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# EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## Abstract

This study examines how students from marginalized communities use social media to gratify their needs in performing educational tasks during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. This research explores what challenges the students face in their own areas during those uncertain times and what opportunities they had in developed areas where they were studying. Focus group discussions were arranged by providing free space for the students to express their genuine issues. The educational tasks, lockdown challenges, educational facilities, digital divide, ethnicity, educational performances, and telecommunication services were explored in detail. The students' interpretation, understanding and responses to these issues were concerns of this investigation. These sub-themes examine under the shadow of "Cognitive, Personal, Affective and Tension Release Needs" of Uses and Gratification Theory. But after discussion with the students, the researchers found that there were many other challenges faced by the marginalized students who belong to peripheries and tried to remain in contact with their educational institutions during the lockdown such as internet facilities, electronic gadgets, war zone conflicts, and transportation etc.

**Keywords:** Social Media, COVID-19, Education, University Students, Uses and Gratification Theory

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on ethnic minority communities' students, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The digital divide refers to the unequal distribution of technology and access to the internet between different groups. In Pakistan, ethnic minority communities are more likely to have limited access to technology including the internet, which has made it difficult for them to access essential information and services during the pandemic. This has made it harder for them to stay informed about the pandemic, access telemedicine services, and participate in remote learning and work from home during the lockdown. In addition, many ethnic minority communities have also been hit harder economically by the pandemic, making it even more difficult for them to afford access to technology. The digital divide has also perpetuated the existing inequalities, as those with limited access to technology are at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing information, resources,

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and opportunities. This has led to a widening of the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not, exacerbating existing inequalities and making it even harder for ethnic minority communities to recover from the pandemic.

The ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 and the prevailing threat to human life have been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization (Sohrabi et al., 2020). The first case of COVID-19 was officially reported on 26th February 2020 in Pakistan. The condition spiraled hastily, and to effectively contain COVID-19, a complete lockdown was imposed in the country on 23rd March 2020, later converted into a 'smart lockdown' on 9th May 2020. Smart lockdown means launching targeted tracing, tracking, testing, and quarantine mechanism in infected cluster populations with the coordination of national security apparatus to stop the spread of COVID-19 while easing restrictions on economic activities under the safety guidelines provided by the government (Ali et al., 2020). Despite the smart lockdown, however, the pandemic has incurred massive challenges to all human beings in Pakistan and worldwide, causing visible effects on social, emotional, cultural, and economic fabrics (Naeem & Bhatti, 2020).

All educational institutions, public places, and markets were directed to remain padlocked. However, it was also observed that the continuous spread of the disease, myths, conspiracy theories, sensational media reporting, and blame games about COVID-19 caused distrust among the people (Wang et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020). Social distancing from classmates, friends, and teachers, lack of personal space at home, and family financial losses are some of the main risk factors that significantly influence the mental health of university students and make them frustrated and envious. During COVID-19, social isolation and social distancing became a reality and were observed more commonly in various parts of the globe. People increasingly turn to social media for support, entertainment, and connection with others (Nabity et al., 2020).

Under these challenging circumstances, social media has an important role to play. By doing so, the overall approach towards social media usage; attitudes transformed from traditional to tech-based approaches. As such outlets are already playing a vital role in public relations, information seeking, marketing, surveillance, information sharing, news, awareness, academics, and many other areas (Kreiss, 2016; Reuben, 2008; Kim et al., 2016; Selwyn, 2012; Chappelle et al., 2014; Sohn and Leckenby, 2005; Cheng et al., 2016; Sterling et al., 2017; Jackson and Lilleker, 2007; Tess, 2013; Wells, 2017; Turcotte et al., 2015;). This heavy dependency and use of media create physical, physiological and mental illness in users due to false and fake news that flouts on social media from non-verified platforms. Due to this, every user tries to verify disseminated news by searching on different media platforms. The process of understanding, interpreting and responding to this disease has the convergence of technology. Thinking of food, health, education and shopping etc. is confined within the domains catered by social media. According to the annual report of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) (2020), significant growth has increased in digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ali et al., 2020) which shows the major shift from traditional to new media.

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## Problem Statement

This study examines how students all over Pakistan's major public sector universities used social media to gratify their needs in seeking information pertaining to COVID-19, and how social media usage affected these students' self-efficacy towards preventive measures against COVID-19. While the usage of social media during the pandemic in Pakistan was mainly associated with different organizations bombarding their target audience with information without knowing their effect or utility or at least used by the target audience. This lack is much visible in academic institutions, especially in Pakistan where students' interpretation, understanding and responses to this disease may completely change. In order to address this blind spot, the study will conduct focus group discussions with students from five (05) Pakistani public sector universities, who are most relevant to the research—those living in hostels and dormitories away from homes.

## Research Questions

RQ1: How does social media usage help students to meet their educational tasks during the COVID-19 lockdown?

RQ2: What challenges students faced during this lockdown period in their peripheries?

## Research Objective

- To explore the social media usage and educational tasks performed by the students during the COVID-19 lockdown.

## Theoretical Insight

Health emergencies throughout the world change the lifestyle of the public. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on university students and their media consumption habits. Through the lens of Uses and Gratification Theory, it is evident that university students have relied on media to fulfill their needs for information, entertainment, social connectivity, and stress relief during the pandemic. The shift to remote learning and the restrictions on social interactions have resulted in an increased dependence on digital platforms, leading to changes in the way students consume media. This highlights the importance of media in fulfilling the psychological needs of university students and the need for continued research into the impact of the pandemic on media consumption habits. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a lasting effect on the media landscape and the ways in which university students use media to fulfil their needs and desires.

However, gratifications sought (GS) refer to those needs that motivate university students to seek gratification from social media and gratification obtained (GO) is referred to as the actual outcome or gratification received from social media against that needs among university students. This study has different dimensions that are explored by the help of students' opinions and detailed discussion-belongs to different peripheries of the country. The conceptual frame has developed on the bases of the selected theory by putting the focus on how students use social media during this pandemic to meet their educational needs and what type of challenges they faced and how they tackle these issues in remote areas. Thematic exploration under U&G Theory refers to the examination of how specific

themes or topics within media usage contribute to individual gratifications.

Blumer, Mcquail and Brown, (1973) contended that these groups consist of the more primary factors for which one may use the mass media. These groups are; diversion (escape from problems and routines for an emotional release), *personal relationships* (social engagement through media), *personal identity* (self-understanding, reality exploration) and *Surveillance* (information and knowledge gathering). Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) believed that people may engage or disengage with others through the use of mass media. They identified 35 needs and grouped them into five main categories based on the primarily speculative literature (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Perse and Courtright, 1993) on the social and psychological effects of mass media.

For this study, it is operationalized that the educational tasks extracted from, lockdown challenges, educational facilities, digital divide, ethnicity, educational tasks, and telecommunication services were under consideration and tried to explore under the umbrella of U&G Theory. These sub-themes were explored under the shadow of the *"Cognitive, Personal, Affective and Tension Release Needs"* of U&G Theory. The different codes were highlighted by using previous data/studies on social media- such as lockdown, COVID-19, facilities, ethnicity, connectivity, education etc. these matters were the main gratification sought to use social media during the pandemic. But after discussion with the students, the researcher found many other challenges faced by the marginalized students, who belong to peripheries and tried to remain in contact with their educational institutions during the lockdown.

**Literature Review**

Information-seeking is a purposeful activity. Searching for condition-specific details and disease prevention and treatment information helps fulfilling specific needs of health information (Payne et al., 2003). Meantime, health information seeking is an essential part of self-health management, especially in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases. Social media is expected to become a useful source of medical information at this age (Jacobs et al., 2017). Similarly, the usage of various applications of social media to seek information has also increased dramatically, as the rapid increases in the number of infected individuals were causing a burden on the medical system during this pandemic (Naeem et al., 2020). During COVID-19, people's anxiety about health was unprecedented, so acquiring health-related knowledge on the internet became very popular (Bhandari& Jung, 2014).

In the new distance learning environment, students can utilize social media to study, communicate with their instructors and classmates, and access course materials (Awidi et al., 2019c; Castro, 2014; Manca, 2020). There is evidence that professors use social media for academic and professional goals (Awidi et al., 2019a). Academic conversations are dominated by social media and online video platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Wikipedia (Klein et al., 2018). According to a recent poll, Facebook and WhatsApp are the most widely used academic tools in higher education today (Manca, 2020).

Increases in college enrollment have been linked to the rise of social media (Manca, 2020; Valenzuela et al., 2009; Yildiz Durak, 2019). The results of these studies

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have generally shown that students' use of social media platforms improves their opportunities for informal intellectual dialogue, community building, trust and contentment, and overall well-being. The use of social media can improve student motivation and retention (Awidi et al., 2019a; Dyson et al., 2015). Using social media has been shown to improve students' interactions with one another in a university setting (Awidi et al., 2019a; Bowman & Akcaoglu, 2014; Cuesta et al., 2016). Facebook use has been shown to improve students' academic performance (Bowman & Akcaoglu, 2014; Cuesta et al., 2016; Lambić, 2016), as well as their motivation (Awidi et al., 2019a). Facebook's potential as a learning tool for students has been well recognized (Lambić, 2016). Other research (Irwin et al., 2012; Junco, 2015) has found a correlation between Facebook use and poor academic performance. Using Facebook excessively was linked to less participation in school activities (Junco, 2015). Facebook boosted students' academic performance (Awidi et al., 2019b). Students and faculty are working together more frequently because to social media (Rasiah, 2014). To that end, students who used social media to study profited from the shared materials. The word was used mostly in the sense of working together (Sharma et al., 2016).

Educators can connect with their students on SNSs, facilitating student learning and development through group work and the exchange of ideas (Awidi et al., 2019a; Junco, 2015; Sharma et al., 2016; Beemt et al., 2020; Durak, 2019) though academics recognized the potential of SNSs for scholarly communication, widespread adoption was sluggish (Sobaih et al., 2016). The digital divide, teachers' lack of familiarity with SNSs as a tool for education, false beliefs about the effectiveness of SNSs as a teaching tool, and inadequate IT support and infrastructure in some schools (Sharma et al., 2016; Sobaih et al., 2016). Wang, (2019) found that 36.7% of the Chinese participants had sought online health information at least one or two times, citing saving money and easing the privacy concern as the two primary reasons for seeking health information online. Like, in China health information is the second largest category of information searched by Chinese Internet users (Xinhuanet, 2018). Yan et al., (2016) studied that in the United States, more than 70% of internet users have been observed in seeking health information online by using various applications of social media.

According to the Pew survey in the United States, 52% of Americans use their mobile phones to acquire health-related knowledge (Jacobs, 2017). From February to March 2020, Facebook and Instagram use increased by more than 40% globally; during this period Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram users have increased by 70%; the number of views of the real-time stream has doubled (Nabity et al., 2020). The usage of local social media applications in China i.e., (WeChat and Weibo) has increased by 58% (Pesälä, 2017). The study in hand will sightsee how the motivators impulse the usage of social media and will also provide the students' understanding towards COVID-19 in Pakistan.

During the disaster and pandemic period, people's aims to use of social media may change. Nowadays, it is increasing for people to seek health-related information on the internet (Bratucu et al., 2014). Millions of people turn to the internet as their first source of information (Ittefaq et al., 2018); young people have developed this habit (McKinley & Wright, 2014). However, one of the most significant limitations of the internet, and more specifically of social media platforms for health communication, is sometimes the inaccurate character of the information they release on health (Mukherjee & Bawden, 2012; Kuttschreuter et al., 2014; Zhang, Wen, Liang, & Lei, 2017).In health information-seeking,

it is found that different user groups use various sources of information and it is also found that patients with chronic diseases are more likely to find health-related information on social media (Miller & Bell, 2012). Courtemanche et al., (2020) found similar results: networked sources were favored by internet users for easy accessibility and the opportunities to save time.

## Methodology and Research Design

Taking note of this crucial situation, being qualitative in nature; this study explores social media usage in the pandemic context and students' online information-seeking behavior. As, qualitative research helps the researcher to understand the idea and meaning of reality according to the participant's interaction with the world (Almusam, 2016). Qualitative researchers are more involved in looking at things, perceptions, experiences and practices through the lens of 'How' and 'Why' questions (Creswell, 2000). Since the interaction changes over time and produces multiple purposes, qualitative research comprehends and records the existing realities with accumulated experience and interaction (Ginsberg, 2009). However, in the current study the students were interviewed by using focus group discussion; who are most relevant and well-educated to the research, having information about the explored concept. They are Internet-wise, the most highly connected population segment and their media preferences are hugely different from the older generation.

In order to shine a light on this blind spot, the researcher conducted ten (10) focus group discussions (FGD) with students from five (05) Pakistani public sector universities, who were most relevant to the research—those living in hostels and dormitories away from homes. Each focus group has divided into Urban and Rural area students, and the researcher tried to balance the interviewer's gender accordingly. The purposive sampling technique has been used to identify the participants. Greenbaum (1993) and Krueger, (1994) suggests that 08 to 10 participants in each Focus Group Discussion are sufficient.

A diverse sample was selected using the principle of maximum diversity on the basis of different socio-demographic parameters such as age, gender, education status and area to find out the problems and issues they faced. Qualitative data is not in numbers, but it is based on oral and verbal recordings and transcribed interviews. Usually, qualitative data analysis is based on interpretive philosophy; the meaningful and symbolic content of the recorded data is examined. In this study, the recorded data were analyzed in two steps. In the first step, the data were grouped according to the defined major themes, then sub-themes and codes. At this stage, the researcher created codes, similarities, differences, and emergent themes. In the second step, results are generated from the NVivo software which provides the researcher with significant outcomes in the forms of word clouds, word trees, word patterns etc.

## Analysis and Discussion

Under this selected theme, the researcher tried to explore the understanding and perception level of the students by asking relevant questions regarding social media usage and educational performances during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the students who shared their opinions were in hostels and others, lived at their homes during lockdown; but faced many issues and also were constantly engaged with their universities. The students

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were asked about the reasons, why they used social media platforms and to what extent it was useful for them during this pandemic. Some of the students answered the questions comprehensively while others addressed them in brief.

Overall, the respondents highlighted many connected issues and discuss the main reasons, particularly from marginalized areas, what type of issues they were facing, and how they lost their educational lockdown period due to fewer resources. They also tined educational facilities that had been provided by the institutions during this lockdown period. However, many respondents have complained about the effectiveness of online classes; because they initially not getting an understanding of the online teaching techniques. Keeping in view the main theme, after evaluating the qualitative collected data from the students through detailed discussion, the researcher developed the following codes and sub-themes in order to interpret and discuss the main theme comprehensively. On these issues, students had a lot to share, so they responded actively and made the discussion valuable.

**Code:**

1. Social Media
2. Education
3. COVID-19
4. Facilities
5. Telecommunication Services
6. Ethnicity
7. Marginalization
8. War effects
9. Connectivity

**Sub-Themes:**

1. Educational Tasks
2. Challenges during the lockdown period
3. Facilities provided by the Universities
4. Digital Divide and Telecommunication services in Pakistan

These sub-themes were the hot areas of discussion for the students and they had a lot to participate in this domain. The students added to the discussion that the sudden switch of studying mode was difficult for everyone to adopt. It took a year for the students to get habitual in the studying mode. The respondents from developed areas agreed that social media helped a lot in meeting the educational tasks during COVID-19 because it was not

possible to visit the institutions and get the lectures and material in hard form. Therefore, it was the online site where teachers were uploading the documents for the students. At the same time, it was a big challenge for students to understand this new normal because it was the first time that the educational system was shifted from traditional to tech-based settings. Both the students and teachers have had no prior training and understanding of this pandemic. Whereas parents' concern was the quality education that was not delivered in online mode and no concession in the fee charges was provided by the educational institutes. But, social media was the only source to teach them, help them and guide them on how to live, how to learn and how to behave with the chronic disease. As one of the respondents stated that:

"For us, there was only social media; that facilitate us to perform all activities within four walls during the COVID-19 pandemic. All institutions tried to engage their students by virtually, but there were connectivity issues."

The whole world was under the pressure and the COVID-19 was out of control. So, the Pakistan government has decided to impose a lockdown in all cities and banned all types of movements and gatherings throughout the country. Due to this, all educational institutions changed their educational teaching style from traditional to tech-based. Students and teachers were on different types of applications at that time, and they were performing different tasks; as needed. To continue all educational activities, the government, stakeholders, and educational institutions tried to tackle this pandemic and offered different plans. But, remote area students and teachers; both faced many challenges during this pandemic. As one of the respondent mentions:

"Social media usage helped us a lot to meet our educational tasks because we were connected via Zoom, and WhatsApp etc. to complete our assignments during the pandemic. But, unavailability of the telecommunication services in remote areas was the big challenge for us".

Likewise, there were many other options on social media for the students to connect with their educational institutions to attend lectures and get material from the teachers. Few were reluctant and unfamiliar to use new media and, modern ways of teaching; not only students but also teachers. As per the convenience and feasibility of the students they tried to get informed and connected with peers, friends and family through the best available social media platform. During the ongoing prevailing perils of COVID-19, people increasingly turn to social media for support, entertainment and connection with others (Nabity, Cheung, & Thatcher, 2020). As of early June 2020, Twitter made a new record number of new downloads and daily active users. Gupta, (2007) is believed that this is due to the people's desire to update the COVID-19 pandemic information. Since we were left with no more options, we had to continue to study online. Different types of social media helped the students in different ways to prepare for the lectures and make notes during this pandemic. But, due to the connectivity issues, most of the students were unable to gratify their *personal needs*. This was a big challenge for both teachers and students as well during this pandemic. The marginalized students failed to continue their educational activities due to fewer resources and a weak development structure. Along the same lines, one of the respondents argue that:

"I used Zoom, and Google Classroom and then TEAMS, and I find TEAMS most

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convenient for connecting to online education rather than Zoom and Skype. It was not easy to use these mediums".

It was a difficult time; due to which rapid changes were seen everywhere. Many educational institutions launched different ways of online teaching, through which students were connected their selves. Private universities tackle this issue vigilantly but, public sector universities faced many issues to engage their students by using modern ways of online education. As, most of the public sector universities built mutual patch-up by using WhatsApp; a common using app in Pakistan. On another side, private universities purchased Zoom space and also connect through TEAM software during the lockdown.

Likewise, many scholars Asemah, (2011); Gallion, (2010); and Whiting and Williams, (2013) mention that a huge number of people utilize social media for interaction, killing time, entertainment, seeking and sharing of information, socialization, self-expression, education, surveillance and communication during uncertainties. By using this framework, the researchers identify the spectators as making a pragmatic choice for a certain media over its competitors and striving for certain gratification. The switch to online mode was not even planned. As students had to move to their houses and many belonged to the remote areas of Pakistan; where internet facilities were very poor. They were unable to continue their educational activities, and that is why lost their grades; that shows they never gratify their affective and personal needs. As one of the theme mentions

"I enrolled in Punjab at a renowned university. After lockdown, I came back to my home in Waziristan; where we don't have sufficient facilities to connect with regular online classes".

Moreover, students could not take their classes properly which was the main reason for their lacking behind. In areas such as KPK majority was awarded about the telecommunication and network services; which were not adequate enough for them to function online for any purpose whether it is education or any other etc. The COVID-19 outbreak constrained people within four walls and ensured safety measures, and government-imposed bans on public movement (Courtemanche, Garuccio, Pinkston & Yelowitz, 2020). Usually, students face Internet connectivity issues in the submission of their online tasks sometimes load shedding issues were being faced by the students. They got late because there were in remote areas where the government handled these issues in very unstructured and nonprofessional ways. In these marginalized areas, students were stuck and unable to move, connect and perform well, due to the unavailability of resources. Many respondents pointed out that, they were not only facing the COVID-19 issue but they had militarized operations. Due to these continued military operations against terrorist groups, there were fewer facilitated in terms of health, education, telecommunication services and transportation. Along the same lines one of the respondents commented that:

"We were living in remote areas where we are facing connectivity problems. Our Baluchistan and KPK governments failed to facilitate the students in terms of educational connectivity during this lockdown".

Due to the lockdown during this pandemic; social media and telecommunication services were tested in all the ways. Everyone had the usage of social media according to their own needs. Students used it in dual modes; study and entertainment. Whereas,

students who could not avail the facilities due to unavailability of internet services faced a lot. From the remote areas, students came to join universities in the main cities of the country. But, after the lockdown, they were supposed to go back to their homes and try to connect with their educational institutions for educational activities from their homes. Therefore, when they were at home, in remote areas there felt big differences in the facilities.

The digital divide and telecommunication services within an outside the cities of Pakistan are not very good, and as per the participants, when there was a load on the Internet by the users the network become slow, as well as there were a lot of internet connectivity problems, especially in their home towns. This is all because of the inefficient telecommunication infrastructure in Pakistan. The main reason for the unavailability of resources in these remote areas was military operations. Due to security purposes, the military suspended these types of structural developments in that areas and the common man; who is thinking about a good future and following the country's policies suffered. The living identities in these areas felt like marginalized communities compared with other developed areas of the country. This digital divide during the pandemic exposed the whole structure of the country and highlighted the real-time issues related to these remote areas.

The frequently used terms were extracted by using different tools of the NVivo software and diversified graphs and pictures got to analyze comprehensively. During this pandemic, create distress and students were under pressure due to the lockdown and the movement was banned in the country. Students were supposed to go back to their homes and continue their educational activities during the lockdown; which was difficult. The only way to connect with their educational institutions, peers, family and friends was through social media. As per the computer-assisted analysis, the most frequently used words in the students' responses were; lockdown, COVID, social media, family, friends, online education, health, fear, facilities, entertainment, students, depression and isolation etc. The extracted graphs and pictures analyze one by one below in detail. The figures-1 shows the frequently used terms in the discussion while talking about the usage of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Figure-1. Word Cloud of Most-Frequently Used Words During the Focus Group Discussions.




This figure-1 shows a cluster of used words in these responses identifying the focus of discussion which could help us to follow patterns of thinking of the students about the lockdown and COVID-19. The above cloud also shows the frequency of the issues, as well as the intensity of the subjects. Newsreels, depression, stress, scrolling, togetherness and family health disquiets were the motivators for students to use social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the discussion, most of the students were concerned about their educational careers and health issues. That's why they heavily use social media to gratify their needs and to meet deadlines also. Moreover, the majority of the respondents focused to discuss the telecommunication divide and ethnic problems; that they were facing during this pandemic.

The cluster of used words in the above cloud also shows, how the students were staying at home and engaging in different activities by using modern ways of technology. They were much concerned to know about government policies, treatment processes, health care techniques, new information and NCOC (National Command and Operation Center) decisions. However, at that time for students, the only way to gratify their informational, entertainment and communication needs was to use social media. In Pakistan, with low Per Capita Income, the people were under pressure due to business losses and strict policies about hotels, markets and other public places. The parents were worried about their children's education and health. This situation creates restless and psychological disorders not only in parents' minds but students' also. Another respondent argues that:

"My father lost his business; he is the only breadwinner of our family. He was unable to support us in educational tasks. So, during the lockdown, I was supposed to support my family financially and started work online. By using social media, I earned money for my family and for my education as well".

On one side this pandemic creates hurdles for families but at the same time, it gave the opportunity to grow their self as per the demand of the environment. Many of the respondents mention that they learned software as per the demand of online work. These respondents were belonging to the major metropolitan cities and had basic necessities of life. They mostly have the best telecommunication services and all the means of communication. So, their gratification obtained list is larger than those who don't have a well-organized structure. But on another side, many of the students belong to remote areas

of Pakistan, even though they don't have the facility to perform their educational tasks by using social media at these peripheries. This discussion explores the new digital divide between different geographical divisions of the country. Most of the students were unable to perform their educational tasks, which shows a major difference between gratification sought and gratification obtained. Here as per the uses and gratification notion, students want to use social media for certain gratification but were unable to obtain these gratifications; due to the unavailability of the resources and services.

These all responses and arguments help the researcher to build the frame of the study and explore the real-time issues of the respondents. It was a difficult time for the students to continue their educational activities and participate in all assigned tasks to complete their educational requirements. So, the important thing is that, in the future, we face this type of pandemic. how can we tackle this and how can we overcome it and how can we treat it and also how can institutions develop their educational policy and how a government can facilitate their living identities by pushing up in all areas of the country.

## Conclusion

The outbreak of COVID-19 has significantly affected the educational sector worldwide. Schools, colleges, and universities have closed down to curb the spread of the virus. This has led to the emergence of educational tasks, including e-learning, online classes, and other forms of virtual education. In Pakistan, war zones have been a significant challenge to the education system. Children in these areas have been deprived of their right to education due to ongoing conflicts. The government, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders have been making efforts to ensure that children in these areas access quality education. The uses and gratification theory provides insights into how individuals consume media to satisfy their needs and wants. It highlights that people have different motivations for consuming media, such as entertainment, information, social interaction, and escapism.

In the context of education, the theory suggests that students are likely to choose educational materials that satisfy their needs and wants, such as academic performance, career advancement, and personal development. In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic, educational tasks, war zones in Pakistan, and the uses and gratification theory have significant implications for the education sector. Governments, stakeholders, and educational institutions need to explore innovative ways to ensure that learners access quality education in all contexts. Additionally, understanding the motivations and needs of students can help educators to design educational materials that cater to their unique preferences and enhance their learning outcomes.

## Recommendations

As we all went through COVID-19 and suffered in different ways. The main reason for struggling was that we lack in technology and its implementation. Many of the students even after being educated remain unaware of how to use various applications such as Zoom and Slack etc. So, institutions must make students familiar with applications and their usage. However, the situation of COVID-19 was new for the teachers and government of this decade; futuristic approaches must be taken now.

- So, Pakistan remains prepared for any kind of situation which comes and everyone

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must be prepared to face it technically, physically and psychologically. The government needs to consider every factor and students need to develop more capabilities, while institutions need to cater to the needs of students politely.

- Moreover, most of the respondents suggested that the institutions must introduce training workshops and short-term programs for student learning as well as teachers. Under these conditions, the government must provide subsidies and facilities to the people such as daily wage workers to tackle this type of pandemic and related issues in the future.

- Likewise, they suggest that public-private universities cope with programs during that type of pandemic. Stakeholders must facilitate the institutions as well as students by using modern techniques. By using this technique, many remote area and less developed area students can uplift their lifestyle and improve educational standards.

- Pakistan's government should stop all types of wars; try to convince opponents through dialogue. All provinces and central governments must try to make it possible to introduce a proper development policy for the development of these neglected areas.

- Telecommunication service providers must ensure the availability of services in remote areas and resolve connectivity issues through the collaboration of security entities. In order to address the digital divide and its impact on ethnic communities (students), it is important to ensure that all individuals have access to technology and the internet. This can be done through initiatives such as government-funded programs, community-led initiatives, and private-sector partnerships.

- By closing the digital divide, we ensure that all individuals, regardless of ethnicity, have access to the information and resources they need to stay informed and healthy during the pandemic and beyond.

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