessly into OSM. This has caused them to not only lag in their daily lives but also to undergo numerous negative effects.

A particular study by Kumar (2014) revealed that social networking media gave a sense of belonging to an academic community, as the students online with their friends were mostly, they met in college. Two step flow interactions, student to student and teacher to student favored academic learning through social networks. The use of these networks must be disciplined as it can lead to distraction from education. The social networks used for educational tutoring and social networking sites that students used for academic purposes are YouTube, WhatsApp and Facebook. Meanwhile, not only the students are benefiting.

There are benefits and risks associated with using any social network even though there have been reports regarding its effect on students' academic performance. Accordingly, some researchers found a poor effect and influence when the media is overused in such a way that does not academically improve learning or its process. There are still other researchers who examined this same problem but have found no conclusive data affirming the significant relationship between using social networking and student academic performance (AlRahmi and Othman, 2013).

Insights of Students in the use of Social Media During the Pandemic

Social media continues to be an integral part in the lives of Filipinos who have increased access to the internet via mobile devices. And of course, we can say that we remain as the social media capital of the world. Social media penetration up from 32% to 40%. (Social Media Stats of the Philippines 2015 from wearesocial.sg) With regards to medium utilized for social media usage. Most of the students use cellular phones or CP in accessing social media with percentage of 62% followed by PC/laptop with percentage of 26%. Lastly was the tablet with percentage of 12%. Most of the students use cell phones because they can be bought anywhere. They can access social media even without Wi-Fi because of network promo subscription on cellular phone.

Most of the youngsters nowadays own cellular phones, and tablets which they use to participate in various social media activities. Apart from that, communication networks such Sun Cellular, Smart Communications, and Globe Telecom are giving away promos for social media use and internet surfing for various limits of time depending on their subscriptions. Moeller (2012) noted that mobile phones, those always-on, pocket- and purse-sized media platforms, are reshaping what the world is coming to. The vibrating and beeping non-stop push notifications of posts and messages and tags are prompting young adults to think about connecting to their virtual lives more than to the world around them. And this is not just an American trend - this is happening globally.

The institution installed Wi-Fi for the relaxation time of the students, employees, and others. There is a Wi-Fi zone at the cashier for the students who are enrolling or waiting to lessen their boredom. Through Wi-Fi, the students can access the internet with the use of their cellular phones, tablets, or laptops. While they are waiting for something at the cashier, especially at the time of the enrollment, they use the Wi-Fi installed by the institution to let the time pass by so them not feel bored.

A student can also study while they are engaged in social media since they can converse about previous lectures and assignments given to them. Aside from that, a learner can click various search engines or open various tabs while currently engaged in a group conversation over the internet. Passing and transfer of data can be readily obtained with copy and paste commands. However, the quality of learning and retention may be different than that of traditional methods.

Social networks encourage discovery. If someone is interested in certain books, bands, recipes, or ideas, it's likely that their interest will be catered for by a social networking service or group within a service. If users are looking for something more specific or unusual then they could create their own groups or social networking sites. Social networking services can help young people develop their interests and find other people who share the same interests. They can help introduce young people to new things and ideas and deepen appreciation of existing interests (Fewkes & McCabe, 2012).

Using cell phones, like social media, has a negative impact on academic achievement (Al-Barashdi et al., 2015); in fact, social media is becoming increasingly synonymous with smartphone usage. Because of its pervasiveness and connection, social networks can be utilized to predict smartphone addiction in users, according to (Jeong et al., 2016). These capabilities of smartphones encourage multitasking (Lepp et al., 2015) or using social media while doing something else, which reduces the amount of time available for academic tasks. Lepp et al. (2015) conducted a study of US college students to assess their self-efficacy and self-regulation, i.e., how well they believe they can achieve their objectives and how well they can regulate and manage themselves when using smartphones. Students with poor self-control were found to have the most harmful effects from smartphone use on their academic performance; in terms of demographics, Al-Barashdi et al. (2015) claim that gender and field of study can be used to predict addiction. According to their evaluation of the literature, male and humanities students are more vulnerable to smartphone addiction.

However, some research suggests that the surveys used to generate these links may be incorrect, resulting in an estimate of actual usage (Jeong et al., 2016). These capabilities of smartphones encourage multitasking (Lepp et al., 2015)), which requires users to recollect activities and select a suitable averaging method (Kan & Pudney, 2008). On the other hand, works relying on smartphone data for analyzing usage tend to focus on addictiveness on their own (Lee et al., 2017, 2014) or do not correlate usage patterns to academic performance (Wang et al., 2015).

Moreover, college students nowadays (which consist of Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials) are exposed to all types of technologies in many aspects of their live and form of large proportion of users on social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, MySpace and many more (Guy, 2012). In the University of New Hampshire, the students use Facebook and YouTube more than any other social media platform. Blogs, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn had significantly lower amounts of student users. The students from the business school had the highest percentage of users of blogs, Twitter, and LinkedIn while Liberal Arts students were the highest percentage of Myspace users (Martin, 2013).

Social networking media sites have become a habit for some students, and it was found out that it is difficult for them to study for one hour without logging in to one network site. They become very smart because of the information they get from these sites and it is easy to get almost any materials for school assignments. But some students become very poor academically (Egedegbe, 2014). According to the research of Brubaker (2013), the current generation of college students has been exposed to a technology which led them to rely on social media such as Facebook and Twitter. It has an impact on the academic performance when students overuse or multitask while doing their schoolwork.

Students consume a lot of time on social networking sites, especially the adolescents. They are involved in uploading/downloading, getting information related to their academic or future career, chatting with friends, and watching online movies (Kanagarathinam, 2014). Twitter is one of the most important media companies in the world. It is now one of the top 10 most visited sites. With more than 500 million users, the students can find teachers, schools, and perhaps more important professionals, lead publications in their areas of interest (Anonymous, 2013). Blogs can be used in a classroom environment for diary entry; it also can be a useful tool to link communication between study groups within a class or other classes or even schools.

Blogs can highly motivate the students, especially those who otherwise might not become participants in the classrooms. It gives excellent opportunities for students to read and write effective forums for collaboration and discussion, and powerful tools to enable scaffolding learning or mentoring to occur (Nguyen, 2015). According to the study of Head and Eisenberg conducted in 2009, Wikipedia provides the students with a summary about a topic, the meaning of related terms, and got students started on their research and offered a usable interface and one of the expectable workarounds that many students use, especially during the first stages of their research process. In the University of Washington's Information School, most of the college students use Wikipedia and they know its limitations. Because of its quick way to get started, they use Wikipedia just as most people do but not deep and credible.

In other words, knowledge on the social networking media is a basic asset that a college student nowadays must possess to survive in his chosen volition. In this regard, a question may be asked: Is any use of social networking media beneficial to students? Unfortunately, studies revealed different results. Accordingly, the use of technology such as the internet is one of the

most important factors that can influence educational performance of students positively or adversely. The effect of SNS usage will depend on the type of SNS the student is using. If a student uses the internet for the purpose of leisure activity that interferes with academics, it will negatively affect the student academic performance negatively (Egedegbe, 2014). According to the study of Tayseer, et al., (2014), results showed that most of the students who spend many hours in using social networks have a high GPA at the Petroleum University.

The theories considered most appropriate for this study are: social information processing theory and media equation theory. Social information processing theory explains online information. The theory was developed in 1992 by Joseph Waither (Asemah, 2011). Social information processing theory is an interpersonal communication theory which suggests that online interpersonal relationship development might require more time to develop than face-to-face relationships, but when developed, it has the same influence as face-to-face communication. This means, the more students use social media, the more they influence their disposition to studies, given the fact that friends from social media will begin to exert influence on each other.

Media equation theory, as noted by Griffin (2000), cited in Asemah and Edegoh (2012) was propounded by Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass. The theory proposes that media are equal to real life and that electronic media are being given human attributes. In most cases, people talk to computers as if they were talking to human beings. More so, in most cases, you talk to your television as if you are discussing with human beings, hence you talk to television sets as if you are discussing with people. That is, people have personalized the media of mass communication to the extent that they now see them, just the way they see human beings. Thus, Griffin (2000), cited in Asemah and Edegoh (2012) notes that media are equal to real life. He further noted that what Reeves and Nass's equation suggests is that we respond to communication media as if they were alive. This theory says that people now treat computers, television and the new media like real people and places. Going by the media equation theory, we tend to give human attributes to inanimate objects in our homes. According to Griffin (2000), the practical implication of the media equation is that once we turn on a television or boot up on computer, we follow all the rules of interpersonal interaction that we have précised throughout life. Thus, the word interface is particularly apt when describing human media relations. This natural social response goes way beyond occasional words yelled at the television set or our frantic play for the computer to retrieve lost data. Reeves and Nass maintain that the media equation is so basic that it applies to everyone; it applies often, and it is highly consequential. The above assertion aptly captures how the audience members now tend to engage the media in a discussion as they do to human beings. The relevance of the theory to the paper cannot be overemphasized.

People treat the media like human beings, so whatever people see in the media, they tend to believe because they respond to the new media, the way they will respond to human beings.

II. Methodology

The research is a qualitative study since the aim is to study the influences social media has on senior high students. Qualitative research is based on the interpretations of the participant's realities (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005). In this way, the qualitative approach is chosen, because the experiences of the participants are what will be researched.

This study consists of an interview guide with questions. One-on-one interviews were held with each participant. Grinnell (2001) highlights that with face-to-face interviews: "the presence of the interviewer makes it possible to capture nuances of responses that would otherwise be lost." Meaning that the interviewer has the possibility to be present during the interview and in this way understand the person better. The participants are fifteen (15) students between the ages of 16 to 20. The age group has been chosen, because their usage of social media is significant and rising (Allen et al., 2014) and it is an age where the participants are regarded as adults in society.

Fifteen (15) students studying at the Senior High School of Ateneo De Davao University, a private educational institution, run by the Jesuits were selected for the study, because all of them used Social Media during the pandemic.

Other inclusion criteria were: officially enrolled in Grade 12 of the Senior High Department, of either sex, has all the gadgets used for social media networking (cellphone, laptop, computer, tablet); uses all social media outlet regardless of the reason (YouTube, google, tweeter, linked, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). The study used purposive sampling in selecting the participants.

The participants of the study were informed of the goals and objectives of the research. Each has a story to tell about their experiences in social media and their reasons for using the social media during the pandemic. The participants all stayed in Davao City, some are residents of nearby localities, but all willingly participated in the study. Participants were coded as C1 to C15.

First, the researcher sent a letter addressed to the RMC Ethics Committee asking approval of the study attaching all required documents for perusal of the committee. Then, a letter of request for approval was sent to the Dean of the Graduate School and the Principal of the ADDU's SHS School's Department for the approval and conduct of the study.

Second is the sampling and actual identification by the researcher of the actual respondents. Upon approval of all requests, the researcher prepared for the conduct of the study. The triangulation of the study used three methods whereby collection of the data was guaranteed: interviews of the participants, notes of the researcher during the interviews conducted, and ocular inspection of the gadgets used in social media.

Third, the researcher conducted the interviews using the guided questionnaires. Questionnaires were retrieved right away after the respondents have answered them all. For the

data gathered to remain confidential and anonymous, the participants' names will be coded as C1, C2, C3 and so forth. It will "help guard against the accidental recognition or identification of your subjects."

The data collected through the interviews, was transcribed, and written down on the computer. After this, the transcriptions were printed to have a better overview of them. In this study, thematic analysis is used through the Framework Method which consists of identifying different themes in the data (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005).

To make a clear analysis, the researcher chose to use the theoretical framework and the research questions from this study when analyzing. Then the interviews were highlighted depending on the most significant answers and the theories. The themes emerged from the responses and depending on what had been said in the answers, the researcher analyzed these within the theoretical framework. Each answer was written down and subcategories within the themes were found through common denominators.

The Framework Method is appropriate for thematic analysis of textual data, particularly interview transcripts, where it is important to be able to compare data by themes across many cases, while also situating each perspective in context by retaining the connection to other aspects of each individual's account. Experienced qualitative researchers should lead and facilitate all aspects of the analysis, although the Framework Method's systematic approach makes it suitable for involving all members of a multidisciplinary team. An open, critical and reflexive approach from all team members is essential for rigorous qualitative analysis.

The Framework Method is an excellent tool for supporting thematic (qualitative content) analysis because it provides a systematic model for managing and mapping the data. It is most suitable for analysis of interview data, where it is desirable to generate themes by making comparisons within and between cases. The management of large data sets is facilitated by the Framework Method as its matrix form provides an intuitively structured overview of summarized data.

III. Results and Discussion

Experiences of ADDU senior high students in the use of social media in their lives during the pandemic

General inductive qualitative analysis of participants' answers yielded four principal themes: (1) COVID-related stresses notably around health, finances, and daily hassles; (2) social media's emergence early-on as a modern communication system, (3) drawbacks of social media engagement that included promoting different interpretations of social distancing

recommendations; and (4) diminishing returns from social media engagement as social isolation persisted.

Theme 1. COVID-related stresses: health, finances, and logistic toxicity. Participants reported increased stress and decreased well-being throughout the study period, but especially in the early weeks of the pandemic (2020). Although several participants reported feeling liberated from the “tyranny of a schedule”, nearly one-half of participants reported increased stress and anxiety.

Theme 2. Social media as an access to community, connection, and information. During the first months of the pandemic, participants reported increased social media use and nearly all reported using the Internet and computer-mediated communications to boost their mood.

Theme 3. The role of social media in promoting different interpretations of social distancing guidance and in monitoring compliance. Recommendations and requirements for sheltering at home, mask-wearing, and social distancing changed rapidly. Participants were asked to identify their primary sources of information on measures to safeguard against COVID transmission. Sources were ubiquitous and varied, including government websites and news media but also articles and videos shared via social media.

Theme 4. Diminishing returns from social media engagement as isolation persisted. Relatively quickly, participants began limiting their social media interactions. Most participants described their social media engagement as primarily passive, using words like “aimlessly scrolling,” “zoning out,” or “distraction.” People began to note the consequences of too much DOH information.

Reasons students use social media during the pandemic

The results of the data analysis showed main situations of students in using social media in life from which four (4) themes were extracted: (1) *Problems in socializing including the sub themes of problems in communicating and escaping loneliness*; (2) *Problems in Resiliency including the sub themes of devastation in harsh conditions and inability to recover oneself (inner distress)*; (3) *Weakness in Problem Solving Skills, including the two sub themes of weakness in analysis and decision making and disorganization in planning*; and (4) *Lack of Friends or Making Friends including not having to do anything*.

Reason 1. Problems in socializing, communicating, and escaping loneliness.

For many participants, weakness in social interactions is a factor that leads them to use social media. Two forms of problems in communicating and escaping loneliness were extracted using this approach.

Reason 2. Problems in resiliency, devastation in harsh conditions, and inability to recover. Based on the experiences of the participants, problems in resiliency were another major reason for

use of social media and getting addicted to its use. The bulk of the problems and the lack of proper support, on the one hand, and the ease of access to social media, on the other hand, have made social media a haven of safety to escape from the crises and to continue their activities there. The use of this reason is examined in two forms: Devastation in harsh conditions and inability to recover oneself.

Reason 3. Lack of problem solving skills, weaknesses in analysis and problem-solving, and disorganization in planning. According to participants' experiences, lack of problem solving skills has been one of the key factors in individuals' addiction to social media. These individuals could not easily solve their problems and consequently suffered from other problems such as depression, lack of concentration and attention, anxiety, and the like. These problems made them more likely to become tied-up to social media. The use of this reason is examined in two forms: Weaknesses in analysis and disorganization in planning.

Reason 4. Lack of friends or Making friends. Most of the students expressed lack of friends in the first place among reasons for using social media. After a lack of friends, most of the students stated that social media was a social activity requirement. Another reason was the feeling of fulfilling a task. Another reason is that the current events were not missed. Another reason was social media was intermingled with social life.

Insights of students in the use of social media in their academic life during the pandemic

Insight 1. It is their means of social communications. Many students have accepted that social media is their primary source of communication with other people. Most of the students in grades 9-12 have admitted that they use social media to send and receive messages from their classmates and friends.

Insight 2. It is part of their digital footprint. Many admission officers also tend to check the social media activities of the students when they apply for the top colleges. A student's profile on these platforms is highly detrimental in assuring their admissions. 1 out of 10 admission officers from the top colleges gives preference to the social media profiles of the students.

Insight 3. It is where their friends are. Many parents have accepted that they communicate with the kids using social media platforms. School also use social media to receive and invite applications for admissions. Study groups in these platforms are used to share and gain information.

Insight 4. It is where they want teachers and experts. Students prefer communicating with their teachers through various social media platforms. They want their schools and colleges to arrange for connections through social media.

Insight 5. It is how they want to learn. Students from classes 6-12 have demanded online textbooks and study material. They want to study and communicate through online sources.

Students feel that they are more complacent in using online sources and collaborative tools for studying.

Insight 6. It is their reference desks. Students gain knowledge and stay up to date with the current affairs through the various social media platforms. Many also use these platforms to clear their doubts on stereotypical topics like drug abuse, sex, etc.

Insight 7. Social Media engages communication. It is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. By design, social media is Internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content. Content includes personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or smartphone via web-based software or applications.

Insight 8. It is damaging. When admission offices analyze a student's online profile, they have said that it has negatively impacted their perception of the applicant. On other hand, values at home and with friends that should be learned are not properly achieved.

Insight 9. It is distracting. Schools have banned the usage of mobile schools within the school premises. This is because these devices are very distracting and cause a deterioration of the learning process.

Insight 10. It is hard to monitor. Students tend to cheat in their exams and use unfair means with the help of mobiles and social media. It is hard to catch and monitor such practices.

Insight 11. It can affect the students' communication skills. Some students can start using the informal social media language for their schoolwork. Some may even abbreviate words like "The" as "d" and "you" as "u". This hinders their ability to learn the proper spellings and correct grammatical way of communicating in real life. They can even start importing the informal method of texting and chatting into their day-to-day conversations which can adversely affect their overall communication skills.

Insight 12. It can become addictive. When a person gets addicted to a particular thing, then they are unable to do without it. This can be very detrimental to any student who depends solely on social media to learn. Some students may not even pay attention in class because they know they can always use social media to get any information which can become unhealthy since they will not be able to do without it. This addiction can also have an adverse effect on the student's self-esteem and confidence since they can easily replace the real interaction with their teachers and colleagues with the use of a social media app which can hinder them from gaining the confidence to relate well with people in real life.

Insight 13. Inability of learners to become independent. This is one of the greatest disadvantages of social media in education because with the use of social media, students do not

necessarily have to work alone since they can work together in groups and can even create group chats. This can lead to some of the students not actively participating in the group work and mellow in the background. Since group work can give some students the opportunity to become lazy and unwilling to do things on their own, this can even hinder them from working on their own personal thoughts and ideas.

Insight 14. It can lead to distraction. As much as social media can be a good tool for learning. It can also adversely affect the students or even teachers since there are a lot of noise and distractions on social media. In the process of using social media to learn certain unwanted posts can pop up on the app which can distract the user from their main aim such distractions include pornographic images and videos, uncultured music or movies and even unsolicited ads that can lead the student or teacher to a completely different website which can create a total distraction from learning.

Analysis

Facebook and other sites were used to both read and to share information on pandemic spread, lockdown and other policies in place throughout the country, and information on logistical aspects meeting basic needs, including which businesses were open, and at what hours. Indirectly, social media also allowed individuals to find opportunities to volunteer or donate resources. Resource exchange appeared focused on education and instruction, including resources aimed at supporting the education of children at home.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound social consequences. One of the most meaningful has been the impact of social distancing on social connection. In contrast to past disasters resulting in displacement and distancing, the internet and social media are now fully developed tools for social engagement and information gathering. Our results revealed that social media assumed a central role in pandemic response - not only empowering individuals to quickly access and share information on disease spread and emergent health policy changes but providing access to resources and community engagement. Yet despite the pivotal role played by social media in managing both the pandemic and pandemic mitigation strategies, longitudinal patterns indicate that this purposedriven social media engagement is short-lived with increasing evidence of negative engagement patterns as the pandemic wears on.

In her book, “A Paradise Built in Hell: The extraordinary communities that arise in disaster,” author Rebecca Solnit describes a pattern of nimble, responsive, and democratized response to societal disaster in which communities come together to provide resources, information and support. Our results echo the pattern observed in Solnit’s book - at least in the beginning - showing clear evidence of individuals using social media platforms to engage in information and resource exchange, to check in on the health and safety of family and friends across the over long distances, and to track COVID spread and policy response.

COVID-19 called into question several aspects of social engagement previously thought to be immutable. When social distancing made it impossible for individuals to connect socially and to recreate a new social contract through daily interactions and through “small talk” (Coupland, 2003; Coupland et al., 1992, 1994) our study suggests that social media played an important role in providing continued access to “small talk” to recreate a social cohesion. In addition, providing an observation window into the lives of others social media provided both the reassurance of co-coping with common stressors (Thoits, 1986) as well as an opportunity to model one’s own behavioral and emotional response of other social ties (Bandura, 1969).

Nevertheless, like other studies on the longevity of support availability (Mikal et al., 2019, 2020a, 2020b), our study showed that social media platforms were very useful immediately following the transition to staying at home but became less useful over time. Relatively quickly—by weeks three and four—social media exchanges once viewed as motivational, and community-building began to wear thin for some users. This thinning of enthusiasm for support via social media models observations drawn from social support deterioration processes (Norris & Kaniasty, 1996). Moreover, findings demonstrate that participants engaged more passively over time. In other words, findings here point to a rather short-lived community. The role of CMC shifted to one of social observation, small talk, and whiling away time.

Early engagement with social media as a mechanism for engaging in small talk and modifying one’s own behavioral response to COVID progressively morphed into political derision and policing others’ compliance with social distancing recommendations. Participants reported simultaneously resenting the behavioral pressures exerted by sharing experiences via social media and often engaging in those same behaviors to exert influence over the behavior of others. Over time, social media platforms, like Instagram displayed more combative and divisive posts, leading to an increase in stress and conflict for some participants.

The current research has identified and examined social media not from average users’ perspective but from the eyes of individuals who define themselves as social media users. It has been determined that a large part of the participants that took the survey was in the continuity phase and these people have used social media for at least a year. Research findings indicate that social media usage had a beginning and a continuity phase. It has been determined that the initial stage of reliance was the beginning of the dependency during the first six months of use, after the first six months of social media use individuals pass through the continuation phase.

Discussion

In social media usage, the students used it as a convention to avail their reasonable satisfaction. Therefore, social media may be used for practical things such as learning.

It shows that students know how sharing or watching educational movies can be used as an alternative to using social networking. And since students use devices like mobile phones, tablets, or laptops to captivate themselves and get relief from the stress they are experiencing in

their academic performance, it is also used as lecturing for their lessons and talking about academic matters.

Hence, parents are the ones who are continuously monitoring them. They may guide their children in using social media to manage it properly without invading their child's privacy. Also, teachers navigate the students to use social media.

It would be best if teachers could use social media to enhance the students' academic overall performance. Social media sites can also help students seek help from them;

Lastly, Schools obtain the highest standard for academic performance. Appropriately, schools may use social media as a platform for learning to help them focus on their academic performance.

First, the Department of Education must implement policies and projects designed for easier access of the students to the Facebook network site in the school campus. However, part of the said project must incorporate policies that must regulate the proper time usage by the students in order not to intervene with their classroom activities.

Moreover, making the in-campus internet access available for every student shall make them safer in accessing as compared to availing the same service outside the campus during evening time. The school must modify its academic curricula to incorporate more subjects on information technology to make their graduates more competitive in the world market.

Further, this educational policy may also help the students to gain appropriate knowledge from their professors on how to use their time wisely in social networking so as not to affect their academic activities.

There must be the proper and regular monitoring of parents in the use of the social network media by their children to protect them from obscenity, pornography, internet bullying and addiction which tendencies may seriously affect their studies.

The students, especially those who are slow learners, must exert more effort on how to use and exploit all the available avenues of social networking media to compete with their fast-learner classmates.

It is to be considered that similar but more intensive study on the relationship of the social networking media and academic performance of students be conducted. This study, being limited in scope, objectives, purposes, tools, and statistical methods used, needs to be deepened, broadened and expanded.

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Daina R. Villarino is a passionate educator and an advocate for quality education. Born on December 29, 1997, in the picturesque town of Magsaysay, Davao del Sur, she embarked on a journey to inspire young minds through her love for mathematics. Daina holds a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education Major in Mathematics, which she earned in 2018. Her commitment to excellence was further validated when she successfully passed the Licensure Exam for Teachers in the same year.

Daina's teaching journey began at the Davao Christian Learning Center, where she nurtured primary school students during the academic year 2018-2019. Her dedication to fostering a positive learning environment and igniting curiosity in her students left an indelible mark. Currently, as a Full-time Faculty member at the Ateneo de Davao University Senior High School, Daina continues to shape young minds, imparting not only mathematical knowledge but also life skills and values. Her passion for education knows no bounds, and she remains committed to empowering the next generation of learners.

Daina R. Villarino's story is one of resilience, dedication, and unwavering commitment to education. As an author, she draws inspiration from her experiences in the classroom, weaving narratives that celebrate the transformative power of learning. Whether through textbooks, articles, or heartfelt reflections, Daina's words resonate with educators, students, and lifelong learners alike. Her journey is a testament to the profound impact teachers can have on shaping the future, one lesson at a time.