

Original Research Article

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Sources of Information for Agricultural Students on Online Meeting Tools during Covid-19 Lock Down

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to know the sources of information for agricultural students on online meeting Apps during COVID-19 lock down with a sample size of 150 respondents (i.e., Agricultural students studying in Agricultural Higher Education Institutions across A. P, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala). In this study 68% of respondents revealed that Teaching staff and officials of Agricultural Higher Education Institutions (Institutional Sources) are the major contributors in creating awareness about online meeting Apps among Institutional, Non Institutional and Mass Media Channels. 88.7% of the respondents opined that Social Media is major contributor among Print, Electronic, Social Media channels and 68.7% of respondents revealed that WhatsApp have played crucial role among Social Media Platforms in awareness creation about virtual meeting Apps. This study also revealed that, Age and Level of education/type of degree are the major influencing factors in a decision to choose a particular meeting App for their online classes.

Keywords

COVID-19, Lock down, Institutional Sources, Social Media, WhatsApp

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Introduction

It is a well known fact that COVID-19 had shown staggering impact on global education system. Worldwide there are more than 1.2 billion learners in 186 countries are out of class room due to the pandemic (source: UNESCO).

As the corona virus pandemic started affecting India, all the colleges and schools along with Agricultural higher education institutions closed physically due to pandemic-led lock down. There are as many as 1.65 lakh students are pursuing various Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Doctoral programmes in various Agricultural

institutions (2019-20; <https://education.icar.gov.in/>) across the country were impacted due to pandemic and their academic activities were significantly disrupted.

Based on UGC Guidelines for the Universities in view of COVID-19 pandemic and in consultation with academic experts and administrators of agricultural universities, the ICAR has taken several immediate measures to ensure continuity in teaching- learning process. ICAR along with NAHEP, NARES responded well to the situation and started taking advantage of technology to bring classes online via various online meeting apps.

But, the challenge is to find the best online conferencing solution for specific e-Learning needs, especially when there are so many options available and also many students are unaware of online meeting apps before COVID-19 lock down. Keeping all these things in mind this study was conducted to know what are the major informational sources that has been contributed significantly to create awareness about online meeting apps among the agricultural higher education students during lock down period and also to know the role of demographics in choosing particular online meeting app.

Materials and Methods

The data were collected during June, 2020 on a structured survey schedule administered as an online survey using Google forms and data were collected purposively from A.P, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala states. A total of 150 respondents have been selected on simple random basis from various Agricultural Higher Education Institutions studying in these 5 states. Care has been taken to eliminate multiple responses during the online survey and all the respondents included in the sample are unaware of online meeting

Apps before pandemic-led lockdown.

The data collected was categorized and tabulated according to demographics, type of online meeting App used, sources of information in awareness creation.

The Pearson chi square test (χ^2) was performed to know the significance of association between the demographics of the respondents and type of online App used, sources of information in awareness creation. The computation was done by using SPSS statistical program.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of respondents according to demographics

Results pertaining to distribution of respondents according to demographic characteristics is presented in table 1. The findings shows that highest number of respondents belongs to the 21-25 years age group (70.7%) followed by 16-20 years age group (25.3%) and 26-30 years (2.7%) and least number of respondents are in >30 years age group(1.3%). This might be due to the most of the students studying in Agricultural Higher Educational Institutions are in between 21-25 years, 16-20 years and there are few students belongs to >30 years are studying in these institutions. Then 58.7% of the respondents are females and 41.3% of the respondents are males.

The highest number of respondents are pursuing Under graduation (56.7%) followed by Post graduation (40%) and PhD (3.3%). These results are in the order of (i.e., Under graduation, Post graduation, PhD respectively) total number of students pursuing these 3 degree programmes in various Agricultural Higher Education Institutions.

Distribution of respondents according to type of online meeting App used

Table 2 clearly shows that 52.7% of the students are using Zoom mobile application for their online classes followed by Google Meet (38.7%), Webex (4.6%) and Others(4.0%).

Distribution of respondents according to sources of information in awareness creation

From the Table 3, highest number of respondents (68%) opined that Teaching staff and officials of Agricultural Higher Education

Institutions (Institutional/Formal sources) are major sources of information in creating awareness about online meeting Apps followed by Mass Media Channels (17.3%) and Non Institutional/Informal sources i.e., Friends, Neighbours, Relatives, Family members (14.7%). Past research on sources of information suggesting that Mass Media channels are actively involved at awareness stage of any new technology. But in contrast the results are showing that Institutional sources have played crucial role in creating awareness about online meeting Apps. The reason might be awareness stage was coincided with trial and adoption stages due to an abnormal situation (Pandemic).

Table.1 Distribution of respondents according to demographics (N=150)

Variables	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
AGE		
16-20 years	38	25.3
21-25 years	106	70.7
26-30 years	4	2.7
> 30 years	2	1.3
GENDER		
Female	88	58.7
Male	62	41.3
EDUCATION		
Under graduation	85	56.7
Post graduation	60	40
PhD	5	3.3

Source: Online Survey 2020

Table.2 Distribution of respondents according to type of online meeting app used (N=150)

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Online Meeting App		
Zoom	79	52.7
Google Meet	58	38.7
Webex	7	4.6
Others	6	4.0

Source: Online Survey 2020

Table.3 Distribution of respondents according to sources of information in awareness creation (N=150)

Variables	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
<u>Major Sources of Information</u>		
Teaching staff and officials of Agricultural Higher Education Institutes	102	68.0
Friends, Neighbors, Relatives, Family members	22	14.7
Mass Media Channels (Print, Electronic, Social Media)	26	17.3
<u>Type of Mass Media Channel</u>		
Electronic Media	17	11.3
Print Media	0	0
Social Media	133	88.7
<u>Type of Social Media Platform</u>		
WhatsApp	103	68.7
You Tube	21	14.0
Instagram	12	8.0
Face Book	8	5.3
Others	6	4.0

Source: Online Survey 2020

Table.4 Pearson Chi – square (χ^2) values for demographics versus type of online meeting app used, sources of information in awareness creation (N=150)

		AGE	GENDER	EDUCATION
Online meeting app used	χ^2 VALUE	20.001	7.530	27.546
	P-VALUE	0.018*	0.06	0.00**
	SIGNIFICANCE	S	NS	S
Major sources of information	χ^2 VALUE	5.978	3.571	4.954
	P-VALUE	0.426	0.168	0.292
	SIGNIFICANCE	NS	NS	NS
Type of mass media channel	χ^2 VALUE	9.471	1.124	4.408
	P-VALUE	0.024*	0.289	0.110
	SIGNIFICANCE	S	NS	NS
Type of social mediaplatform	χ^2 VALUE	8.648	3.721	6.885
	P-VALUE	0.733	0.445	0.549
	SIGNIFICANCE	NS	NS	NS

NOTE: * and ** indicates significance at 5% and 1% level of significance respectively.
NS= Non significant, S= Significant

88.7% of the respondents opined that Social Media have contributed in awareness creation followed by Electronic Media (11.3%) among Mass Media Channels. Significantly highest per cent of Social Media might be due to its wide range of accessibility. But one important finding in this study is that none of the respondents (0%) have reported the role of Print Media in awareness creation. This might be due to the very low level of accessibility to Print Media channels like news papers during pandemic-led lock down.

Highest number of respondents (68.7%) opined that WhatsApp have played important role in awareness creation among various Social Media Platforms followed by You Tube (14%), Instagram (8%), Face Book (5.3%) and Others (4%). The reason might be due to WhatsApp will allow the people in intense inter personal communication than any other Social Media Platform and inter personal channels will in turn act as a reliable source of information.

Pearson chi square (χ^2) test for demographics versus type of online meeting App used, sources of information in awareness creation

Pearson chi square test results in Table 4 showing that there is a significant relationship between the Age and type of online meeting App used $\chi^2=20.001$, $p=0.018$, $p<0.05$.

It is also showing that there is there is a significant association between the level of education of respondent and type of online meeting App used by him $\chi^2=27.546$, $p=0.00$, $p<0.01$. From here it is evident that level of education/ type of degree will play a role in decision to choose a particular meeting App for their online classes.

There is a significant association between the Age of the respondent and type of Mass Media Channel $\chi^2=9.471$, $p=0.024$, $p<0.05$.

In conclusion, it was discovered that Institutional Sources (Teaching staff and officials of Agricultural Higher Education Institutions) have played a crucial and very important role in creating awareness about virtual meeting tools and succeeding in preparing the students for online classes for teaching-learning continuity.

It was also found that Age and level of education have played major role in choosing a particular online meeting App for their virtual classes.

The type of Mass Media Channel involved in creating awareness about online meeting Apps vary with the Age.

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