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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract:

This makes social media an important educational instrument and an outlet for training among the many residents in such remote communities where it is nearly impossible to obtain educational resources as expected. More or less people having access to the internet with low-cost mobile devices makes knowledge, learning, information sharing, and career building via sites such as YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. Social media bridges the gap between rural and urban regions in terms of education by opening up international sources, encouraging cooperation, and enhancing participation in vocational training. There are several challenges to its implementation, including cultural resistance, unreliable connectivity, and digital literacy gaps. According to research, learning through social media greatly expands knowledge and abilities while, conversely, focusing on obstacles in implementation. Only by attending to the aforementioned issues through targeted interventions, culturally relevant content, and enhanced digital infrastructure will the said goals be fully achieved.

Introduction:

While social networking systems were first conceptualized as tools mainly for interpersonal connections, they have since evolved into a number of resources to help with learning, skill development, and career growth across different populations. There has been a keen interest among scholars to examine the possibility of using social media as an effective tool for learning in these locations where educational facilities are sparse or lack more than what is sufficient for the requirement. In the last few years, social media has revolutionized the way people communicate, collaborate, and gain access to information.

There are multiple ways through which social media can be utilized as an educational tool: to promote group projects, grant users access to hundreds of resources, enhance digital literacy, and foster a feeling of community in students. Websites like Facebook,

Instagram, LinkedIn, and Coursera, and niche websites have certain features on them that may be utilized for learning purposes. These information exchange networks improve the learning process by encouraging discussion participation and peer-and professional connections with people who share knowledge all over the world.

Social media also had wide spread across more miles of places where it used its technologies for wider range reach into all users around rural areas that the same may gain educational material or contents into a smartphone or any other mobile pad. That may bring it up, to take on to educate as change can be effective given that mobile is gaining to more users. Several research

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studies have shown that learners in social media develop the ability to improve engagement and motivation, promote the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in a dynamic learning environment.

While social media has much positive potential for educational use, hazards and challenges have to be weighed and considered. A number of problems occur in teaching with social media-including the probability of cyberbullying, the potential for being digitally illiterate, and also the existence of false information-that challenge teachers and politicians. Additionally, the environment with which social media is used bears a lot in the effectiveness of such a teaching tool. Designing successful programs that use social networking sites for education requires understanding the unique needs and circumstances of rural populations.

Need of Study:

1. Today, with such an eager interest in knowing the extent to which social media has enabled learning and skills or knowledge acquisition among rural populations, investigating its effectiveness will provide a lot of light on how such a medium may complement or enhance conventional education methods.

2. Rural communities have their challenges, such as digital literacy issues, cultural constraints, and limited access to devices or reliable connectivity. Understanding these barriers is essential for developing targeted interventions that ensure the equitable use of social media for education.

3. Social media promises to empower marginalized groups such as rural youth and women. It can help them acquire new skills, and provide employment, and social inclusion. This paper explores how these tools can facilitate inclusion in education and development initiatives.

4. Although social media sites have become popular in urban education settings, their use in rural skill development is still not explored. This study aims to determine whether and how learning through social media improves the skills and knowledge of rural people.

5. Most people in rural areas are separated geographically from the learning centres and do not have access to formal institutions; social media, however, helps scale by enabling the student to study from anywhere, and access global resources to aid learning, and knowledge sharing.

Rational of study:

1. Growing penetration of smartphones and affordable internet services in rural areas would create an opportunity to avail digital platforms to educational pursuits. Those social media being popular for rural users would be effective medium for educational purposes as well.

2. Systems of old traditional education are heavy resource-takers; thus, it becomes less feasible in many resource-poor rural settings. Social media presents an economic and scalable alternative for diffusion of educational content and skill development.

3. Despite all this, challenges still prevail in rural education adoption through social media because of digital literacy gaps, inconsistencies in connectivity, and cultural resistance. The importance lies in the identification and rectification of such barriers to achieve the maximum utilization of social media in rural areas.

4. Most rural communities are ignorant of the various government initiatives and programs that have been initiated to promote education and skill development. Social media can be an effective tool for creating awareness and increasing engagement with such initiatives.

Conceptual framework :
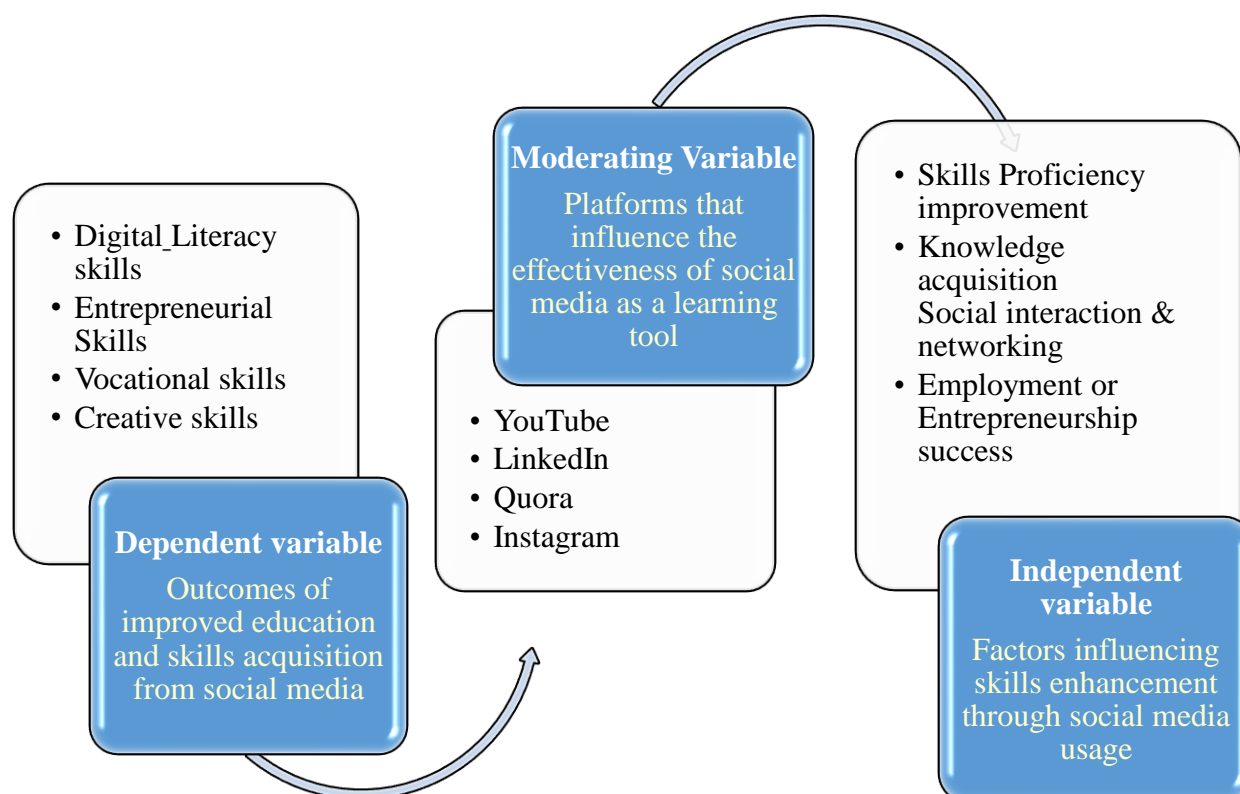
This model focuses on how media helps in the learning and upgrading of skills in social media while highlighting what aspects affect this.

"Outcomes of improved education and skills accumulation from social media," one of the dependent variables, means tangible benefits the user enjoys in the form of digital literacy, entrepreneurial aptitude, occupational skills, and creative capacity. These results so demonstrate how social media may be used as a teaching tool in both the personal and professional domains.

In the case of variable moderator's impact on the achievement as a learning resource, social media platforms like Instagram, Quora, LinkedIn, and many others are included. On YouTube, there are many lectures and video lectures that facilitate learner-centered teaching and self-study over various subjects. LinkedIn provides job opportunities along with ensuring professional skill development. It offers classes through LinkedIn Learning and connects experts with other experts in the field. Quora encourages an exchange of knowledge through answer guidelines and responses on topics that range from comprehensive to situational. Instagram is primarily a media platform, but it also offers its creative sectors educational information in a variety of media formats, such as data visualizations, tutorials, and video clips, to encourage them to develop their own abilities.

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Review of Literature:

M. Grabe, K. Christopherson, " Optional student use of online lecture resource preference , performance and lecture attendance" (2007) This study examines the ways in which students use course management system-provided lecture materials, such as audio recordings, lecture outlines, and summaries, and how that use relates to attendance and test scores. This research builds on the work that was done thirty years ago in studying the advantages of teacher notes, but it takes advantage of the Internet to gather usage data and distribute information. The results indicated that students perceived audio recordings as less helpful compared to text-based summaries. There was a strong correlation between performance in exams, attendance, and use of resources, although some students managed to catch up with online resources on missed sessions. However, because there was no direct student reaction, the findings are limited in this aspect, meaning that these dynamics require further study in the future. Daniel

D. Prior, Jason Mazanov, David Meacheam, Graham Heaslip, James Hanson, "Attitude, digital literacy and self efficacy: Flow-on effects for online learning behavior"(2016) This study examines the function of self-efficacy in online distance learning and its connection to learning practices. Here, the antecedents of self-efficacy—student attitude and digital literacy—are examined, as well as its effects on important behaviours, such as peer engagement, interaction with learning management systems (LMS), and course convener interaction. Self-efficacy is a known driver of confidence and autonomy in traditional education. Results from an online poll of 151 postgraduate business students indicate that self-efficacy is strongly enhanced by positive attitudes and good digital literacy. The increased self-efficacy improves students' ability to engage with peers, make effective use of LMS tools, and communicate with conveners, and hence it highlights its importance in achieving good learning outcomes in online education.

Christine Greenhow, Cathy Lewin, "Social media and education: reconceptualizing the boundaries of formal and informal learning"(2016) This study investigates the potential of social media in connecting formal and informal learning in participatory digital cultures. Although young people use social media mainly as consumers, some take advantage of its advanced features, and this makes it a promising platform for instruction. Although it has been proposed as a hybrid learning tool, the use of social media to bridge the gap between formal and informal education is still little understood. The paper develops a conceptual framework for considering social media as a learning environment that falls somewhere between formal and informal. Using two contrasting case studies, the model is tested under the lenses of social constructivism and connectivism in order to explore the complex interactions between learning in different scenarios. Results reveal that the framework opens a new avenue for research into the role of social media in education and offers a future scope for refinement of the relationship between them.

V. Rama Devi , " The Role of Social Media in Rural Development – A Study in Telangana State" (2022) The present study deals with the impact of social media on farmers and rural communities and examines the transformative potential of social media platforms in the rural districts of Telangana. The descriptive study is conducted with a cross-sectional survey design using 900 respondents from 30 villages in 30 districts. The main application of social media among farmers is for communicating with specialists in solving problems and getting information about the weather, agricultural legislation, and quality seed and fertilizer. Social media also serves as a source of training and education. Despite these advantages, social media is still not

widely used in sharing farming methods and marketing agricultural products. Facebook and WhatsApp have emerged as the most preferred platforms in which farming and business topics should be discussed, according to various research findings. Though unexploited, the social media setup might be most useful in this area to deliver optimal benefits to such communities.

Radhakrishnan Palani ,N. Sriram , Manivannan N, "Usage of Social Networking Tools by Rural Youth in Transfer of Technology - An Overview"(2020) Based on research from several studies, the paper explores how rural youth use social media, focusing on the time spent on different platforms and their key purposes, such as networking, education, and entertainment. It also explores a double purpose of social media, focusing on its potential to positively shape lives while alerting against the severe adverse effects of overuse, such as addiction. Through time, the existence of social media has been extensively embedded in every aspect of their lives, positively and negatively in the case of rural youth, who have taken social media along with them significantly to influence change in their own growth and hopes for the future.

Prabhleen Kaur , Dr. Azamat Ali, "Social Media App Preference Of Rural Students In India"(2022) This study has clearly brought out social media's two-faced nature-the tool for the betterment of society and the reason behind societal problems. Although social media has already been a transformation catalyst in communication, entertainment, and business, the reach is still not equal as in the Indian rural areas, where hardly any individuals have access to or know what the internet is. The gap also signifies the digital gap in a multi-diverse country like India, where most people live in a rural setup. Social media is harming in many ways; it makes people dependent, distracted, and fails to maintain healthy emotional and psychological well-

being, while helping more with knowledge, trade, and communication. The present article is based on how technology influences the life and aspirations of Indian children.

Research methodology:

- Research Design : Descriptive methodologies were used to design this research study.
- Data Source : The questionnaire method, which was the primary source of data, was used to gather the data. In addition to this, secondary sources, including books, research papers, journals, articles, and other websites, were used for gathering information.
- Sample Size : 36 Respondents
- Sample Area : Murbad

Objective of the study :

1. To study the effectiveness of social media-based learning in improving skills and knowledge among the rural population.
2. To explore the impact of social media on bridging the educational gap between rural areas.
3. To identify challenges and barriers rural communities face in utilizing social media for skills and educational development.

Hypotheses

- **(H_0):** There is no significant improvement in skills and knowledge among the rural population through social media-based learning.
- **(H1):** There is a significant improvement in skills and knowledge among the rural population through social media-based learning.
- **(H_0):** Social media does not have a significant impact on bridging the educational gap between rural and urban areas.
- **(H1):** Social media has a significant impact on bridging the educational gap between rural and urban areas.

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- **(H₀):** Rural communities face no significant challenges and barriers to utilizing social media for skill and educational development.
- **(H1):** The rural community faces significant challenges and barriers in utilizing social media for skill and educational development

Research Gap:

This study concentrates on learning outcomes but ignores whether the knowledge and skills obtained through social media lead to long-term benefits, such as increased employability or improved academic performance

This study highlights social media as an educational tool as it remains unclear about the effectiveness compared to traditional teaching methods in rural area. Culturally relevant, high-quality educational content available on social media platforms is important for such learners in the rural setting. Such a study is needed to determine if existing available content addresses the particular learning needs of the rural target groups.

Scale: reliability Test

This study does not compare different social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Coursera, etc.) to find the most effective education and skill development platform.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Data analysis is examining, purifying, converting, and interpreting data in the pursuit of discovering patterns and gaining insightful knowledge to help in making decisions. Data is gathered from sources, cleansed to eliminate errors or discrepancies, and then has to be examined to establish its trends and structure. Statistical methods along with visualization programs are often used to check data, theories, and effectively and practically convey findings. In addition, advanced methods such as predictive modeling and machine learning can be used to predict outcomes and inform strategic decisions. In every industry, data analysis is an essential tool that helps businesses address problems, make better decisions, and perform better.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	36	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	36	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.806	.805	21

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Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PA (AGE)	1.861	.4871	36
PE (EDUCATION)	2.694	.8218	36
V01	3.750	1.0522	36
V02	3.583	.8062	36
V03.1	4.111	.7848	36
V03.2	4.139	.8993	36
V03.3	4.139	.5929	36
V03.4	4.056	.8927	36
V04.1	4.111	.8545	36
V04.2	4.000	.7559	36
V04.3	4.139	.8669	36
V04.4	3.917	.7319	36
V04.5	4.194	.8559	36
V05	3.583	.9063	36
V06	3.917	.8409	36
V07	3.333	.8944	36
V08	3.417	1.0522	36
V09	3.694	.9202	36
V10	3.833	.8783	36
V11	3.833	.7746	36
V12	3.778	.8319	36

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
78.083	64.250	8.0156	21

ANOVA with Friedman's Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Friedman's Chi-Square	Sig
Between People		107.083	35	3.060		
Within People	Between Items	221.127[a]	20	11.056	250.370	.000
	Residual	414.778	700	.593		
	Total	635.905	720	.883		
Total		742.988	755	.984		

Grand Mean = 3.718

a. Kendall's coefficient of concordance W = .298.

Data interpretation: The current study has conducted the Cronbach's Test using spss software which shows the value 0.806 on the scale which indicates highly reliable.

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ANOVA ANALYSIS :

Table 1. The effectiveness of Social media- based learning in improving skills & knowledge among the rural population.

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
PE (EDUCATION)	36	97	2.694444	0.675397		
V03.1	36	148	4.111111	0.615873		
V03.2	36	149	4.138889	0.80873		
V03.3	36	149	4.138889	0.351587		
V03.4	36	146	4.055556	0.796825		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	57.96667	4	14.49167	22.30577	6.73536E-15	2.423286
Within Groups	113.6944	175	0.649683		significant	
Total	171.6611	179				

From the ANOVA result given in the table, the groups were seen to have a statistically significant difference, since the F-value = 22.31 > F crit = 2.42, and P-value = 6.73E-15 < 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis, H_0, which stated that social media-based learning does not significantly enhance the skills and knowledge of the rural populace, could be rejected. The results support the alternative hypothesis (H_1), whereby social media-based learning greatly improves knowledge and skills in rural residents. This indicates that social media-based education can bridge the achievement gap to improve knowledge and skills in the rural community.

Table 2. The impact of social media on bridging the educational gap between rural areas.

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
PE (EDUCATION)	36	97	2.694444	0.675397		
V12	36	136	3.777778	0.692063		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	21.125	1	21.125	30.89669	4.62178E-07	3.977779
Within Groups	47.86111	70	0.68373		Significant	
Total	68.98611	71				

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According to the ANOVA results, there is a statistically significant difference between the groups (F-value = 30.90 > F crit = 3.98, and P-value = 4.62E-07 < 0.05). Thus, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis (H₀), which claims that social media has no discernible effect on closing the educational gap between rural and urban locations. There is support for the alternative hypothesis (H₁), which holds that social media significantly contributes to closing the educational gap between rural and urban areas. This implies that social media successfully lessens the gap in educational attainment between those living in rural and urban areas.

Table3. Challenges and barriers rural communities face in utilizing social media for skills and educational development.

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
Groups	*Count*	*Sum*	*Average*	*Variance*		
PE (EDUCATION)	36	97	2.694444	0.675397		
V04.1	36	148	4.111111	0.730159		
V04.2	36	144	4	0.571429		
V04.3	36	149	4.138889	0.751587		
V04.4	36	141	3.916667	0.535714		
V04.5	36	151	4.194444	0.73254		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	58.75926	5	11.75185	17.64178	1.39718E-14	2.257066
Within Groups	139.8889	210	0.666138		significant	
Total	198.6481	215				

The groups differ significantly, according to the ANOVA results (F-value = 17.64 > F crit = 2.26, and P-value = 1.39E-14 < 0.05). This suggests that the null hypothesis (H₀), according to which using social media for skill and educational development in rural areas is not fraught with difficulties, can be disproved.

There is support for the alternative hypothesis (H₁), which holds that using social media for skill and educational development presents major obstacles and problems for rural areas. This implies that rural people' perceptions of or experiences with using social media for education and skill development varied significantly.

Scope of Study:

▪ The main reason for the severe skill shortages in rural communities is the restricted access to high-quality educational and training institutions. Social media can be a ground, as this study will examine, to address this gap by providing users with a wealth of educational information.

▪ Because of the spreading mobile internet and affordable cellphones, rural communities are increasingly accessing social media. It's within the mainstream evolution of how communication and education take place when someone learns how to utilize this platform for skill building.

- Training through conventional methods in teaching is sometimes a costly and resources-consuming affair. Social media gives a cheap option of education as well as human skills formation within poor resource environments.

- The findings would be useful in guiding educational organizations and policymakers so as to well understand how these social media avenues can support standard teaching methods that might influence judgments about policies related to skill advancement in rural parts of the countries.

Conclusion:

This study reflects that the social media has the great insight of education and skill development in rural areas. This rejection of null hypotheses shows that learning with a social media enhances the skills and knowledge of the rural peoples. Hence, it acts as an instrument to be transformed into an educational facility. in addition, outcomes indicate that using social media can create an effective rural-urban difference in academic contexts through quality knowledge acquisition. Nevertheless, the findings suggest the difficulties such as usability and connectivity to the Internet that may cause a limitation within the potential context of the project. The results also indicate diversities of their perceptions and understandings by considering the difference in culture, technology, or infrastructure of local sites. Hence, in short, though there is great scope for the effective improvement of education and skill developments in rural regions through social media, it would be necessary to overcome these hurdles and increase the digital literacy to make them adopt it long term and equitable.

Summary of Findings:

o According to research, educational resources, which include webinars, online courses, and video tutorials, become available on social media. On YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp, many rural respondents reported having better skills in such

areas as digital literacy, methods of agriculture, and small business management.

o Social networking stimulates networking and peer learning, allowing the rural students to come into contact with those mentors and experts who could help and guide them.

o Social media-based educational outreach programs have shown promise in increasing entry into skill-building seminars and vocational training programs targeted toward rural needs.

o With its advantages, social media is unable to be implemented effectively in the education of the rural community, given the lack of digital infrastructure and internet connectivity in some parts of the region. Poor bandwidth makes it frustrating in many rural areas and leads to uneven access to educational materials.

Suggestions:

- Involving Suppliers of Technology and Community Leaders of the Rural Regions and Educators in the Analysis of Potential Use and Obstacles of Social Media for Classroom Use.

- Develop region-specific plans for the integration of social media into existing curricula.

- Provide recommendations for culturally appropriate, high-quality content creation and enhancement of digital infrastructure in rural settings.

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