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Role of Social Media in Health Promotion and Behaviour Change

Bhagawoti Sharma

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Abstract

Social networking is an Internet-based technology that helps its users to promote and modification of health-related behaviour. College students can use social media for many reasons, such as accessing health information, as a source of health education, and finding and sharing health information. The study aimed to find out the existing social media use situation and to analyze the facilitating and impeding factors of social media use among college students for health promotion and behavior change. This study was based on a cross-sectional research design. A total of 409 Bachelor level college students were included in the study from three colleges of the Banke district colleges by using a multistage sampling method. The data were collected by using a self-administered questionnaire and analyzed them using SPSS version 20. This study found that 29.4 percent of respondents used Facebook for health communication, and 26.7 percent of respondents used Facebook for watching health -related videos, texts and images . Similarly, the majority of the respondents (79.5%) pointed out that knowledge and skills as one of the motivating / influencing factors of social media use. Based on the present study results, college students use social media to understand and share health information.

Keywords: Health education, health promotion, behaviour change, social media, college students, digital media, internet

Introduction

The study site of this study was Banke District. Banke district is a district in the state of Lumbini Province. It is the most famous of the 77 districts of Nepal. The core study area of this study is all of the campuses of Banke district which has affiliated and constitutional campuses of Tribhuvan university. There are 31 colleges located in Banke District. Among them, 18 colleges are affiliated and constitutional campuses of Tribhuvan university. This study was conducted on three Banke District colleges: Mahendra Multiple campus Nepalgunj, Banke, Bright Land College Nepalgunj Banke, and Madhya Paschim Multiple Campus Nepalgunj Banke. Mahendra Multiple Campus, located at Nepalgunj-13, Banke, is one of the oldest and biggest educational institutions of Nepal's Mid-Western and Far-Western development region. Brightland College

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Npalgunj is a private college. It was established in 2005 AD. It is located at Nepalgunj-10, Pasang Lamu Road, Banke District, Nepal. Bachelor's and Master's Degree programs, it is connected with Tribhuvan University (TU). Another study campus is Madhyapashchim Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj Banke. It offers B.Ed. and BBS programs and is associated with Tribhuvan University.

Social media helps in the health promotion and modification of health-related behaviour (Sahu et al., 2020). It has become a major part of the daily lives of over 3 billion people worldwide (Michael Stollefson et al., 2020). It is an Internet-based technology that allows the exchanging of notions, opinions, and evidence through digital networks and communities (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). Students in schools, colleges, and universities are eager to use and connect with various social networks through smartphones, tablets, computers, and other technologically advanced electronic devices (Subramanian, 2017). It provides users with quick electronic communication of personal information, documents, videos, and photos (Sahu et al., 2020). College students and higher education institutions are the early adopters of social media. They spend more time on social media for different purposes i.e. meeting with friends, health communication, health promotion, etc. Health promotion is the process of enabling people to control and improve their health (Povlsen & Borup, 2015). It also has a positive effect on the health behaviour of individuals and communities which affects their health (Noack, 1987). It is important for enhancing the quality of life of individuals, families, communities, and nations. In today's world, social media has become an important source of health communication and health promotion for all people, including college students.

There are currently tens of thousands of social media sites related to health promotion (M Stollefson et al., 2020). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Youtube, LinkedIn, Blogs, Encyclopedias, Wikis, and Google+ may be used in teaching and learning health education. Social media tools motivate students to interact with one another as well as express and share their creativity (Raut & Patil, 2016). Social media provides a unique opportunity for students and teachers to interact with each other. Students easily find educational information and communicate it with their friends and teachers through social media (Chugh, 2018). It can be clearly said that social media is an imperative source of health education and information that helps to change the healthy behavior of college students (Abbas et al., 2019).

Shewaye et al. (2021) revealed that 47.7 percent of the respondents used social media to look diet related information. Similarly, 40.5 percent of the respondents used social media to look diet related information. Likewise, 20.9 percent of the respondents used social media for looking sexual and reproductive health related information and 12.4 percent of the respondents used social media for hygiene related information. Likewise, 63.7 percent of the respondents had inadequate knowledge of online social media for health promotion, and 31.1 percent of respondents had moderate knowledge (Pant et al., 2016). Furthermore, 73 percent of respondents confirmed that they could use social media as a health information source. Among them, 50 percent of respondents used Wikipedia, 44 percent used youtube, 41 percent used Facebook, 32 percent used google, and 22 used LinkedIn to find health information (Adel, 2015). Likewise, other similar studies showed that 50 percent of

the respondents received health promotion messages through social media (Alshammari & Alshammari, 2017). These previous study results show that the increasing number of different kinds of social media users and use social media for different purposes e.g. acquiring health information, enhancing academic achievement. Al-Menayes (2015) states that entertainment, personal utility, information seeking, convenience and altruism are the influencing factors of social media use among undergraduate students. Likewise, Sanmamed et al. (2017) revealed that versatility is the motivating factor for using social media. Similarly, time, entertainment, access to social media, keeping in touch with others, getting information, interacting with family and friends, meeting others, learning new things, staying away from pressure, commenting, and expressing opinions have been found to be the major causes of social media (Ugur & Basak, 2018).

Overall, 23 percent of women and 47 percent of men in the 15-49 age group have used the Internet in Nepal in the last 12 months. Over the past 12 months, more than half of all men and women who use the Internet have been inclined to use the Internet on a daily basis (Ministry of Health et al., 2017). Social media has appeared as an alternative platform for exchanging and seeking health information (Althunayan et al., 2018). Health information in the media has a great social impact because this type of message is critical for changing people's beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours, as well as promoting health knowledge among the audience (Adel, 2015; Marinescu & Mitu, 2016). Media allows for more convenient, low-cost, fast, and timely delivery of health information (Smith & Denali, 2014). Many viewers are using social media to guide their healthcare decisions (Sumayyia et al., 2019), to obtain health information, to communicate with other individuals, and to connect with learning groups that make health education convenient (Hanson et al., 2011). College students use social media for study, and recreation, as a source of health education, to search for health information, and to share health information (Raut & Patil, 2016). Likewise, Pant et al. (2016) conducted a study entitled "utilization of online social media for health promotions among adolescents of Nepal". This study reveals that 94 percent of the respondents preferred Facebook for health information and health seeking behaviour. Likewise, 80.5 percent of the respondents believe that social media helps to easily share information. Sililarly, Adhikari (2020) conducted a study entitled "the impact of social media on Navodit college students". This study reveals that 11.11 percent of the students used social networks to socialize and to make new friends. Likewise, 61.11 percent of the respondents used social networks to remain updated about what is trending. Furthermore, 15.74 percent of the students used social networks to collaborate with fellow students and study.

It is learned that health-related content on social media positively impacts college students health promotion and behavior change such as health awareness, food-intake habits, stress reduction, hygiene maintenance, exercise, sleep, etc. There are numerous research studies which have been conducted in different countries of the world, however, in Nepal's context, I found very few studies being conducted concerned with the use of social media in health promotion. Hence, the study is carried out on the role of social media for health promotion and behavior change among Nepal's college students. The researcher hopes that the findings of this study help health educators, as well as other public health professionals use social media as an important tool for providing health education. Health Educators and health

professionals, also use the research results to determine their teaching strategies and to formulate strategies related to using social media on teaching health education. These research results also contribute the Nepalese higher education e.g this study may provide an opportunity for health educators, professors, and technology workers to better understand the pros and cons of using social media to promote health and change behaviour among college students. Likewise, The study has produced information that has carried out a deeper understanding of the role of social media in health promotion and behaviour change. Health Educators, health professionals, stakeholders, college administrators, parents, policy planners, and teachers have used the research results and recommendations as learned lessons to review their plans and activities to manage and formulate strategies to counter social media's role in health promotion and behaviour change among college students. The research information also acts as a literature review for future academicians. So, it is important to conduct this research. The main objectives of the study were as follow:

- to determine the existing social media use situation among college students for health promotion and behavior change.
- to analyze the factors facilitating and impeding social media use among college students

Methods and Procedures

This study was conducted on the basis of a cross-sectional research design. All of the bachelor level students studying at all the campuses of Banke district were the population of the study. College students were chosen as the study population because many young people are spending a large part of their time on the internet, and social media. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's sample size calculation formula. Furthermore, Three private and public undergraduate colleges affiliated to Tribhuvan University in Banke district were included in this study. Researchers followed a multistage sampling method to select the study population. At first, the researcher decided on one province from the seven provinces of Nepal using a simple random sampling method. The selected province was Lumbini province. Then the researcher selected one district among the list of districts in Lumbini province which is Banke district. After that, the researchers randomly selected three colleges using a two-stage systematic random sampling technique. In the second round, four classes were randomly selected from each of the selected colleges. All of the students present on the day of data collection in the sampled classes were requested to participate in the study. A total of 409 college students in Banke district filled up the questionnaire.

The researchers used a self-administered structured questionnaire to collect data. A questionnaire was prepared based on the study purpose and consultation with subject experts. Questionnaires had been pretested in 10 percent of the total sample size in a similar setting. Then the tools were improved as needed. After finalizing the tools, the tools were translated into the Nepali language for the convenience of the respondents.

The data were collected from December 17, 2020, to January 1, 2021, through the self-administered questionnaire. Before starting the data collection, the researcher had taken verbal consent from the respondents to participate in the research. They were informed about the purpose of the study. The researcher had assured the respondents that the data collected from them would be used purely for research

purposes and would be kept completely confidential. In addition, the use and protection of information, and respect for one's culture and customs were assured. In the same way, the respondents were given the freedom not to answer the questions at any time if they were not satisfied

The collected data were entered into a computer and analyzed with SPSS version 20. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage to meet the study's objectives. It was also calculated chi-square to show the association between facilitating/impeding factors of social media and forms of social media used by respondents. The assessment of the relationship between facilitating and impeding factors and social media use for searching different kinds of health related information was conducted using the chi-square test.

Results

Existing Situation of Social Media Use

According to the findings of this study, all of the respondents use social media. They used different forms of social media for various purposes which have been presented as follows.

Table 1. *Purpose and Forms of Social Media Used by Respondents*

Purpose of Social Media Use	Forms of Social Media Use				
	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Blogs	Whats app
Health Communication	29.4%	11%	25.5%	10.3%	14.2%
Search and share health information	21.1%	4.7%	24.3%	9.8%	13.0%
Watch health related video, text and image	26.7%	8.8%	23.3%	8.1%	12.7%
Meeting friends and relatives in a digital Way	48.8%	13.2%	41.7%	11.5%	23.8%
Share feelings with Friends	30.1%	7.6%	26.0%	5.4%	15.2%
Entertainment	50.0%	15.9%	42.6%	10.8%	23.0%
Total	90.7%	18.6%	77.7%	21.3%	39.0%

The table 1 showed that 90.7 percent of the college students used Facebook, and (18.6%) least of the respondents used Twitter. Among all users, 21.1 percent of respondents used Facebook for searching and sharing health information. Likewise, 23.3 percent used YouTube to watch health-related videos, text and images, and least of the respondents used blogs for health communication.

Frequency of Social Media Use and Sex of the Respondents

Table 2. *Association between Frequency of Social Media Use and Sex of the Respondents*

Frequency	Sex of the Respondents		Total	P- alue
	Male	Female		
More than once a day	15.4%	33.3%	48.7%	
About once a day	9.0%	22.0%	31.1%	
A few times a week	2.4%	8.1%	10.5%	
A few times a month	2.9%	6.8%	9.8%	
Total	29.8%	70.2%	100.0%	.744

*significant at 5%

The table 2 found that nearly half (48.7 %) of the respondents used social media more than once a day, At least (9.8%) of the respondents used social media a few times a month. Similarly, among all social media users. one-third percent of the female respondents used social media more than once a day whereas 15.4 percent of the male respondents used social media more than once a day and the least (2.9%) of the male respondents used social media a few times a month. Whether testing the association between the frequency of social media use and the sex of the respondents, the p-value is found .744, so there is no association between the frequency of social media use and sex of the respondents.

Health Information Search through Social media

The respondents searched different kinds of health information through social media e.g. balanced diet, exercise, a preventive measure of disease, sexual health problem, and various health problems and their preventive measures as well required treatment.

Table 3. *Description of Respondents Search Health Information through Social Media*

Type of health information	Responses	Percent
Diet and Nutrition	245	59.9
Yoga and Exercise	242	59.2
Medicine	128	31.3
Mental illness	44	10.8
Alcohol and drugs	35	8.6
Sex Education	55	13.4
Preventive Measure to Disease	83	20.3

*Multiple responses

The table 3 showed that 59.9 percent of respondents said they searched diet and nutrition-related health information through social media. Likewise, 59.2 percent of the respondents searched yoga and exercise related information through social media and 13.4 percent of the respondents explored sex-related health information through social media, and the least (8.6%) of the searched alcohol and drug related information through social media.

Positive Influence of Social Media Use

The findings related to the positive influence of social media have been presented as follows:

Table 4. *Description of Categories of the Positive Influence of Social Media*

Positive influences of social media	Responses(n=409)	Percent
Aware of health	171	41.8
Motivates to change positive behavior	258	63.1
Share health-related text, video and images	101	24.7
Share of scientific achievement related to the field of health promotion and behaviour change	82	20.0
Provide preventive health service	81	19.8
Share health evidence	58	14.2

*Multiple responses

The table 4 revealed that 41.8 percent of the respondents pointed out that awareness of health is the positive influence of social media use. Likewise, 63.1 percent of the respondents pointed out that the motivation to change positive behaviour is due to the positive influence of social media use and 20 percent of the respondents pointed out that share of scientific achievement related to the field of health promotion and behaviour change is the positive influence of social media use. In addition, 19.8 percent of the respondents pointed out that providing an opportunity to share health evidence with others is a positive influence on social media use, and the least of the respondents indicated that sharing health evidence is a positive influence of social media use.

Facilitating and Impeding Factors Related to the Use of Social Media

The present study attempted to identify the factors facilitating / impeding the use of social media. Therefore, this data analysis presents the factors that affect the use of social media websites.

Table 5. *Description of Facilitating and Impeding Factors to Use social media*

Facilitating and Impeding Factors	Responses(n=409)	Percent
Knowledge and skills	325	79.5
Attitude towards social media use	110	26.9
Access to digital devices	90	22.0
Time	102	24.9
Availability of Internet	69	16.9
Family and Peer pressure	34	8.3
Digital literacy	49	12.0

*Multiple responses

The table 5 found that 79.5 percent of the respondents pointed out that knowledge and skills as one of the motivating / influencing factors of social media use. Likewise, 26.9 percent of the respondents pointed out that attitude is another motivating/ influencing factor of social media use. In contrast, least of the respondents (8.3%) pointed out that family and peer pressure are other influencing/ impeding factors of social media use.

Table 6. *Association between Facilitating Factors and Forms of Social Media Used by Respondents*

Facilitating/ Impeding Factors	Forms of Social media					Total	P- Value
	Facebook	Twitter	You Tube	Blog	Whats App		
Knowledge and Skills	315	66	251	53	119	325	
Attitude towards	107	30	97	31	40	110	
Access of digital Devices	85	21	75	14	48	89	
Time	74	25	78	49	48	102	
Availability of Internet	63	18	54	12	28	69	
Family and Peer Pressure	32	8	25	9	11	34	
Digital literacy	46	17	44	15	24	49	.000*

*significant at 5%

The table 6 showed the bivariate frequency analysis between facilitating factors and forms of social media use. To test the association between these two variables chi-square test of association is applied and the p-value is found below 0.05. Assuming the level of significant 0.05, the test is found significant (p-value less than 5%). This implies that college students are motivated to use social media due to those impeding factors listed in table 6.

Discussion

This study presents unique empirical results on social media use. The discussion of this has been made by dividing two areas, e.g. existing situation and facilitating / impeding social media use factors.

Existing Situation of Social Media Use

Findings from this study indicated that all of the respondents use different kinds of social media. Among all of the social media users, the majority (90.7%) of the college students used Facebook, 77.7 percent used Youtube, 21.3 percent used blogs, and the least (18.6%) of the students used Twitter. Upadhyay and Sedain (2019) found that 48.7 percent of the respondents used Facebook/ messenger followed by YouTube (41.3%). Likewise, Twitter is 5.2 percent. Whether testing the association between the frequency of social media use and the sex of the respondents, the p-value is found.744, so there is no association between the frequency of social media use and the sex of the respondents. However, a study carried out by Pant et al. (2016), in Nepal showed that the majority of respondents were male i.e. 149 (59.4). There is a significant association between knowledge and sex where males have a higher level of knowledge than females (P-Value 0.033). It is concluded that there is no similarity between these studies. Some reasons may be differences in study time, differences in place, sample size, nature of data collection tools, accessibility of Internet or digital devices, knowledge, interest, and skill about the use of social media.

This present study showed that 29.4 percent of respondents used Facebook for health communication, 21.1 percent of respondents used Facebook for searching and sharing health information, 26.7 percent of respondents used Facebook for watching health-related videos, text, and images which is similar to a study conducted by Pant et al. (2016) which concluded that Facebook was the preferred by the majority of respondents, i.e. 94 for health information and health-seeking behaviours. The present study also found that 25.5 percent of respondents used YouTube for health communication, 34.3 percent used it to search and share health information and 23.3 percent of the respondents used YouTube to watch health-related videos, text, and images. The results compare with the study results of Adhikari (2020). He demonstrated that 11.11 percent of the students used social media to socialize and make new friends. Similarly, 61.11 percent use social media to stay up to date on current events. Similar studies show that 59.5 percent of the respondents obtain and exchange health information through social media (Oh & Kim, 2014). It is found that the difference in contextual studies shows the difference percentages of social media use for health communication and search for health information. The reason and purpose of social media use heavily depends on the research method, sample size, the

user's attitude, interest, access to the Internet, cost, knowledge about services provided by social media, etc.

According to the current study, 48.7 percent of respondents used social media more than once a day, 31.1 percent used social media about once a day, 10.5 percent used social media a few times a week, and 9.8 percent used social media a few times a month. A Similar study shows that 81.4 percent of the respondents regularly used social media at all times, 9 percent of the respondents used social media mostly at night, and 5.4 percent of the respondents used social media mostly during weekends(Akintola et al., 2016). It appears that the two related studies show different results. Different places and times, distinct respondents and privacy, legal risk, time, and convenience may be responsible for these results.

This study found that 59.9 percent of college students searched for diet and nutrition-related health information through social media. Similarly, 59.2 percent of the college students explored yoga exercise-related information, 31.3 percent of the college students searched for medicine-related information and 20.3 percent searched for mental illness-related information details through social media. Likewise, Oh and Kim (2014) revealed that 57.71 percent of college students in the USA and 81.62 percent of Korean college students searched for diet and nutrition related-health information. Similarly, 24.88 percent of college students in the USA and 33.77 percent of Korean students searched for mental illness related information through social media.40.80 percent of college students in the USA and 24.68 percent of Korean students searched for medicine-related information. This finding shows similarities between the results of studies in two different contexts. However, no similarity between the percentages related to types of health information searched through social media. Some reasons may be the users' interest, digital literacy, and not knowing that health information can be obtained from social media.

The present study found that 41.8 percent of the respondents said that social media helps us be aware of our health. Similarly, 63.1 percent of the respondents reported that social media motivates us to change positive behaviour. Furthermore, 24.7 percent of the respondents reported that the positive influence of social media is to provide an opportunity to share health-related text, videos, and images which is supported by the study conducted by Pant et al. (2016) where 80.5percent students believe that social mediahelps to share health information more easily. Another similar research provided that the majority (67.2%) of the respondents reported sharing messages on positive health regularly on social media, whereas 32.8 percent did not. Likewise, 54.1 percent of the respondents said they did not share any messages about the importance of physical activity. Overall, 85.2 percent of participants believed that social media use, particularly sharing these messages, improved their lives. (Sahu et al., 2020). Those two contextual studies show t there dissimilar results. Some reasons may be perception, study context, place, age, and sex of the respondents, level of education and digital literacy, etc.

Facilitating / Impeding Factors to Social Media Use

The finding showed that the majority of the respondents (79.5%) pointed out that knowledge and skills as one of the motivating / influencing factors of social media use whereas 22 percent of the respondents pointed out that access to digital

devices and 24.9 percent pointed out that time, 16.9 percent pointed out that availability of the Internet, 12 percent respondents pointed out digital literacy and least of the respondents (8.3%) pointed out that family and peer pressure as the other influencing/impeding factors of social media use. Adhikari (2020) has found that peer pressure has played a role in joining social media to some extent. Likewise, Bristy (2016) showed that Involvement, Usefulness, and are the three most important factors considered by Bangladesh students during their Facebook adoption. Similarly, Athukorala (2018) found that 31.10 percent of Chinese respondents and 37.50 percent of international students have claimed that time is a very significant factor influencing social media use, and 47 percent of Chinese students and 38.9 percent of international students claimed that convenience is the main factor affecting social media use. Furthermore, 26.79 percent of Chinese students and 29.17 percent of international students mentioned that cost is a very important factor for them when they use social media (Athukorala, 2018). Similarly, Abbas et al. (2019) found that improving an individual social and communication skills and Increasing knowledge are influencing factors of social media use. Those different contextual studies addressed some similar and distinct motivating factors of social media use. The reason may be the nature of tools for data collection, researchers and respondents' knowledge about social media use/ context and area of the study, etc.

Conclusion

The present study was based on the use of social media for health promotion and behavior change among college students in Nepal. This study found that close to one-third of college students used Facebook for health communication. Likewise, only about a quarter of college students used Youtube for health communication. Similarly, more than one-third college students used social media more than once a day, and the least of the respondents used social media a few times a month. They searched diet and nutrition, yoga and exercise, medicine, alcohol and drugs, sex education, mental illness, and preventive measure for disease through different kinds of social media. It is found that knowledge and skills, attitude towards social media use, access to digital devices, time, availability of internet service, family and peer pressure, and digital literacy are the leading factors in social media use.

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Author

Bhagawoti Sharma is a Lecturer at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, Banke. She has completed a Master's Degree in Health Education from Tribhuvan University. She is currently a Ph. D. scholar in Health Education at Tribhuvan University. She has been working on developing an anti-alcohol educational sessional for school students. She has been continuously involved in research activities for 3-4 years.