

# **Changes in the usage of Social Media Platforms during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper attempts to study the social media usage among social media users during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media is, without a doubt, a major aspect of daily life in today's society. It is used widely and for a variety of reasons. To many, the day starts and ends with social media, to the point that many have careers centred around social media. What started as a simple way to stay connected with family and friends has now expanded beyond expectations and has successfully incorporated its existence into almost every aspect of daily life. Considering the extent of its significance, it is expected that the pandemic would change patterns in usage of social media slightly, if not significantly.

The pandemic has brought with it several government mandated lockdowns and restrictions that have altered the daily lives of many. Right from office workers working from home and shorter hours for supermarkets to the frenzy surrounding the virus itself, it can safely be concluded that the pandemic has in fact impacted life in varied ways.

This paper studies the usage of social media and how it has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social Media refers to computer based applications that allow one to share ideas, thoughts and information in virtual communities or groups. They are generally interactive and mainly consist of user generated content. Users create profiles for the website or app and list their interests, based on which social media facilitates interaction between like-minded individuals. This results in an online community of sorts consisting of individuals with similar interests. Social Media platforms are either websites or a downloadable application, or sometimes both.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

### **FACEBOOK**

Facebook is a Social Networking site, founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. It was originally intended for college students to interact, although the target audience has certainly expanded since its inception. Facebook allows users to

create profiles and list their details, after which they can reach out to other users and add them as “friends”. In addition to this, users can also post texts, pictures, and videos with varying levels of privacy.

## **INSTAGRAM**

Instagram is a completely visual based application owned by Facebook. It allows its users to create profiles and share their photos and videos with their “followers”. Instagram allows users to either own a public account or a private one, hence enabling them to control and choose who views their content.

## **QUORA**

Quora, founded by Adam D’Angelo, is a question and answer platform. Users, after creating their accounts, can answer questions posed by other users either under their names or anonymously. They are also allowed to ask questions to other users of the platforms. The questions and answers posed to the user is generally suited to their interests, which they list out at the time of inception of their account.

## **YOUTUBE**

YouTube is an online video sharing platform that now operates as a subsidiary company of Google. YouTube mainly consists of videos that are catered to people of all age groups, right from nursery rhymes to World War II documentaries. Users are not required to have an account to view most of the videos, however, they are required one to interact with other users in any way. YouTube also allows account holders to like, dislike, comment and create playlists.

## **TIKTOK**

TikTok is one of the newer social media platforms, based in China. It mainly contains short lip-sync, singing or other talent videos which are uploaded by the users themselves. Since it is a visual medium, and does not even allow pictures to be posted, TikTok is mainly used for entertainment purposes.

## **USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **CONNECT WITH FRIENDS**

This is one of the reasons most social media sites gained popularity initially. It provided users with an opportunity to connect virtually with their families and friends. This was well received as people could keep tabs on their friends and families with minimal effort.

#### **ENTERTAINMENT**

Social Media Platforms like TikTok and YouTube are mainly used for entertainment purposes. They are full of funny skits, music, and other talent videos which cater to audiences of all ages and hence, are extremely entertaining.

#### **NEWS**

Many Newspapers and channels have accounts on Social Media websites and regularly post to keep their followers well updated. Many political figures and world leaders also manage social media handles and keep the people regularly informed of their activities.

#### **EDUCATION**

Social Media platforms like YouTube and Facebook have large communities of students with common goals. YouTube has several channels that are dedicated to education. Many educators post videos for the benefit of the students, which the students watch and learn from.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

To find the following

- Maximum usage of a particular social media platform
- Number of hours being spent on a day
- Type of social media user
- Change in usage pattern due to COVID-19
- Impact of social media in life

#### **LIMITATIONS**

As always, this research was also affected by certain limitations.

1. The sample taken for the study was confined to residents of Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
2. Only subjects belonging to the Middle and Upper Class were studied, due to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.
3. The research was conducted through an online questionnaire due to time and monetary constraints.
4. The information provided by the respondents may not be fully accurate.
5. Time acted as a considerable limitation.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

Null Hypothesis: There will be no significant difference in the social media usage patterns before and during the pandemic.

Alternate Hypothesis: There will be a significant difference in the social media usage patterns before and during the pandemic.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In *“But not all social media are the same: Analyzing organizations’ social media usage patterns”* (2015), authors Eun Go and Kyung Han You examine in detail how organisations use Social Media to interact with consumer bases and their tendency to use two-way communication platforms. They further discuss the theoretical applications of such.

In *“Social Media Usage Patterns in Higher Education Institutions – An Empirical Study”* (2019), YankaGeorgievaAleksandrova, Silvia StoyanovaParusheva study the usage of Social Media with reference to education. They also identified trends in the usage of social media in communication of education related content among students.

In *“Social Media Usage”* (2005), Andrew Perrin studies the change in the usage of social media over a period of 10 years. He further examines how social media

has changed politics, political debate, communication, work-life, health and stress levels around the globe.

In “*Social Media Update*” (2016), Shannon Greenwood, Andrew Perrin and Maeve Duggan study the various social media usage patterns of the public. With many stating that they get news about the presidential elections and other significant news through social media, they studied the extent of impact of social media on all aspects of daily life.

## **METHODOLOGY**

An online questionnaire was conducted. There were about 130 participants who responded to the questionnaire. Out of these, 75% were female respondents and 25% were male respondents.

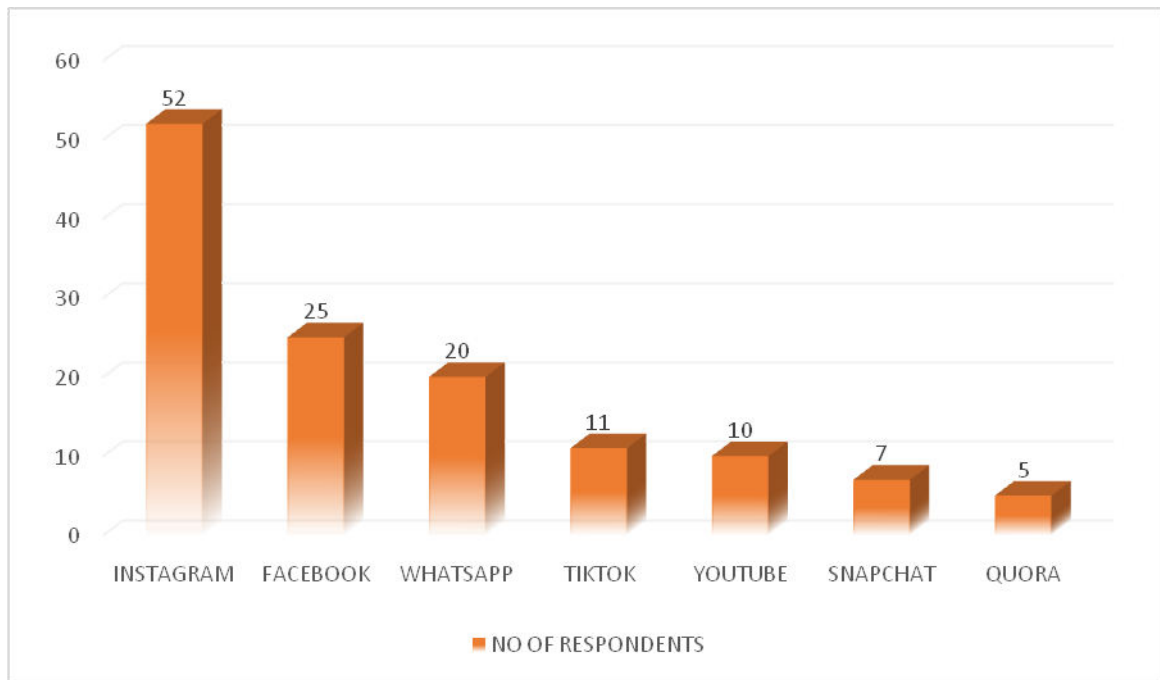
Majority of participants were from 18 to 20 years. All the participants were from in and around Chennai region, Tamil Nadu.

The questionnaire contained a total of 13 questions to get the data with maximum accuracy. The first 3 questions were based on name, age and gender and rest 10 questions were solely related to the research.

The respondents were contacted online only through social media to fill the questionnaire. The survey was conducted with the help of Google Forms medium.

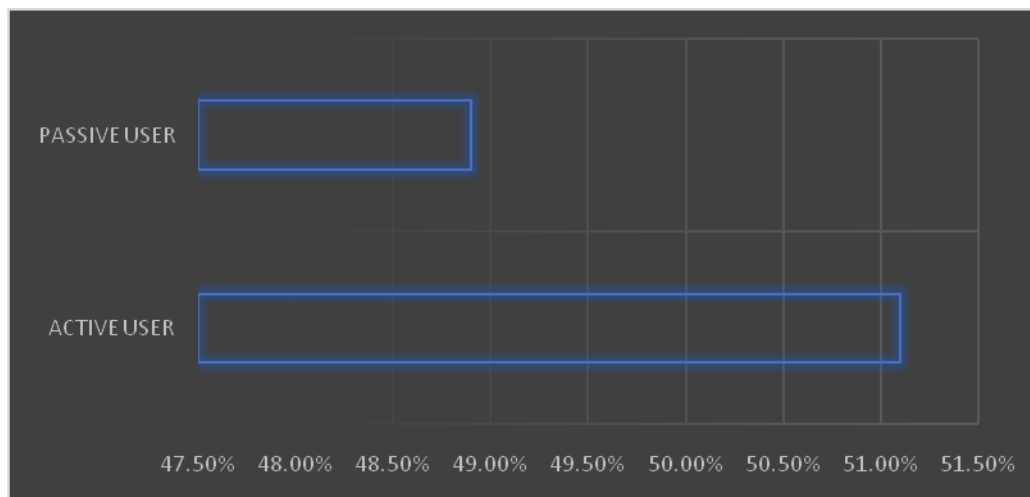
## **RESULTS**

### **1. Usage of social media platforms**



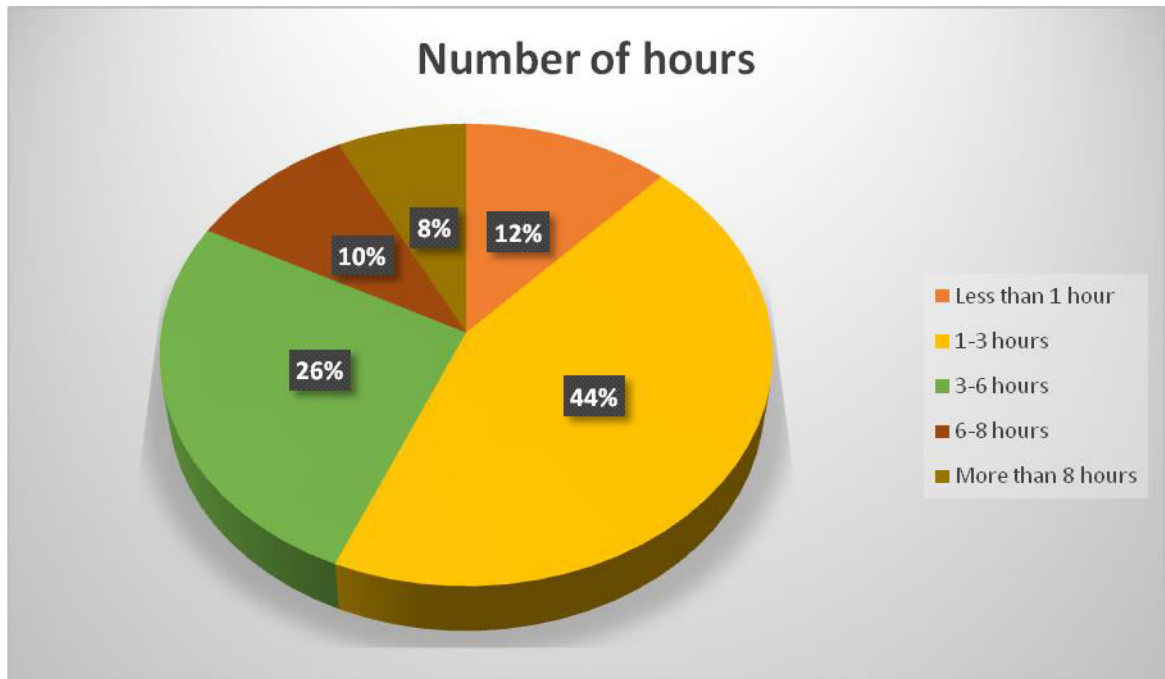
**Above figure:** shows the number of respondents using a particular social media platform

## 2. Type of user



**Above figure:** shows the number of respondents being either an active user or passive user.

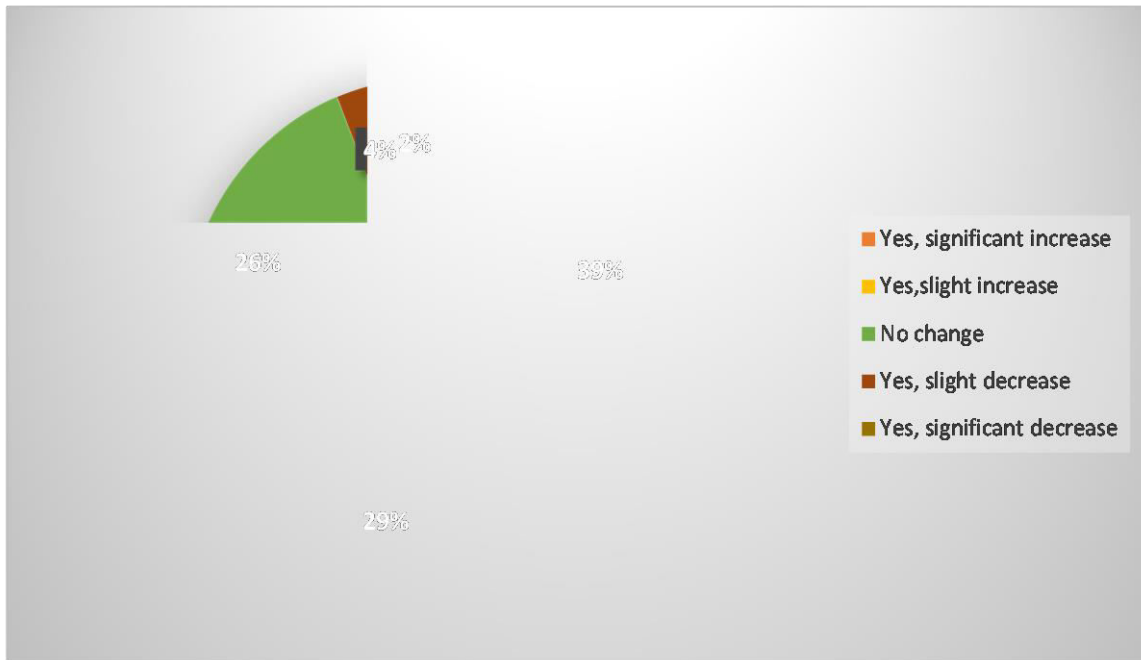
**3. Time spent**



**Above figure:** shows the number of hours being spent per day on social media platform

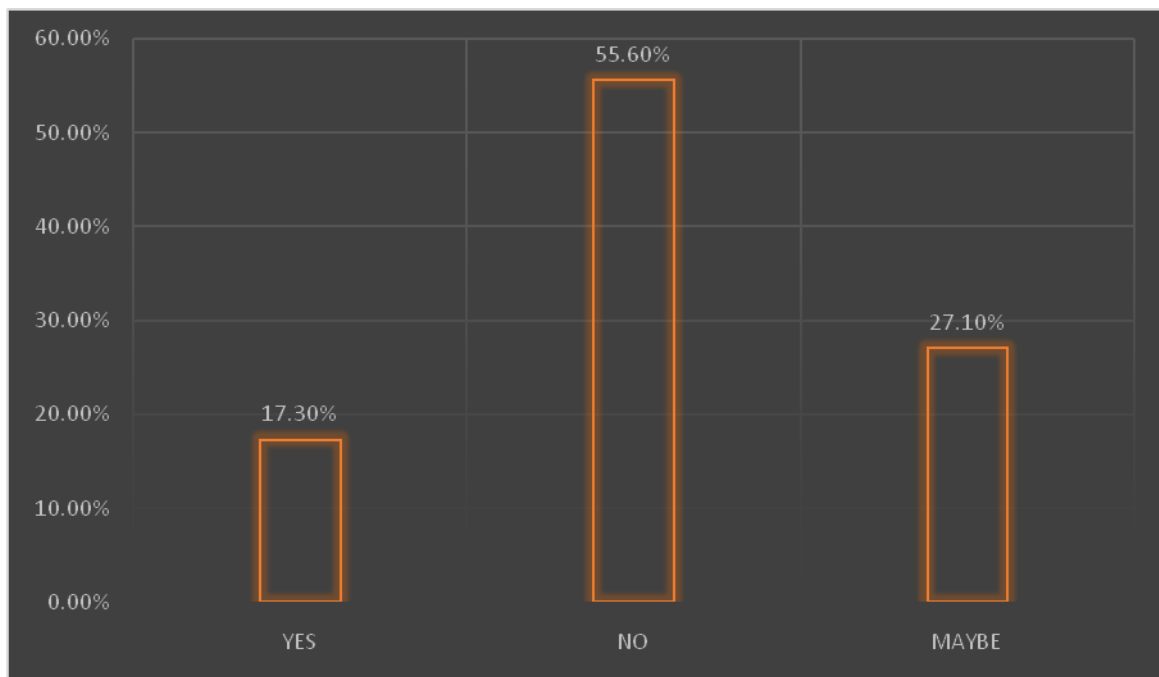
**4. Change in pattern of time being spent**





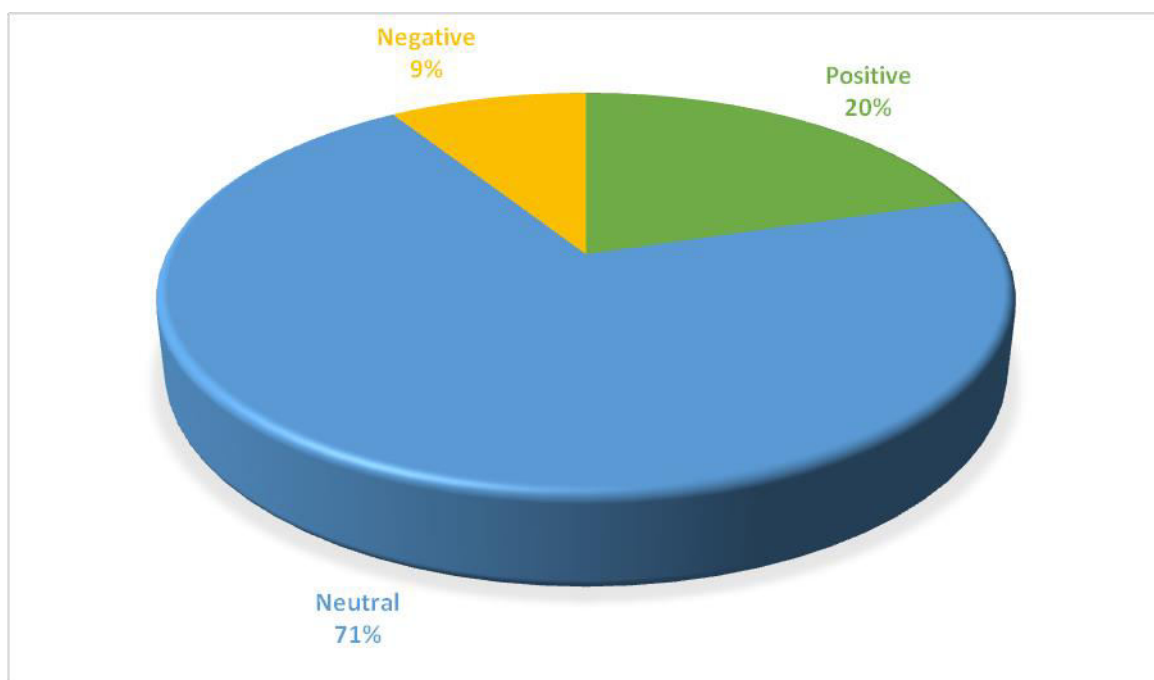
**Above figure:** shows the change in number of hours spent per day during lockdown

#### **5. Distraction due to social media during the lockdown**



**Above figure:** shows the percentage of distraction due to social media amidst COVID-19 pandemic based on the number of respondents.

## **6. Type of impact of social media**



**Above figure:** shows the overall impact of social media on one's life. The data was derived from the responses of the participants.

### **ANALYSIS**

Based on the results, the maximum number of respondents use Instagram (52) followed by facebook (25) and whatsapp (20). The figure-2 shows the type of users, 51.1% of the respondents are active users and 48.9% of the respondents are passive users of social media platforms.

The usual time spent on social media platforms is 1 to 6 hours a day, based on the responses given by the participants. We can also see that, there has been a change in number of hours being spent due to the lockdown in figure-4, where about 39% of respondents have said that there has been significant increase in the usage of social media since the lockdown and about 29% have said there has been only a slight increase in the usage.

About 55.6% of the respondents have said NO for distraction due to social media and about 17.3% have said a YES to distraction due to social media platforms.

But overall, about 70.7% of respondents feel neutral on the impact of social media in their lives and about 20.3% of respondents feel positive using social media platforms.

## **CONCLUSION**

The aim of this research paper was to understand whether there is a change in the pattern of using social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic which has owed to lockdown. So, by conducting an online survey we could understand the change in the pattern. Based on 130 participants the research data has been derived by asking properly framed questions for the research and some common questions. The hypothesis has been proven true. First we can see that there are maximum users for instagram. Around 39% of the respondents have said that there has been a significant increase in the usage and 29% have said there has only a slight increase in the usage. We could also understand that the overall impact of social media is neutral for the majority of the respondents in their life. Post analysing we could understand that, there has been a significant increase in the usage and that will be the very end result of this research paper.

In general the social media apps and platforms have made it easier to adapt to the “new normal” of living. The gap between lack of social interaction with social communities and groups is significant, and social media provides a way to fill the gap. At the same time, one has to take care of their mental health too, as most people are left with anxiety and looking for support amidst this pandemic, they need to connect themselves with their concerned ones more than before. The other social media platforms like Zoom, Skype, etc., have provided a solution to these types of previously mentioned problems too.

But, the pattern of increase in usage of social media platforms will not persist continuously, if once the lockdown is completely lifted, there will be yet again a complete change in the usage pattern..It doesn't matter in the number of hours one tends to spend in but it is very important to use these platforms wisely. Social

media has both positive and negative impacts but, it depends upon how we use it properly.

## **SOURCES**

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