Use of social media in an educational system: Positive or Negative?

Tiwat Footrakul
Christian German School, Chiang Mai Thailand

*Corresponding Author:
Tiwat Footrakul
Christian German School, Chiang Mai Thailand

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Social media is an internet-based form of electronic communication, which allows users to communicate and share information globally with each other and is frequently used by the communities, including adolescents and students. Blogs, widgets, social networking sites, photo-sharing sites, video-sharing sites and communication platforms such as Facebook or Instagram are all defined as social media. But what are the benefits of social media? Social media can be used to learn new things, broaden your knowledge and aid our career on a professional level. An example would be gaining customer's feedbacks through social media and use them to improve one's brand. But social media also contains flaws, which is i.e. the fact that social media can also serve as a great distraction for students during their learning period. Considering the previous sentence and the fact that a number of students nowadays use social media for educational purposes, a question, which has been debated for decades arises. To what extent should social media be implemented into the educational system? Should it be implemented into the system at all? Would it positively or negatively influence the students? This paper will discuss the pros and cons of social media and to what extent it should be used in an educational system.

Literature review

Social media is integrating more and more in our society, including education, and its effects have been debated for several decades. This topic is concerned by researchers for a long period of time, and a number of research papers has been conducted regarding this topic.

An example would be a research conducted by Charu Saini and Jessy Abraham concerning "Using Social Media for Educational Purposes: Approaches and Challenges". In this paper, a number of benefits are presented alongside the disadvantages of social media. For instance, social media provides immediate feedback, which allows teachers to provide their students with immediate instructional guidance outside the classroom. However, technical expertise of teachers and students is required to integrate social media in the teaching learning process, since the lack of training will only result in a less effective study for students.

A number of similar researches have been conducted, but a survey is almost never conducted regarding this topic although more perspectives regarding this topic can be reflected. In this research paper, I, therefore, chose to conduct an online survey to cover up this part.

Methodology

An online survey containing four different questions has been conducted. The age, his or her opinion on implementing social media into the educational system, the reason for the answer of the previous question and if he or she has been cyberbullied before, are asked in this survey. This survey is digitally contributed to 70 people with different ages and occupations. The responses are mostly concluded in a percentage form, which is presented in bar and pie charts. Results which are answered in sentences and can not be displayed in a chart will be concluded in this paper.
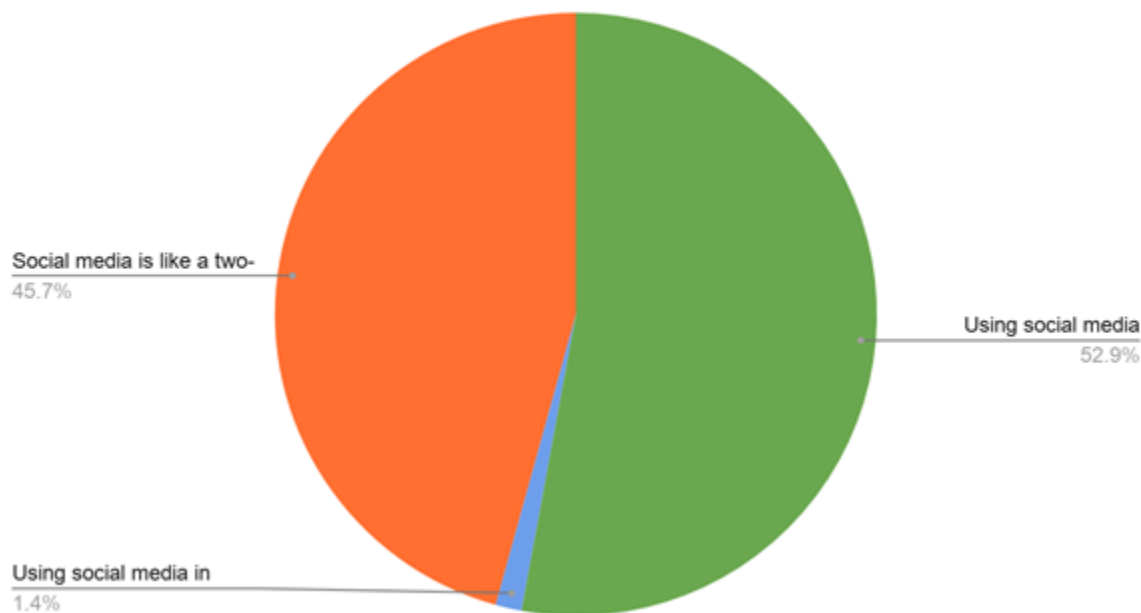
Results

Figure 1: Opinions about using social media in educational system (green = Using social media can effectively improves student's potential blue = Using social media in educational system can only negatively affect the students orange = social media is like a two edged sword)

According to the first figure, the majority of the respondents think that social media can be used to improve a student's potential if it were to be implemented into the educational system (52.9%). The respondents have various explanations for their response. First, there is a lot of information and information sources on the internet i.e. social media, which is frequently updated. This leads to the fact that the information presented on the internet is mostly up-to-date. On top of that, there's a variety of information, which is displayed on the internet and is excluded from the school's treatises. By using the information on the internet, the students can strengthen their knowledge, which can also be used in a research paper and cover the parts they do not understand in the schools, which will help students who are lagging in the schools to catch up with their classmates.

Secondly, the use of social media nowadays is very convenient and swift, which facilitates the students to study faster. An example would be the use of communication platforms such as Facebook or Line, which is, nowadays, already frequently used by adolescents and students for educational purposes. By using these platforms, students can communicate and exchange ideas faster and easier, which will result in an effective study for the students. This does not only apply to communication between students, but also between teachers and students. Students can ask questions to teachers faster and social media also allows an alternative way of teaching. For instance, teachers can use a platform such as ZOOM to

communicate with the students during a pandemic in order to avoid infection, which often occurs in a face-to-face situation such as interaction between teachers and students during a class in the school.

Social media is a two-edged sword is the choice that wins the second majority (45.7%). The respondents who chose this choice think that the aspects mentioned above about how social media can positively influence students are true, but there are also negative factors, which one should consider. First, it is true that social media contains a lot of information, which can be used to improve one's study, but there is also a lot of information, which is scientifically incorrect and may be dangerous for the

users, which are the students. On top of that, social media can serve as a great distraction and also have the ability to make the users addicted and dependent to it.

A small minority of the respondents thinks that social media can only negatively affect the students if it were to be implemented in an educational system (1.4%). The rationale behind this is that social media can serve as a distraction and has the capability to make the students lose their focus and concentration on their studies. Furthermore, social media also requires digital devices such as phones and the internet, which requires an additional cost. This may severely affect those who are financially troubled.
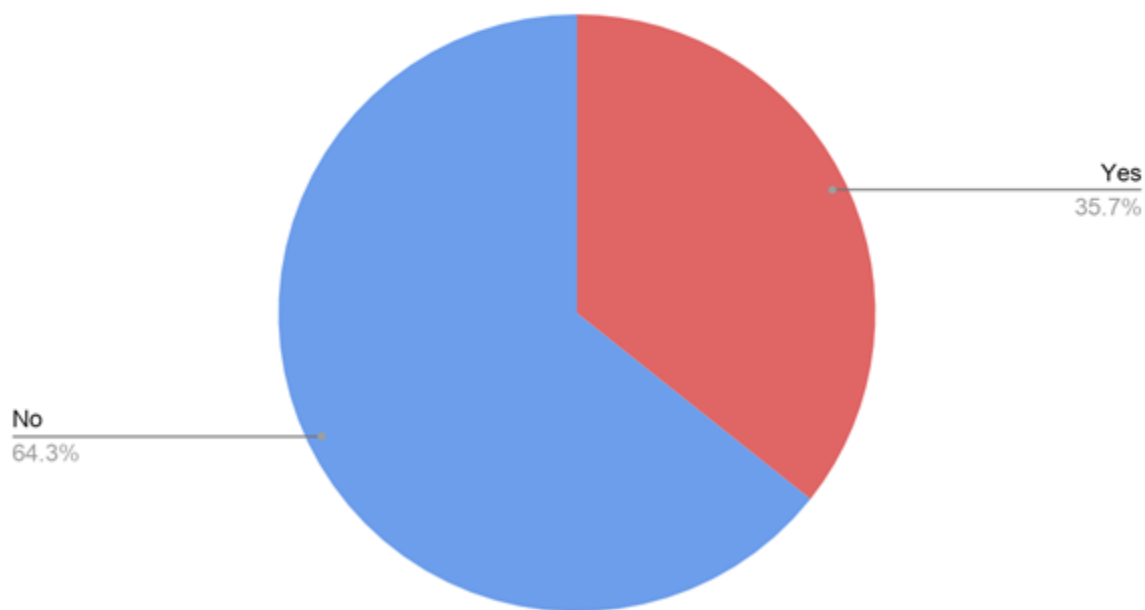

Figure 2: Percentage of those that are/were cyberbullied

Cyberbully is one of the aspects that one also has to consider, since nowadays a number of students is being cyberbullied through social media, which is one of the biggest disadvantages for implementing social media in an educational system. According to the figure, 35.7% of all respondents have experienced a cyberbully through social media before, which is an incredibly high number. The rationale behind this is that a number of adolescents are under peer pressure to fit in with a group of friends and to be accepted at school. An alternative explanation for this figure

would be that the cyberbullies lack empathy, which means that they do not see cyberbully as a big deal. This is due to the fact that they do not feel the pain or the remorse like the victims feel, but they will more likely find it funny, popular and powerful. One of the main reasons for cyberbullies is boredom. Children who lack attention and supervision from parents are often bored, look for entertainment and want to add more excitement and interesting stories to their lives. In the end, they use the Internet as their source of

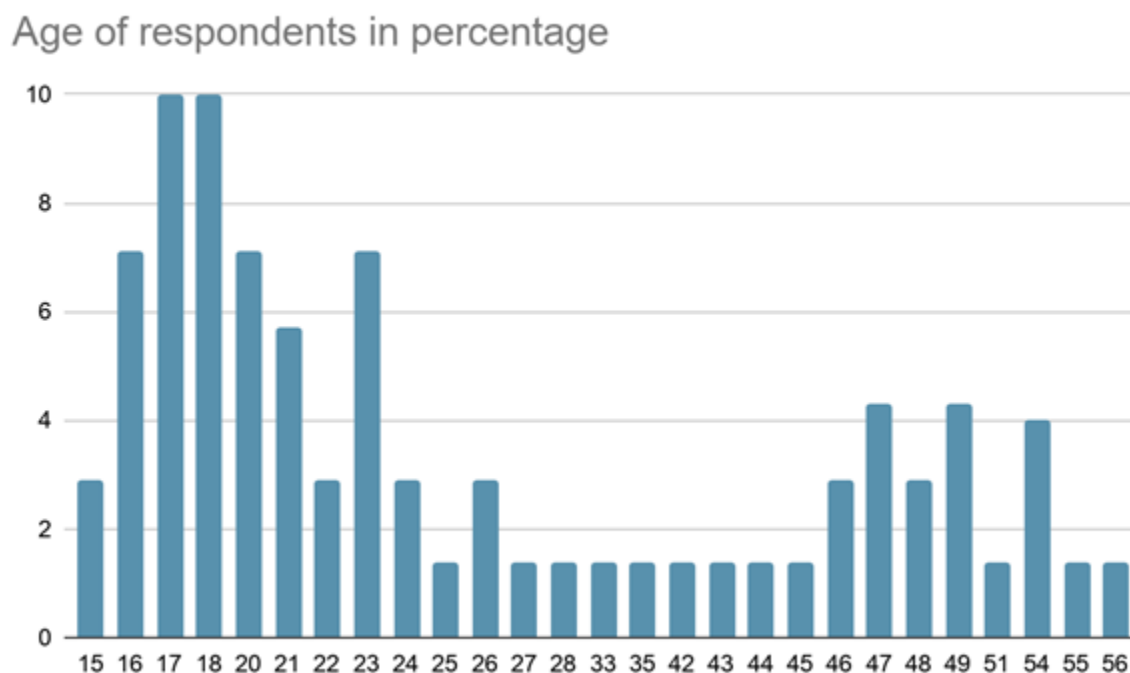entertainment to bully other people in order to gain

attention.

Figure 3: Age of respondents who did the survey

The correlation between the age and the answers of the respondents is one of the aspects that is worth investigating. In the figure we can see that the focus of the survey is on students and adolescents, but there's also a number of elderly who participate in the survey. Interestingly, the proportion between those who think that social media can effectively improve one's potential and those who think that social media is a two-edged sword is about the same for both young and aged respondents (Figure 1) despite the difference in the number of young and aged respondents. This shows that young and aged respondents share the same opinion on this topic. This may be due to the fact that social media, which does not only include education, has already integrated into our society for a period of time, which means that the society, including young and aged people, will receive similar experiences about social media. If they receive the same experience, the conclusions i.e. opinions they make about the topic often do not differentiate much from each other. This

may be the explanation why age does not play an important role in the first figure.

But it's different for the second figure about cyberbully. All aged respondents have never experienced cyberbully before. This means that the 35.7% of the respondents who have been through a cyberbully before is entirely students and middle-aged workers. The rationale behind this is that social media was not widely used and developed yet as the aged respondents were still students in schools where cyberbully occurs the most often. This means that aged respondents could not be cyberbullied, since it was not even possible back then.

This emphasizes the issue of the cyberbully in the society even more. If we exclude the aged respondents in the second figure, then the number of those who has experienced cyberbully before will greatly increase, which will severely intensify the issue.

Discussion

Social media contains advantages as well as disadvantages. On the one hand, social media can facilitate one's study. It is fast, convenient, has a variety and a lot of up-to-date information on it and allows the communication between students and teachers to be a lot easier and faster, which will cause the students to be able to broaden their knowledge and learn more faster than learning solely at schools without using social media. This will allow students who do not entirely understand everything at school to catch up with their classmates by using social media.

On the other hand, social media can negatively affect the students. If the students can not properly allocate their time, social media may act as a distraction for the students, which will be counterproductive. In addition, it may make the students addicted and dependent on it. Furthermore, social media contains a lot of information, which may be theoretically or scientifically not correct. This information can be harmful to the students, who sometimes cannot distinguish between a reliable and a non-reliable source. Moreover, if this false information were to be used in a research paper, the paper would lose its reliability and value. But the most important aspect is the cyberbully that has to be mentioned. Nowadays, a number of adolescents are being cyberbullied and this issue is not yet to be solved.

Finally, it is true that social media contains a lot of aspects that can be used to improve student's potential, but the risks and the costs for using social media are also high. There is plenty of information that can be used for a more effective study, but there is also plenty of incorrect information that can be used to aggravate one's study. On top of that, risks such as cyberbully, addiction and distraction are not to be overlooked.

Therefore, we should not let social media be integrated into the educational system too much, but not that it should be entirely banned. Some aspects, which are tied with acceptable risks such as communication between teachers and students are still useful. However, it is important to control that the use of social media is within this extent and is not extending in order to prevent risks that come with intensive use of social media such as cyberbullying, which can destroy a student's life.

Conclusion

This study explores the advantages and disadvantages of social media, which have to be considered, if social media were to be implemented in an educational system. Based on the responses, the respondents agree that social media can be used to improve student's potential by providing them information, which can be accessed rapidly and easily. However, there are risks, which are tied with the use of social media, which is e.g. cyberbullying or addiction. Therefore, it is important to restrict and control the use of social media in an educational system to an extent, so that the harmful risks caused by social media can be prevented.

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