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## Social Media - A New Chapter in Social Problems or A New Technique to Study Social Problems

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**ABSTRACT:** The term "Mass Media" has been drastically replaced by "Social Media" and the change has made the greatest impact in our society. With the advancement in technology especially in the field of communication, knowledge dissemination process through social media has been widely affected. The degree of accessibility and validity of particular knowledge shared through social media remains questionable as it challenges the fundamental way of knowledge generation, knowledge sharing and knowledge validation process. Though through social media, knowledge is spread in faster and swift manner but unsupervised use of social media remains at centre as a propeller to new age social problems associated with it. Because of this, social media has been considered both as a "subject" and a "tool" when it comes to understand social problems. It felt important to take this study from the social work perspective in order to understand how social work academicians operationalise "social media". A qualitative study was taken up with students and teachers associated with social work institutions based in Gujarat with an objective to see their views on social media. The study explored if the social media was considered as an add-on to existing social problems in the syllabus and society or they considered the social media as a platform to study existing social problems; more specifically psychosocial issues. This study takes a critical take on social media as a tool to be used in their field work and as one of the associated learning methods to learn social work practice.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Social Work Technique, Social Problems

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### INTRODUCTION

Social media is one of the exponentially escalated phenomenon in the digital evolution. Author perceives that social media was intended to ease and revolutionise the way communication was being done. There is no doubt that it has indeed made communication faster, easier and more expansive. On the other side of it, the degree of accessibility and validity of particular communication shared through social media remains questionable as it challenges the fundamental way of knowledge generation. We are in one way or the other are utilising these social media platforms, for example, Facebook, Google + , LinkedIn), blogs (for example, WordPress, Typepad), and microblogs (for example, Twitter, Tumblr) where these types of social media tools allow people to connect and share information in an online space. Individuals share selective details and personality of themselves on social media, which can give a twisted impression of how visually appealing and successful they are to their connections. These young social media users compares their lives with the other influencing individuals, which can lead to feelings of submission and depression according to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). The time saved for the social media in our daily lives increases day by day (Karaaslan, 2015) and if this is the case, the students affect their education, daily lives, physical and mental health negatively (Otrar and Argin 2014; Fuat and Him 2013).

### SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social work professionals have gradually emphasised on perceiving social media through the lens of social work perspectives. Social Media has crept into practice and revolutionised communication between practitioners and service users (Mishna, Bogo, Root, Sawyer, & Khoury-Kassabri, 2012). Social workers use online, video, and telephone therapy, text messaging, email, and social networking sites to connect with clients and colleagues. This transformation of practice raises a number of ethical issues (Reamer, 2013). While practitioners have identified ethical issues with online mediums, they lack clarity on how to address those (Mishna et al., 2012). Furthermore, many social work students are unaware of the ethical issues and importance of maintaining professional behaviour and boundaries in online spaces (Mukherjee & Clark, 2012).

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### SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL PROBLEM

Social media provides benefits for individuals, groups, organisations, communities, and businesses. People can more easily develop and maintain friendships, establish a small business, and keep abreast of research and current affairs. Social media has allowed adopted children and children in care to contact birth parents (Greenhow, 2015). Social media can promote open dialogue with collaborative reflections (Friesen & Lowe, 2012), democratic participation and engagement in politics (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012), coordinate successful political action (Shirkey, 2011), strengthen relationships (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). However, there are many negative impact of social media adding to social problems. Social media empowers individuals, while also empowering trolls, stalkers, predators, and paedophiles who use social media to access victims (Kim, Jeong, & Lee, 2010). Some government regimes have tightened control of social media following unsuccessful political uprisings (Shirkey, 2011).

### SOCIAL MEDIA AS TOOL & TECHNIQUE IN SOCIAL WORK

Social workers have used social media as an advocacy tool (Sitter & Curnew, 2016), a method of practitioner peer support (Gandy-Guedes, Vance, Bridgewater, Montgomery, & Taylor, 2016). Some studies have examined how these digital technologies have crept into social work practice and revolutionized communication between service users and social workers (Mishna et al. 2012; Boddy & Dominelli, 2016).

Other studies have shown that social media allows educators to improve students' experience and enhances research opportunities (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009). (Gikas and Grant, 2013) looked at social media's ability to engage learners with continuous learning and unlimited connectivity.

From the above understanding it is evident that social media is the going to affect the social work services and social work education and it is still evolving, therefore it is very important to estimate the effect of it. Social media can be an invaluable tool, but it should not be seen as a replacement for traditional models of practice but rather, as a tool to strengthen current practice.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH:

The present research is an effort to understand the usage of social media for their social work education by the students. This research also studies the view of students on social media as the social problem and its effect on social work practice.

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES:

A descriptive research type was utilised to understand and describe the perception of social work students on "social media" with reference to social work education and social work services.

For the homogeneity of the study, only students pursuing their post-graduation in social work were considered for the study. All the students receiving education at Faculty of Social Work, The Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda and Parul University were constituted as the universe of the study.

Quantitative research method was used for the study, whereby using a random sampling data collection method students were contacted to be part of the study. The questionnaire consisted of closed ended and open ended questions covering the fundamental objectives of the study.

In all, out of total 120 students from these universities (Total Universe of the Study), a response was received from 20 students (Only Post graduation students). The questionnaire was shared with the class representative and was asked to get it filled from the students of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year students of Masters in Social Work program. (Random Sampling & Purposive Sampling). Only first 30 responses received were considered for the data analysis. The received data was studied as percentage and average and interpreted, to describe the views and understandings of the students. Responses to open ended questions were analysed thematically.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Basic Profile of the respondents:

Table 1.1

Variable	Details			
	1 <sup>st</sup> Year		2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	
Year of MSW Program	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
	18	60%	12	40%
	Male		Female	
Gender	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
	14	46%	16	53%
	With Family		Room Mates	
Currently Living Pattern	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
	20	77%	10	33%

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### 2. Social Media usage and primary concerns expressed by the respondents:

#### I. Social media handles:

It is learnt from the data that majority of the respondents (60%) were managing 2-3 social media handles. There were 30% respondents who were managing more than 3 social media handles and only 10% of the respondents were there who do not use any social media handles.

#### II. Reviewing Time spent on social media & Uninstalling:

54% of the respondents expressed that they frequently review their time spent on social media. 27% of the respondents rarely reviewed their time spent on social media. Whereas 18% of the population very frequently reviewed their time spent on social media.

54.5% of the respondents informed that they had thought of thought of uninstalling their social media handles and this similar % of population did not know anyone who had uninstalled social media handles. Whereas 45.5% of the respondents did not think of uninstalling their social media handles and this similar % of population did know someone who had uninstalled social media handles. Out of these 54.5% of the total population, cited that social media was a major distraction from their studies and was the main reason they thought of uninstalling these handles cause they were wasting away their time on this.

### 3. Social Media as a tool to study in social work education

#### I. Social media to be used as a tool to get scientific information

From the below table it is learnt that majority of the respondents, 50% of them said they often used social media handles to attain scientific information or used it as a learning tool. Whereas, 20% of the population informed that they rarely used Social media as a tool to study.

**Table 3.1**

Variable	Response					
	Rarely		Often		Very Often	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Social Media as Study tool/ to get information	6	20%	15	50%	9	30%

#### II. Social Media as to study social work education related information

**Table 3.2**

Variable	Response			
	Yes		No	
Follow Social Work Professionals on Social Media	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
		18	60%	12
Study Social Patterns through Social Media	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
	24	80%	6	20%

**Table 3.3**

Variable	Response			
	Yes		No	
If they think posted information on Social Media to be true	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
		6	20%	24
If they validate information acquired through social media	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
	12	40%	18	60%

From the above tabulated information (**Table 3.2**) it is learnt that majority of the respondents; i.e. 80% and 60% of them followed social work professionals on social media and made efforts to study social patterns through social media platforms respectively.

On observing **Table 3.3**, it is evident that majority of the respondents; i.e. 80% of the agreed that they do not believe information posted on social media is true and 40% of the respondents validated the information learnt from social media before reproducing it anywhere.

## CONCLUSION

### Is social media a social problem or tool to study social work problems?

“Social media can contribute to increased stress, anxiety, and depression among young people” informed one of the respondents. They perceived social media to be distracting youth from the concrete work, study or in-person socialisation. “Affects most of their

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daily decisions and general perception” said another respondent. They also informed that anxiety because of social bully on social media. Addiction was also brought up as one of the adverse effect of constant use of social media. 80% of the respondents informed that they had explored articles on de-addiction from social media. And **40%** of the respondents informed that social media was indeed a social problem in the society.

There was an equal percentage of respondents who had used /not used social media to consult someone for their personal issue or mental health issue. And majority of the respondents (**80%**) had used social media for their small academic project to collect data from the respondents or to identify the respondents.

It is concluded from the respondents that students though see social media as social problem but they also believe that social media can be used as a tool and technique in social work. It is that social media a technique of study is still in infancy, with right ethical framework this can be utilised as a revolutionary technique in social work practice.

### RECOMMENDATION

We, in this digital era cannot avoid being indulged in social media platforms. It is very important for the social work practitioner to see that young minds are imparted knowledge about both the sides (social problem vs. technique for study) of social media platforms right from their post-graduation degree. It is also significant that as a practitioner, we have to establish a frame work with regard ethical framework, values, confidentiality and authenticity about the knowledge and practices being used by students and social work practitioners.

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**APPENDIX -1**

**Study on “Social Media - A new chapter in social problems or a new technique to study social problems”**

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1. As a social work student, how often do you review your time spent on social media consciously?
2. Did you ever think of uninstalling the social media handles permanently?
3. If yes, what were the reasons?
4. Do you know someone who uninstalled their social media handles permanently?
5. Do you know anyone who does not use social media platforms or social media at all? (Between the age group of 14 years to 50 years)
6. How do you see the effect of social media on youth?
7. Did you read any articles on de-addiction of social media?
8. How do you rate social media as new social problem in society?
9. Do you know anyone in person to have been affected by the social media adversely?
10. How often do you use social media for study purpose or to get scientific information?
11. Do you follow any social activist or social work eminent personality on your social media handle?
12. Do you use social media to study social patterns / trends or any classroom study related topic?
13. Did you ever use social media platform as a tool to collect data?
14. Did you ever search and connect with a person to discuss about mental health on social media?
15. Did you ever search and connect with a person to discuss about personal issues on social media?
16. Do you think that everything posted on social media is true?
17. Did you ever validate the information received on social media or authenticated it?
18. How do you broadly see social media as from the social work perspective view?
19. If, social media is a social problem, how as a social worker student we should try to deal with it? (In two points)
20. If, social media can be used as a tool for study in social work, what care should we take? (In two points)