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Role of Social Media in Perspective of Media Information Literacy During Pandemic Covid-19

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Abstract

Emphasizing the significance of media information literacy, social media is playing a pivotal role in disseminating information and creating literacy among users. This research offers a momentous contribution to both researchers and policy makers as it sheds light on how social media creates awareness among masses during pandemic. This Study ensures to understand the relationship between social media and information literacy and also analyze the association between media literacy and youth behavior. The study employs quantitative research by using survey method to find out the behavior of youth towards disseminated information by social media regarding pandemic COVID-19. Convenience sampling benefits the research to draw a sample conveniently in relevance to social media usage and an exposure to the information of COVID-19. Theoretically, uses and gratification along with media literacy theory has been applied to analyze the current study which intends to focus the need to understand that how behavior of youth changes after getting exposed to the disseminated information regarding COVID-19 in terms of start taking precautions i.e wearing masks, using sanitizers, maintaining social distance. It clearly concludes that social media shows a great contribution in creating literacy among masses which eventually helps people to use precautionary measure against COVID-19.

Keywords: social media, media information literacy, Covid-19, youth.

1. Introduction

Internet has transformed communication and always been a source of information for people. Internet is a place where people can find everything what they need. Internet transmits data formed through web based social networking sites i.e. Facebook and Instagram through web enabled devices to large number of people (Westcott, 2008). Globally number of people using internet is 57 percent of the total population and because of that there is lot of consumption of social media which leads to consumption of different content social media sites related to any topic. In Pakistan there are 76.38 million people who are using internet (Kemp, 2020).

Social media is a term used for all the interactive websites, apps and social networking sites which allows the user to produce, share and consume content and to interact with other people instantly. Social media allows people to connect with the world through internet (Fuchs, 2021).

In support of the above argument, the growth of social media influences the way people think, behave and perceive the information what they want to perceive. In social media, there is bundle of information which can be found easily on different Facebook and Instagram pages. In Pakistan, social media has seen a growth despite the lack of interest and resources. Now almost all TV stations have online websites and also YouTube channels for its digital citizens. Social media is a great and instant source of information for the people. Education and awareness can be

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promoted through social media. Social media plays an important role in bringing global information into one place which helps the people to understand what is happening in the world (Hussain, 2020).

Furthermore, facebook and instagram hugely followed by the youth in Pakistan. There are 37.70 million Facebook users which is largest of all the social media apps usage in Pakistan which is 90.37 people of the total population and Instagram which has been used by 3.2 percent people of the total population in 2020 (Napoleoncat, 2020). In relevance to the study, the researcher analyzes the content of different pages on Facebook and Instagram. The reason for selecting these pages is their huge subscribers.

Pakistan has seen a wide growth in internet and its importance is increasing day by day. Every information is available for the people on internet. People can consume, produce and share information easily and become more aware about the current affairs. Many social media apps and websites are developing day by day to ease the flow of information and business. Internet has also increase the trend of freelancing and working on different social media apps for ease of people (Wolcott, 2020).

Media information literacy defines as the set of skills to be used for using consuming digital content by using information communication technologies and social media apps. It is very important to understand the content written in social media and to be used for learning, work and also to get literate. The youth develop the skills which in turn help them to be more capable than other in consuming digital technologies and also in understanding content in the social media (Livingstone, 2020).

Media information and literacy has always been seen with two perspectives one as a consumer of information and the other as producer of information. Being a media literate, it is important to identify the information in social media either it is worth sharing or not because we are now also the producers of information so we should know what is the context, motives and source of the particular information then we can be called as literate in digital age (Koslow, Stewart, 2021).

Media information literacy gives people knowledge and skills to understand the content disseminated by social media. As a consumer of information, it's very important that people should know about the different contexts i.e. (social, historic and economic) of information to interpret and make informed judgments. Being information and media literate helps the people to understand the hidden message in the communication and to effectively evaluate the content. This helps the people to know whether information is authentic or not and sharing with others (Moto et al., 2018).

In this study we are taking media and information literacy from consumer perspectives to find out whether the disseminated information has created the literacy among youth or not.

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced COVID-19 to be a pandemic when it turned out to be certain that the illness was severe and it was spread rapidly over a wide region. COVID-19 is an infectious virus that that spreads in general through droplets of saliva from the nostrils when an infected person coughs or sneezes (WHO, 2020).

Spread of COVID-19 in China firstly and then other countries, it is confirmed to have reached Pakistan on 26 February 2020, when a student in Karachi tested positive upon returning from Iran. On 18 March, cases had been enlisted in all areas of Pakistan. Pakistan has seen a peak of COVID-19 in Month of May 2020 to July 2020 (Shabbir, 2020). Government of Pakistan has taken various steps towards pandemic for instance imposed different forms of lockdown in the country, making mask and sanitizers compulsory for every citizen, announced different economic packages for poor people and also financial bonuses for the front line workers and use technology to create awareness like developing different apps for citizens which help them in being aware and information literate about COVID-19 (Shaikh, 2020).

Youth can be defined as the period between childhood and adult age particularly persons between the age of 18 to 30 (Belmonte, McMahon, 2019). The study focuses on youth as participants in this research. Social media is the only platform that is being used by everyone, particularly youth in the time of pandemic and lockdown as everyone had too much interaction with social media. Youth particularly use social media i.e. Facebook and Instagram in the time of pandemic and lockdown because everyone was available at home with their mobile phones. There is bombardment of information social media sites regarding COVID-19 and to be media literate in this digital age required skills to identify the source of information and also to evaluate the media texts.

The study reveals the role of social media in the dissemination of information and creating literacy in perspective of media information literacy regarding the COVID-19. It also analyzes that how media is being used to create awareness and literacy among youth of Pakistan regarding COVID-19. Further, it also evaluates that disseminated information by social media regarding COVID-19 and its preventive measures affect the behavior of youth in terms of taking precautionary measures. The study focuses on two social media apps i.e. (Facebook and Instagram) on basis of huge number of subscribers. Pakistan has been able to incite a growth-oriented, advanced society with web and social media usage blow up in numbers and scale. There are 37 million social media users in Pakistan (Kemp, 2020).

Moreover, the study helps in tracing information provided by social media sites. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To identify the role of social media in providing literacy and information regarding COVID-19 among youth.

- To find out the relationship between the behavior of youth and the literacy provided by social media regarding COVID-19.

The study evaluates the impact of social media in providing information and literacy regarding COVID-19 among youth and to evaluate the behavior of youth after receiving such news and information regarding COVID-19 on social media. The study contributes to the existing literature in the perspective of media and information literacy. The study also helps in tracing information disseminated by the social media sites in order to educate people regarding the global spread of COVID-19. The study also analyzes the behaviors of youth in terms of taking precautionary or preventive measures to avoid COVID-19 after reading such information on social media.

2. Materials and methods

A reviewed study focuses how social media platforms are educating people in terms of mental health problems during Covid-19. It highlights the role of social media in creating awareness towards coronavirus-related newsfeeds and disclosing death numbers which considerably results in global mental health issues i.e anxiety and panic. The study also dictates that social media is creating literacy but also disseminating excessive information that creates anxiety and panic among people (Abbas et al., 2018).

Social media is creating literacy among people regarding the rapid spread of COVID-19 and also educating people about its preventive measures to combat the disease. Many studies on COVID-19 have disclosed the irresponsible act of social media producers by spreading false information which is damaging the health systems and affecting the mental health of social media users (Radwan, 2020).

Despite the emergent body of literature examining social media in the context of information literacy and mental health of its users, few insights have been observed in respect of people's contribution towards social media platforms that can enhance public health awareness by providing them information regarding precautionary measures against COVID-19. Undoubtedly, coronavirus has aggressively affected people worldwide which shows considerable impacts on our health care systems. A lack of research has also been noticed for the role of social media campaigns on public protection against the COVID-19 in developing countries (Al-Dmour et al., 2020).

A study "Identifying Credible Sources of Health Information in Social Media: Principles and Attributes" says that social media is a great source of collecting and consuming information about different issues in the society and world. In today's age there is excess of information on social media and to deal with Social media provides different tools through which people can search the desired the information. Researcher proposed that social media is like an ocean from where different species are living; some are beneficial and some are harmful for the people same goes for Social media where we can find bundles of information but not every information is necessary for people. People filter the information and consume what they searched for (Kington et al., 2021).

A study "Digital Entrepreneurship via Sustainable Online Communication of Dentistry Profession, Oradea, Romania: A Longitudinal Analysis" says that social media is vast medium and source of information. There are different applications and websites that provide different information to the people. They study found that social media is not regulated by government or any other private authority for controlling the content. In the pandemic situation social media have not played the role of responsible and accurate medium of information in the past. Youth

consumed the information on social media regarding pandemic without knowing the source of information which led them to panic (Constantin, Kavoura, 2022).

Another reviewed study on the role of digital transformation addresses that social media tools are used to create awareness among people and highlights the importance of different issues in the society. Social media has the wider reach to audience therefore more people can be informed about latest happening in the society and the world. Social media makes people informed about different diseases and their cure and also what to do in the situation of pandemic as people make less use of print and electronic media in pandemic so the role of social media becomes more in terms of informing and guiding people about pandemic (Elgohary, 2022).

A study “Editor’s introduction: Media and information literacy research in countries around the Baltic Sea” says that media information literacy is always important to identify source of information and to critically evaluate the text. In digital age, media education or media and information literacy has changed and now we have to tell the youth about media dangers; that is to make them able to critically evaluate the information and not to think that every source of information is credible. One has to identify source of information, motives and context of particular information (Jaakkola, 2020).

The study addresses that social media literacy is a central resource of information and entertainment for youth in their everyday lives. The reviewed literature focuses on a new standardized instrument to investigate the online behavior of youth in terms of relating components of social media literacy and aspects of social contexts. The results show that adolescents’ social media literacy has a higher level of impact on their education and online participatory behavior which clearly indicates the influential role of youth and their affected behavior while using social media. (Festl, 2021).

A study “*Media and information literacy in news feeds and education*” says that media and information literacy is very important for creating, disseminating and consuming information on social media especially for youth. Being social media literate, the youth can be more socially responsible. They will think thousand times before posting any information that can mislead the people. Misinformation has adverse effects especially in situation of pandemic therefore the youngster’s needs to be media literate for producing the information and also to be selective in dealing with abundant information (Nygren, 2018).

A study on “What predicts adolescents’ critical thinking about real-life news? The roles of social media news consumption and news media literacy” states that adolescents are becoming the most enthusiastic social media news consumers. The study aims to find out the relation between social media consumption and news media literacy along with critical thinking to make sense of real life news stories. The findings indicate that there is a unique relationship of social media consumption and news media literacy in predicting critical thinking for a real-life sense of news stories. The present study also relates with the reviewed research in order to find out the relation between social media news consumers and media literacy in respect to the disseminated information regarding COVID-19 pandemic. It also highlights mental health problems of social media consumers when they get exposed to the disseminated information regarding high death numbers due to COVID-19 and the outbreak spread globally as it creates anxiety and panic among people according to Kong et al., 2019.

A study on “*COVID-19: immunopathogenesis and Immunotherapeutics*” on COVID-19 is an infectious disease that spreads from one person to another through sneezing or coughing. Its structure is changing day by day due to which it causes increased number of deaths in the world. The current structure and outbreak of COVID-19 is very dangerous and it’s a worldwide emergency which needs to be controlled through proper communication and preventive measures. COVID-19 patients develop stress as they exposed to multiple sources of information especially social media. To control this global pandemic effectively everyone have to behave according to instructions of government and their doctors (Zhang, 2020).

“*A Comparative Study on the Clinical Features of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Pneumonia With Other Pneumonias*” says that COVID-19 symptoms relates to Pneumonia which is why sometimes it’s difficult for the doctors for doing a treatment. A severe case of COVID-19 has to be dealt carefully as it has sometime other symptoms of diseases as well. The disease spreads from one person to another and from one place to another and it have different structures and shapes in different countries. There are several medicines that are given to COVID-19 patients for increasing

their immunity but still only be controlled if people apply preventive measures and stop travelling unnecessary (Gao, 2020).

Uses and gratification theory relates to the current research study as people especially youth use the social media for the sake of information and entertainment on the different issues. They have different interests and motive of how to consume that information and what content they find credible. The theory seeks to determine the relationship between youth and their usage of social media and how it affects the behavior of youth after getting exposed to the information of their own choice (Alhabash, Ma, 2017).

Social media has allowed the youth to consume the content from various mass medium outlets. They can use Facebook, Instagram or other networking site to consume information of their own choice according to Canfell et al., 2020. The theory study provides strong statement that youth can have access to various source of information on social media and they really feel the sense of being aware and connected to the situation which leads to gratification of their needs for information.

Media and Literacy relates to the current research study as youth uses the social media more and they encounter the information bombardment more than other people. They find every piece of information on the social media as authentic and think that it makes them literate because they mostly like the content from their favorite journalist (Prandi, Primiero, 2022). The study seeks to determine the relationship that how youth make the decision of information filtering and the meaning they get out of them. The theory provides the strong statement that youth can use the media and evaluate the information instead of media using them.

People especially youth mostly don't verify or cross check the information they consumed on social media; they share the information to other peoples or in a group which can lead to misinformation and can create panic in the people if it has that much importance according to Walling et al., 2022. The theory study provides the strong statement that being media literate is very important to differentiate between information and misinformation; during global issue like Covid-19 pandemic, people have to rely on the media to receive information and youth use the social media more so that's where media literacy comes to helps them filter and verify the information.

H1. The usage of social media increases media literacy among youth regarding COVID-19.

H2. There is a difference between male and female towards media literacy.

H3. There is a positive relationship between media literacy and behavior of youth regarding COVID-19.

Quantitative research has been employed in the study with survey method. It uses convenience sampling to conveniently draw a sample of youth who are social media users and gets an exposure to the information of COVID-19.

RQ1. Does the usage of social media increase media literacy among youth regarding COVID-19?

RQ2. Is there a positive relationship between behavior of youth and literacy provided by social media regarding COVID-19?

3. Discussion

The study highlights the role of social media in providing information and literacy among youth. The study explores the behavior of youth in terms of adopting preventive measures after reading posts on social media regarding the global spread of COVID-19 (Haque, 2013). In this study majority of the respondents agree that they use social media for consuming and sharing information and follow the pages that posts regarding COVID-19 with the intent to read the content for consuming and sharing information on social media and majority of participants commenting on different posts of social media regarding COVID-19 (Miller, Barlett, 2012).

The present study highlights that information disseminated by social media has created awareness among youth. Youth believe that social media provide information regarding global spread of COVID-19 and literate them about the sensitivity of disease (Livingstone, 2004). The study shows that information disseminated by social media not only educate but also create awareness regarding the sensitive disease of COVID-19 and also inform people about the preventive measures (i.e. maintaining social distance, avoid social gathering, using sanitizer) that are important to adopt in this COVID-19 situation (Koltay, 2011).

In relation with a reviewed study, the current research highlights that behavior of youth affected after reading content and consuming disseminated information by social media regarding

COVID-19. It depicts that youth start maintaining social distancing after reading different posts on social media. Majority of the participants also agree to the statement that they always wear mask after consuming information disseminated by social media regarding COVID-19 (Ittefaq et al., 2020). The results show that information disseminated by social media also creates hype among youth and they become more panic by reading the content on social media. Majority of the participant agrees that they started feeling fearful after knowing about the figures of COVID-19 patients (Abbas et al., 2021).

The present study also highlights that behavior of youth affected after reading content and consuming disseminated information by social media regarding COVID-19. It depicts that youth start maintaining social distancing after reading different posts on social media. Majority of the participants also agree to the statement that they always wear mask after consuming information disseminated by social media regarding COVID-19. The results show that information disseminated by social media also creates hype among youth and they become more panic by reading the content on social media (Gancho, 2017). Majority of the participant agrees that they started feeling fearful after knowing about the figures of COVID-19 patients.

The results of the study relate to our existing literature review “*Role of Social media*” believes that social media makes people informed about the diseases and they become more socially responsible in pandemic (Al-Dmour et al., 2018). As people especially youth dependent on social media for consuming and sharing information in COVID-19, they become more literate and aware about the situation and global spread of COVID-19.

In relation the reviewed study, “*Media and information literacy in news feeds and education*” believes that social media has always been important in pandemic or widespread disease as people become dependent on social media for news and information related to diseases (Garcia et al., 2013). Being literate helps the youth to identify the source, motives and context of information related to pandemic. So, the study highlights that majority of participants get to know the spread of COVID-19 and conditions of hospital due to social media (Nygren, 2018).

RQ1. Does the usage of social media increase media literacy among youth regarding COVID-19?

Social media play role in providing literacy among youth regarding COVID-19. The results of the study show that the usage of social media helps in educating youth regarding the global spread of COVID-19. They become more aware about the intensity of the disease due to information disseminated by social media. Social media educate them about the preventive measures to avoid COVID-19 (Brady, 2010). Social media helps the youth in creating literacy that how to remain safe from COVID-19. They get more informed about the different cures to avoid COVID-19 and remain safe from numerous unsafe treatment methods to remain safe from COVID-19. Social media play an active role in educating youth regarding hospital conditions and increasing figures of death toll due to COVID-19. Information disseminated by social media helps the youth to become more sensible and literate in COVID-19. As cited in the above literature review from the study says that media information literacy is always important to identify source of information and to literate people regarding several issues happening around (Festl, 2021).

RQ2. Is there a positive relationship between behavior of youth and literacy provided by social media regarding COVID-19?

The study finds out that there is a strong and positive relationship between the behavior of youth and media literacy. The information provided by social media affects the behavior of youth regarding COVID-19 as they start taking preventive measures in order to avoid the disease. They become more responsible and adopt all precautionary i.e. (maintaining social distance, wearing mask, using sanitizer) after getting to know about the situation of COVID-19 in country (Alhabash, Ma, 2017). The results shows that majority of participants start following government directions and doctor advice of avoiding social gatherings as it is harmful in COVID-19. Youth consume and share the information regarding COVID-19 on social media in right direction but social media has also created panic among youth regarding outbreak spread of COVID-19. Youth often get worried to know the global and fast spread of COVID-19 and to know about the increasing number of victims, youth start strictly implements on advice of not going into rush or in different social and public gatherings due to information disseminated by social media (Radwan, 2020).

4. Results

The study reveals the role of social media in the dissemination of information and creating literacy among youth regarding COVID-19. It also analyzes the relationship between behavior of youth and media literacy regarding COVID-19 in terms of adopting precautionary measures to avoid COVID-19. The study highlights the difference between male and female behaviors towards the literacy provided by social media relevant to COVID-19.

The results of the study are given below:

Table 1. Correlations test between usage of social media and media literacy

Correlations			
		<i>Usage of social media</i>	<i>Media Literacy</i>
Usage of social media	Pearson Correlation	1	.202**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Media Literacy	Pearson Correlation	.202**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2. Correlations test between media literacy and behavior of youth

Correlations			
		<i>Media Literacy</i>	<i>Behavior of youth</i>
Media Literacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.162*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.018
	N	300	300
Behavior of youth	Pearson Correlation	.162*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	
	N	300	300

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to the results of the above table, the r value .202 indicates a positive relationship between usage of social media and media literacy. The corresponding p.000 is less than 0.05 which shows that there is a significant relationship between both variables and concludes that the usage of social media increases the literacy among youth regarding COVID-19. Hence, the results show that there is a large size effect between the variables and the hypothesis has been proven that social media increases the literacy among youth regarding COVID-19.

By analyzing the above table, the findings show the r value .162 indicating a positive relationship between the behavior of youth and media literacy regarding COVID-19. The corresponding p value .018 is less than 0.05 which means that there is a significant relationship between both variables and it concludes that the behavior of youth changes by the literacy provided by social media regarding COVID-19 in terms of taking precautionary measures to avoid COVID-19. Hence, there is a large size effect between the variables and the hypothesis has been proven that there is a strong and positive relationship between behavior of youth and media literacy regarding COVID-19 in terms of adopting precautionary measures to avoid COVID-19.

Table 3. STD deviation of Media Information Literacy (MIL)

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MIL	Male	186	24.7581	2.35511	.17269
	Female	114	24.8947	2.64196	.24744

Table 4. Independent Samples Test of Media Information Literacy (MIL)

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
MIL	Equal variances assumed	1.402	.237	2.466	228	.042	1.3667	.29354
	Equal variances not assumed			2.463	218.25	.051	1.3667	.30174

According to the results, the p value under sig. (2-tailed) .051 which is less than 0.05 indicates that there is statistically significant difference between male and female behaviors towards the literacy provided by social media regarding COVID-19. The behavior of male is different than female towards literacy provided by social media regarding the pandemic $t(2.463) = p < .05$, $d = 0.29$ which dictates that there is a difference but the effect size is small.

5. Conclusion

Social media, media information literacy and behavior of youth have strong positive correlation (Khan, Idris, 2019). Social media disseminates information and in the perspective of media and information literacy, social media has created awareness and literate the youth regarding COVID-19 which in turn changes the behavior of youth i.e. wearing masks, maintaining social distancing and use sanitizer as preventive measures to remain safe from COVID-19. The study concludes that the social media has created literacy among youth regarding COVID-19 and the information disseminated by the social media changes the behavior of youth regarding COVID-19 (Akindehin, 2011). The study also indicates that youth get panic and feel fear to know about increasing cases of COVID-19 so they start using precautionary measures for safety against this pandemic.

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