Unveiling the Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media amongst the Learners in Digital Age

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Abstract: Technological advancements has created transformations in all spheres of life and it has become an indispensable element of human beings locally as well as globally. Social Media is a digital technology that uses websites and applications by using communication and content sharing. It is considered as one of fastest and speediest modes of communication today's competitive world amongst the students. It is inevitable to explore the challenges and opportunities of social media amongst the learners in order to enhance the e-learning opportunities and digital literacy. It is apparent that social media has been used as well as misused by the students in educational realm. It has tremendously influenced on the mental and intellectual abilities possessed by the learners. This research work consists of questionnaire-based interaction with students, teachers and counsellors belonging to different educational institutions in Panvel and its vicinity. The total respondents included in the research were 2411 of different age group from Degree Colleges and Higher Secondary Schools. Therefore, it is found that there is a complex impact as of social media on youths with a varied perspective. Social media has performed as a revolutionized technological missile by developing the effective communication and social relationships. It is also regarded as double-edged weapon with horrendous consequences amongst the users. It essential to utilize social media for academic development and inculcation of values of good digital citizenship amongst the learners in this 21st century. This is research paper is an

attempt to investigate prominent challenges and opportunities of social media amongst the learners in digital world.

Key words: e-Learning, Double Edged Weapon, Technological Missile, Complex Impact

Introduction

The life of human beings have changed drastically on account of advent of technology. It has played significant role in transforming the life of humans in 21st century. It is apparent that no one can escape the absolute necessity of technology in our daily lives. Each of us is so heavily dependent on technology that we cannot do anything easily without it. Technology is important because it is used in all areas of life. Technology contributes immensely to the access and acquisition of information, and thus the development. This is the reason for the existence of a huge scientific and cognitive revolution, which entails facilitating human life by increasing inventions in various practical fields. Technology has also contributed in reforming teaching and learning process. It is very easy and convenient to collect required information pertaining to ways various domains of learning because of the intervention of technology. It is found that the desire to communicate with each other is very spontaneous and natural amongst the people. Usually, Social Media is a complete term that uses applications and websites by focusing on communication, content sharing, interaction and marketing. It has created a revolution in the life of people as it is used by everyone. The prominent Social Media apps are Instagram, Whatsapp, Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, etc.

The prominent advantages of social media are as follows:

1. Useful for educational purposes: It is apparent that social media allows you to reach a large users and build your brand. We can share relevant information or content with the users, which is helpful if we want people to follow our social media.

2. Stay up to date: The students can get updated information with the help of social media. It can also provide information about various happenings in the world as well as educational scenario within shortest span of time.

3. Get connected to new people: The biggest advantage of social media is that it allows us to feel connected with the people who share our interest and values. It ultimately helps us to build relationships with more people. It is possible to reach out to the people globally with the help of social media.

4. Builds relationships: Social media also contributes in relationship building amongst the people in the society. It is considered as a panacea for connecting our oldest friends and relatives who may not live close to us but still we can stay connected with them. It also creates sense of belongingness and affinity amongst the people.

The prominent disadvantages of social media are as follows:

1. Cyber-crimes: It is the most challenging and threatening drawback of social media. Generally, cybercrime comprises of cyber bullying, money fraud, online threats, stalking and trolling. This problem is increasing day by day and it becomes very difficult to tackle it on account of complexities involved in the process of virtual world.

2. Fear of missing out (FOMO): It is observed that the continuous and overuse of social media may lead to anxiousness in the mind of users if they do not see anything promptly. It ultimately leads to development of inferiority complex. It is also responsible for creating nervousness in the mind of the students.

3. No privacy: This is another significant disadvantage of social media to the users in the world. It is observed that there is no privacy on social media wherein anyone can access our information available online.

4. Getting close to Depression: The excessive use of social media is regarded as biggest addiction amongst the students. There is tremendous dichotomy between virtual and actual world as envisioned by the users.

Objectives:

1. To create an awareness amongst the learners for good digital citizenship.

2. To enhance the e-learning opportunities amongst the learners through social media.

3. To examine the pros and cons of social media amongst the learners with special reference to cyber-crime.
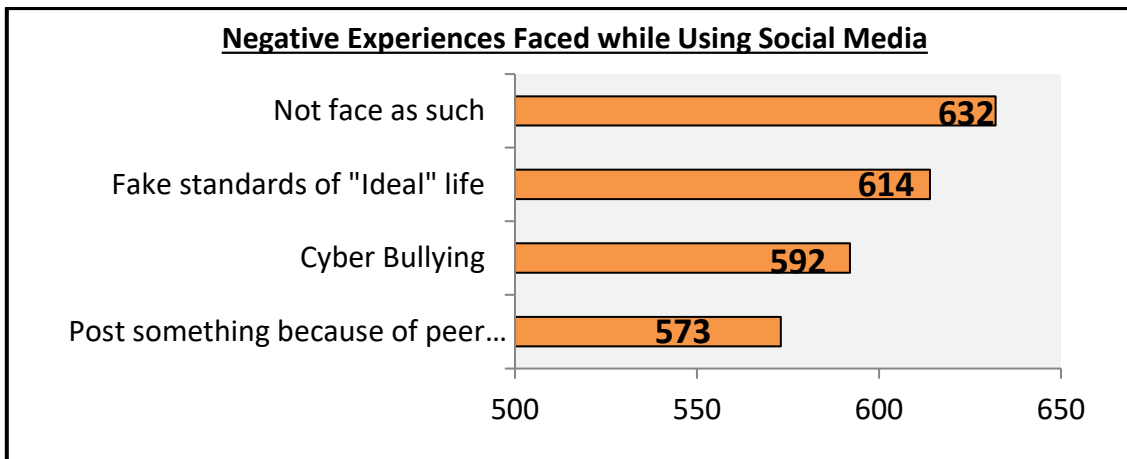
Research Methodology:

The research methodology consists of:
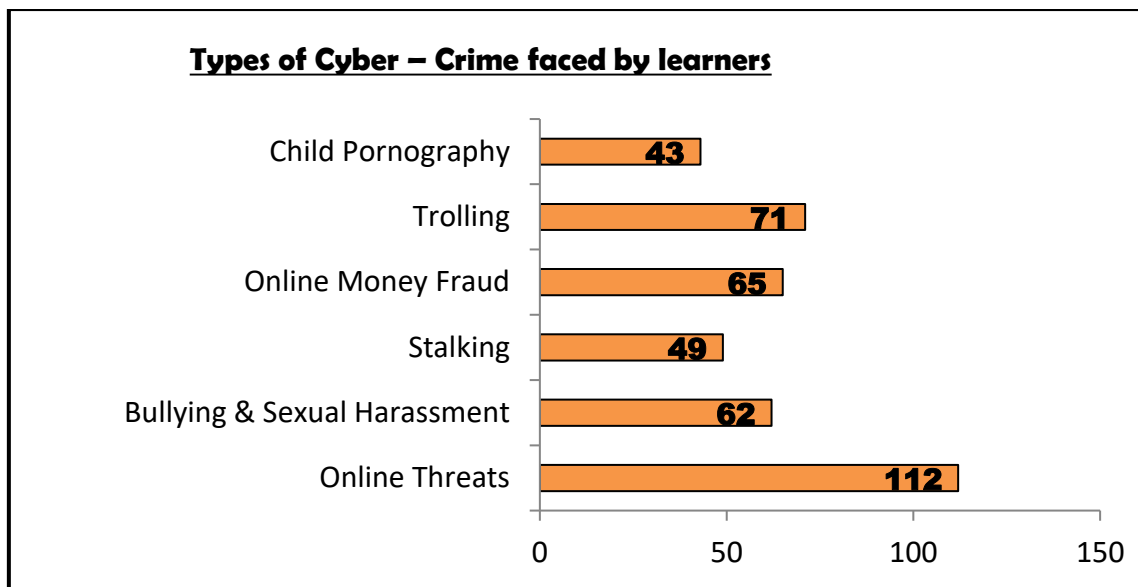
❑ **QUESTIONNAIRE BASED SURVEY :**

- We have designed a questionnaire of 10 questions for the Learners.
- We have designed a questionnaire of 11 questions for the Teachers.
- We have also circulated a google form among the Learners.

❑ **INTERVIEWS AND INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS :**

- We have conducted interview of different teachers and students for data collection.

❑ **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION**

- Primary Data   - Questionnaire for the Learners (1864 samples)

                         Teachers (6 samples)

                   - Google Form (541 samples)

- Secondary Data - Newspaper articles and several research papers.

Sample Size:

For our research, we studied ten educational institutions in our locality and collected total sample size of 2411.

Further, we've categorised students into three age groups, that is, 15-18, 19-21 and 22-30 years.

Data Analysis of the respondents:

The data analysis indicates that the most used social media app is Instagram (25%) and, the least used one is Facebook (7%) and Pinterest (6%).

Challenges on Social Media

The major challenges on social media as faced by the students are reflected in the following graph:

Negative Experiences Faced while Using Social Media

Category	Value
Not face as such	632
Fake standards of "Ideal" life	614
Cyber Bullying	592
Post something because of peer…	573

1. **Cyber Crime**

Types of Cyber – Crime faced by learners

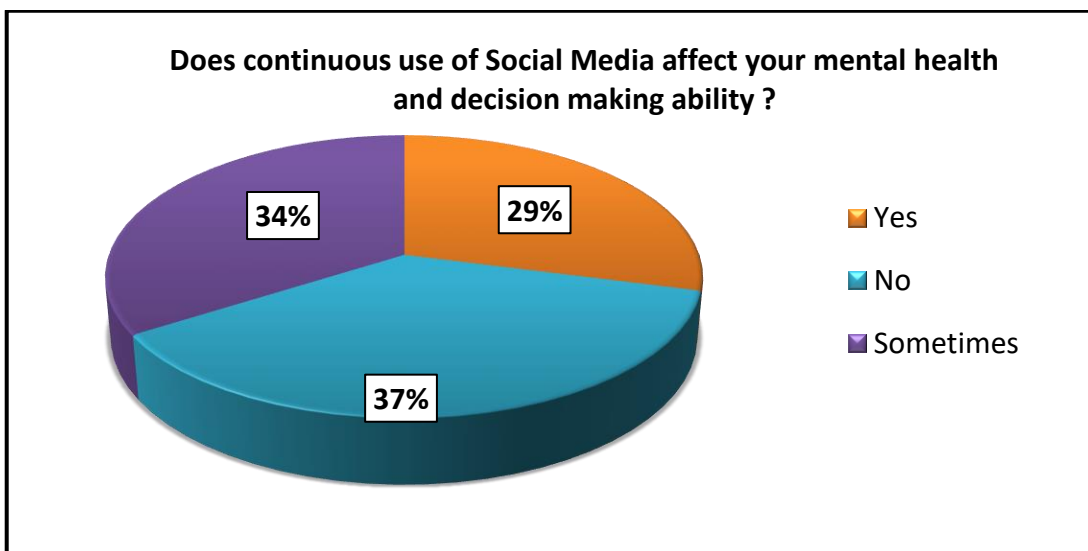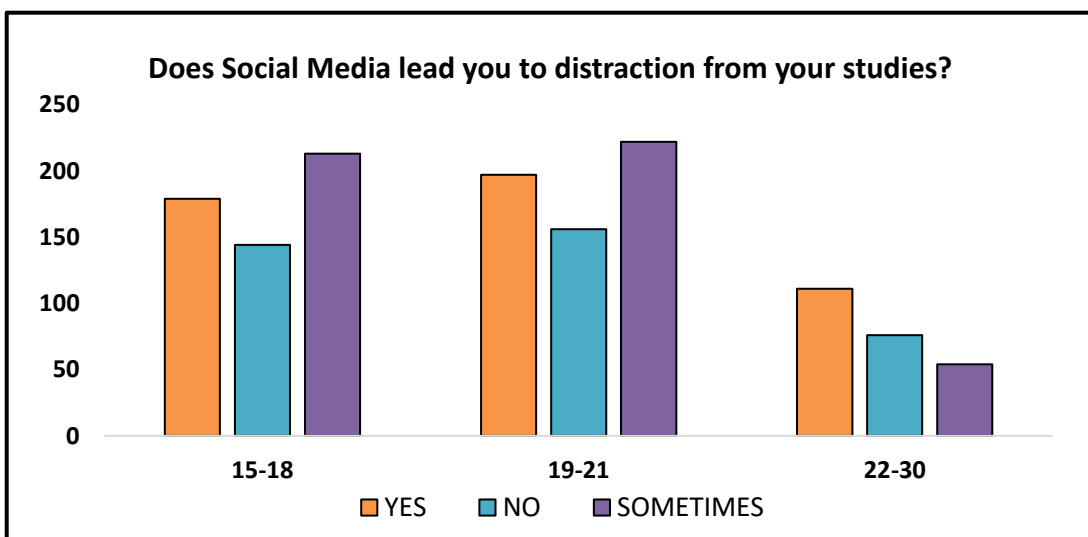| Category	Value
Child Pornography	43
Trolling	71
Online Money Fraud	65
Stalking	49
Bullying & Sexual Harassment	62
Online Threats	112

According to our survey, 21 % of the learners faced cyber-crime while using Social Media, including, Online Threats (22%), Trolling (14%), Online Money Fraud (12%), Cyber Bullying (12%), Stalking (9%) and Child Pornography (8%). But, only 10% of them reported it to their nearby police stations or cyber-cell the reason being lack of awareness regarding cyber-crime and hesitation to do so. Our research also includes two case-studies of cyber-crime in our locality.

2. Psychological Aspect

Does continuous use of Social Media affect your mental health and decision making ability ?
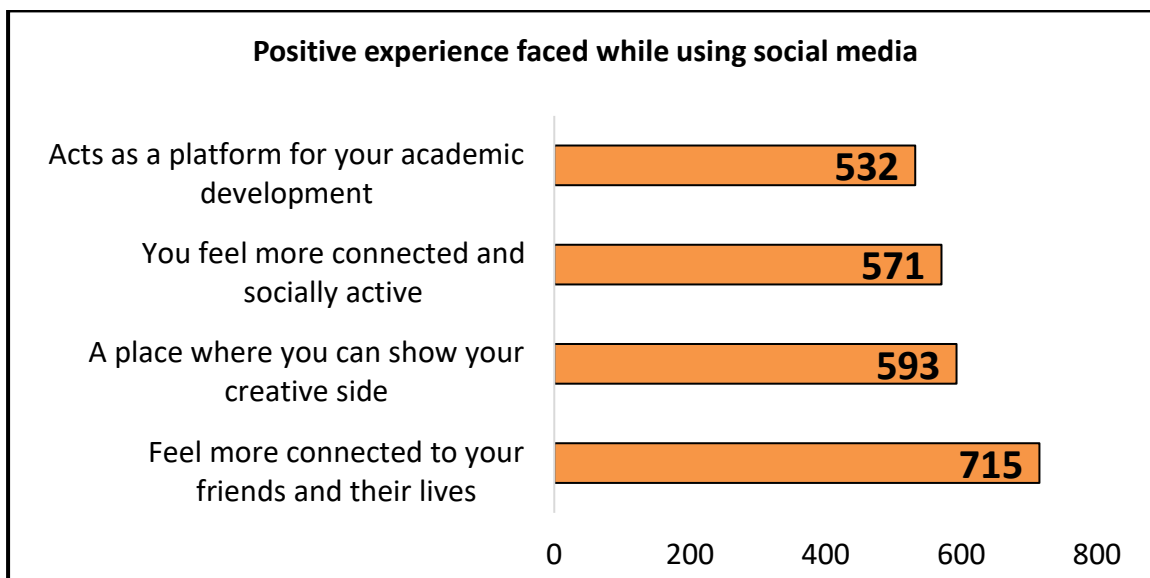
- 29% Yes
- 37% No
- 34% Sometimes

The above pie chart suggests that 29% students believe that continuous use of social media has negatively affected their mental health and decision making ability by causing depression, Fear of Missing out (FOMO), insomnia, inactivity, anxiety, eating disorders.

Does Social Media lead you to distraction from your studies?

YES   NO   SOMETIMES

(Age groups: 15-18, 19-21, 22-30)

The above pie chart indicates that 28% students in the age group of 15-18 and 19-21 years, believes that the continuous use of Social Media leads them to distraction from their studies.

Opportunities on Social Media

Positive experience faced while using social media

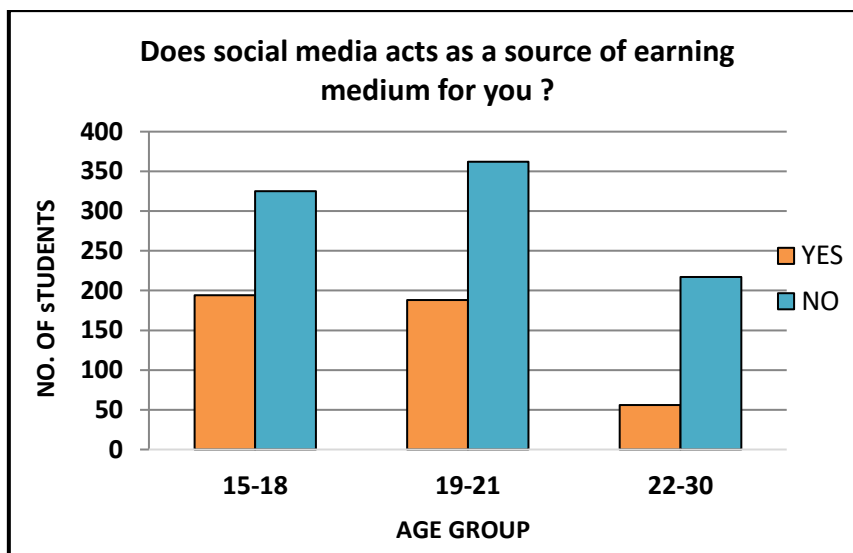| Category	Value
Acts as a platform for your academic development	532
You feel more connected and socially active	571
A place where you can show your creative side	593
Feel more connected to your friends and their lives	715

The major positive experiences faced by the students while using social media are as a platform for their academic development, to be more connected with their peers and family as a creative platform.

Do you use Social Media for Academic Purpose ?

- Yes — 64%
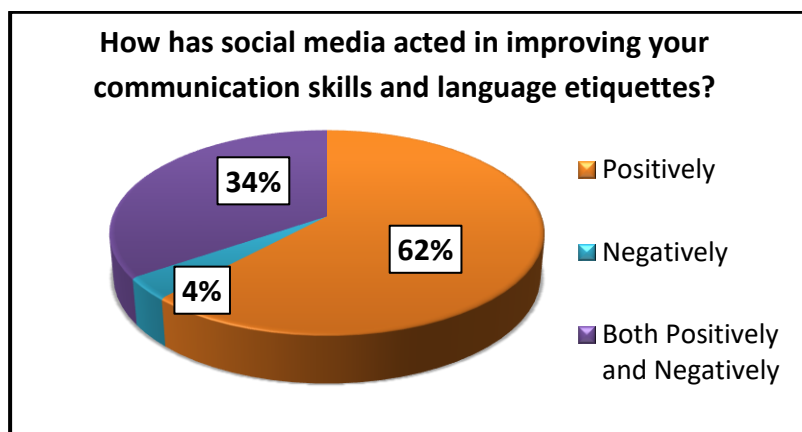- Sometimes — 33%
- No — 3%
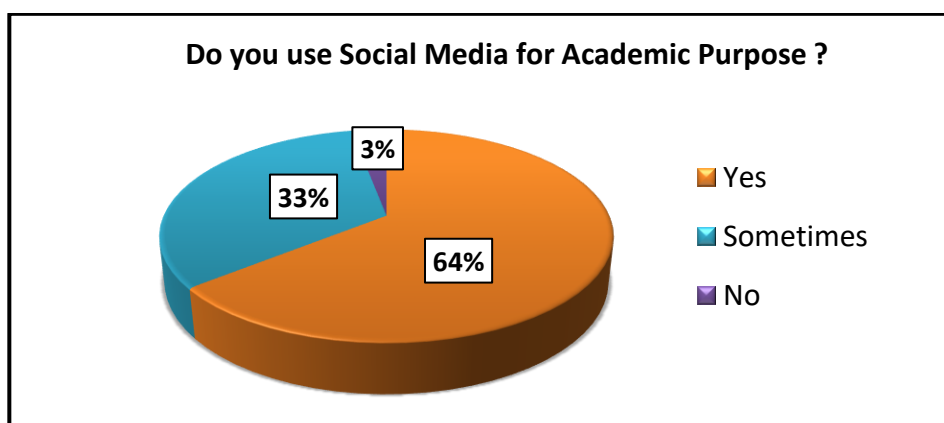
The above pie chart indicates that 64% students use Social Media for their academic purpose, that is, to download and share e-resources, organize group discussions, join

different academic clubs, stay updates with latest news or current affairs and study several research papers, etc.

Does social media acts as a source of earning medium for you ?

NO. OF sTUDENTS

AGE GROUP	YES	NO
15-18		
19-21		
22-30		

For majority of the students in the age group of 19-21 years, Social Media acts as a source of earning medium for them, that is in the form of, blogging, freelancing, affiliate marketing, trading, and online tutoring, etc.

How has social media acted in improving your communication skills and language etiquettes?

- Positively — 62%
- Negatively — 4%
- Both Positively and Negatively — 34%

The above pie chart demonstrates that only 62% students believe that it has positively improved their communication skills and language etiquettes.

Outcomes of Interaction with the Counselor

We had conducted a questionnaire based interview with the counselor in order to know their opinions on Social Media. Through this interaction we were familiarized with major three outcomes:

1. Major challenge on Social Media for students is that of their mental health , including Anger Issues, Screen Addiction, Misconceptions about ideal life, FOMO

2. Digital Literacy – According to the counselor, the correct age to start using Social Media should be above 15 years and there should be frequent and adequate organization of mental health awareness camps in educational institutions.

3. The solutions to Social Media challenges are adaptation of Mobile Free Zones, encouraging practice of physical exercises in schools or colleges and Rubber-Band Techniques.
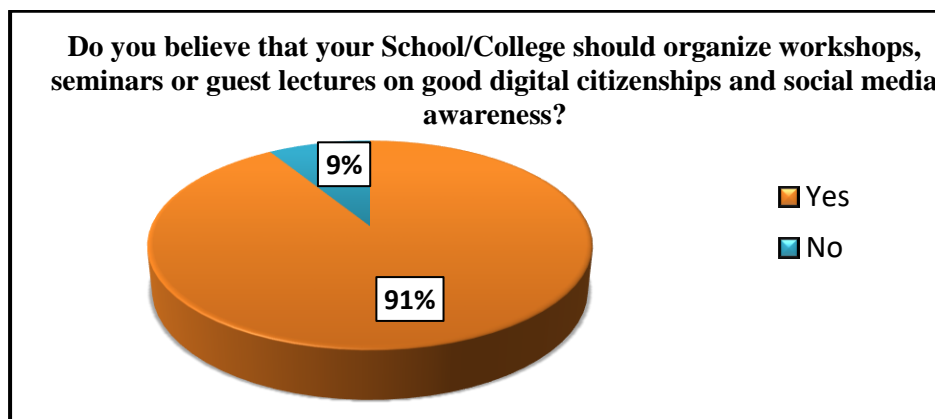
Recommendations:

1. Adapting the practice of "Family Screen Audit**".**

   Through our data analysis, we found that only 39% students were aware of this term.

Are you aware of the term " Family Screen Audit" ?

39% — ■ Yes

61% — ■ No
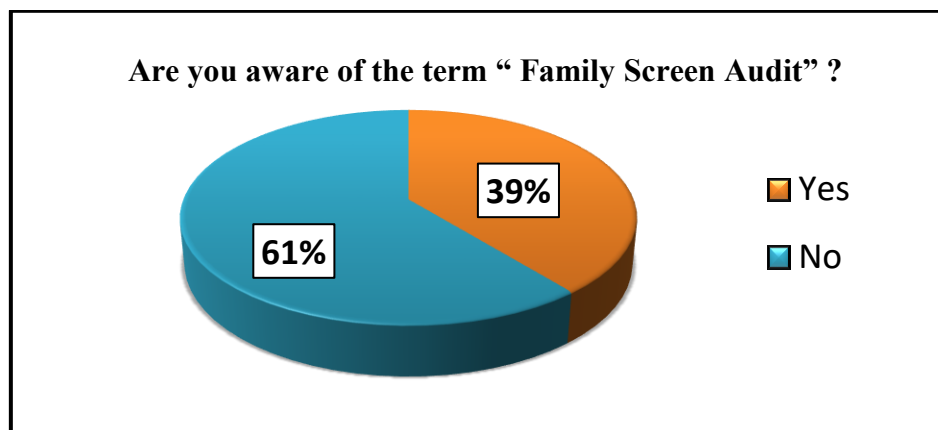
2. The students should ensure a healthy and value based usage of Social Media. For the said purpose only, they can take frequent breaks from it and engage themselves in activities (Painting, Reading a book, Cooking, Gardening, etc.). It would ensure a perfect balance between the virtual and real world.

3. Around 91% students believed that should be organization of orientation programmes, seminars and guest lectures on social media awareness and digital literacy for students in schools or colleges.

Do you believe that your School/College should organize workshops, seminars or guest lectures on good digital citizenships and social media awareness?

☐ Yes
☐ No

9%
91%

4. There should be celebration of "WORLD SOCIAL MEDIA DAY" in educational institutions on a much larger scale to ensure the substitution of social media addiction with its proper utilization for holistic development of students.

5. There should be creation of feedback mechanism for the learners to understand their experiences on e-learning platforms. It can be in the form of google forms, Interaction with students or Parent-Teacher Interactions.

6. The educational institutions should initiate workshops about e-leaning opportunities for the educators and learners, wherein, it should provide proper faculty training to the educators and inculcate the values of good digital citizenship in the students.

Conclusion: In this way, an attempt has been made to investigate various challenges and opportunities on social media amongst the learners in digital age.

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