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Effect of social media on youth

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of the daily lives of Indian college students, influencing their academic performance, mental health, and social behavior. With the rapid expansion of smartphone usage and affordable internet services in India, youth engagement with social networking platforms has increased significantly. This study examines the effects of social media on youth using primary data collected from undergraduate students from some colleges in Mumbai and Nasik. The research focuses on psychological well-being, academic performance, social interaction, and behavioural changes. The findings reveal that while social media enhances communication, learning access, and peer connectivity, excessive usage leads to reduced academic focus, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and digital addiction. The study emphasizes the need for digital literacy and responsible usage among Indian youth. The present study examines the effect of social media usage on youth, based on primary data collected from 131 students. A structured questionnaire was used to assess patterns of social media use.

Keywords: social media, youth, academic performance, mental health, students, India

Introduction

India is home to one of the largest youth populations in the world, with a significant proportion enrolled in higher education institutions. The widespread availability of smartphones and low-cost internet has made social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Telegram central to the lives of Indian college students. Social media now serves multiple purposes, including entertainment, education, socialization, and information sharing. While social media has democratized access to knowledge and communication, concerns have emerged regarding its excessive use among youth. Indian college students often experience academic pressure, career uncertainty, and social expectations, which may be intensified by constant online engagement. This study seeks to analyse the effects of social media on Indian college youth using data collected directly from college students in Mumbai and Nasik.

Review of Literature

Junco (2015) observed that high social media engagement negatively affects academic performance due to multitasking and reduced concentration. Indian studies have reported similar trends. Research indicates that Indian college students spend an average of 2–4 hours daily on social media, with increased risk of sleep deprivation and academic distraction (Sharma & Verma, 2021). However, social media has also been recognized as a valuable tool for collaborative learning and skill development among Indian youth (Kumar & Nanda, 2019).

Objectives of the study:

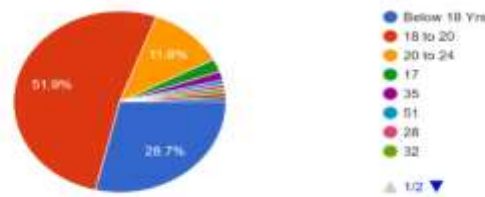
1. To examine the pattern of social media usage among college students in Mumbai and Nasik
2. To analyse the psychological effects of social media on college students
3. To assess the impact of social media on academic performance of students
4. To study changes in social behaviour and lifestyle of students
5. To suggest some measures for responsible social media use

Research methodology:

The sample collected from 129 undergraduate students of various colleges in Mumbai and Nasik from different streams whose having age group from 18 to 25 years. Primary data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** covering following questions.

Results:

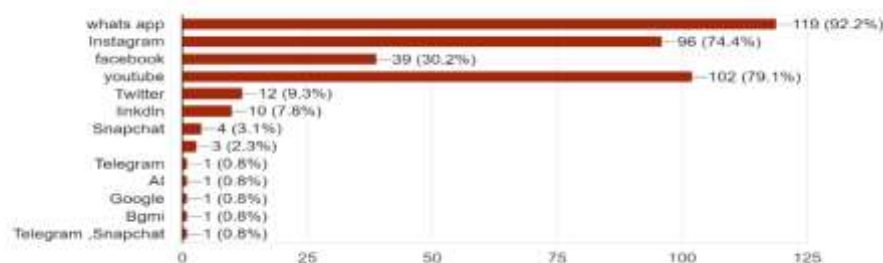
How old are you?
129 responses



How old are you?

The results show widespread use of social media among college students, with the highest usage in the 18–20 years age group, followed by students below 18 years, indicating early and intensive exposure to digital platforms. A smaller yet notable proportion of students aged 20–24 years also reported regular usage, reflecting the continued importance of social media in young adulthood. Overall, the findings suggest that social media has become an integral part of students' daily lives, which may have important implications for their academic performance, mental health, and social behaviour.

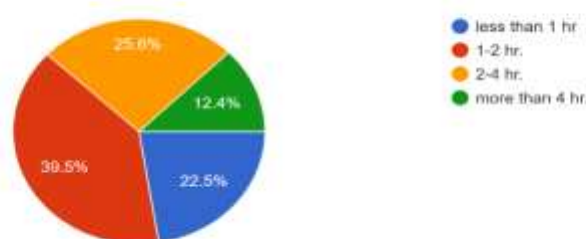
Which Social media platform your using?
129 responses



Which social media platform your using?

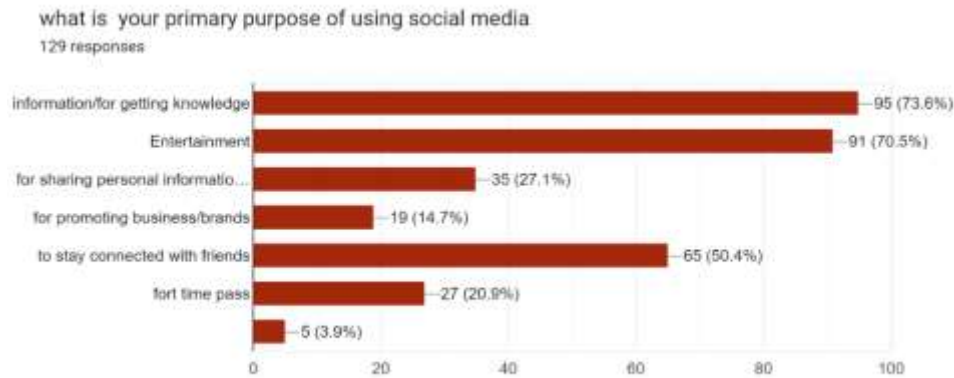
The survey reveals that **WhatsApp (92.2%)** is the most widely used social media platform among students, followed by **YouTube (79.1%)** and **Instagram (74.4%)**, indicating a strong preference for instant messaging and visual content platforms. **Facebook (30.2%)** shows moderate usage, while **Twitter (9.3%)** and **LinkedIn (7.8%)** are used by a small proportion of students. The remaining respondents reported using platforms such as **Snapchat, Telegram, AI-based applications, and Google services**. Overall, the findings suggest that youth primarily engage with communication- and multimedia-oriented platforms rather than professional or text-based social networking sites.

How often do you use social media?
129 responses



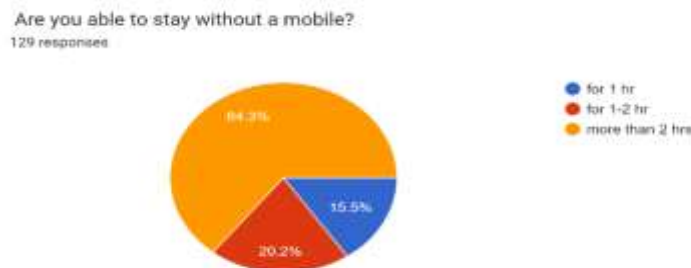
How often do you use Social media?

The findings indicate that the majority of students spend **1-2 hours daily on social media platforms (39.5%)**, some students spending **2-4 hours (25.6%)**, suggesting moderate to high engagement levels. About **22.5%** of students use social media for less than one hour, while **12.4%** shows usage more than four hours per day, indicating a smaller but significant group of heavy users. Overall, the results reflect considerable daily exposure to social media among youth, which may influence their academic routines and well-being.



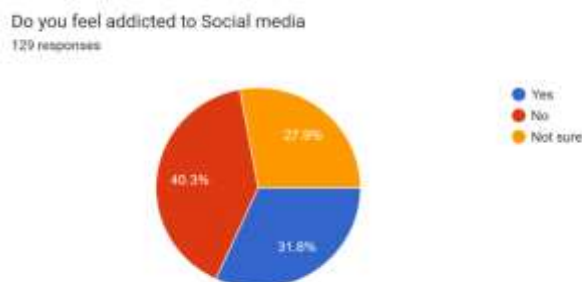
What is your primary purpose of using social media?

The results indicate that students mainly use social media for **getting information (73.6%)** and **(70.5%) for entertainment**, **(50.4%)** students use for **staying connected with friends**. A smaller proportion use social media for **sharing personal information (27.1%)**, **time pass (20.9%)**, and **promoting businesses or brands (14.7%)**, while very few reported other purposes (3.9%). Overall, the findings suggest that youth predominantly engage with social media for informational, recreational, and social connectivity purposes rather than commercial activities.



Are you able to stay without mobile?

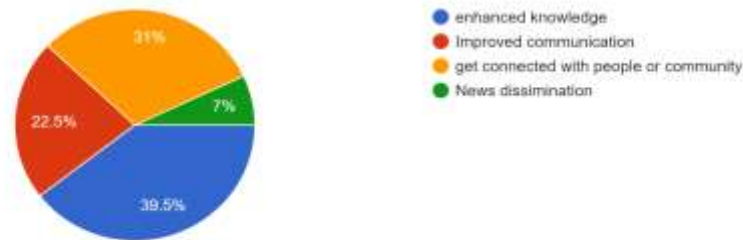
The findings show that a majority of students (**64.3%**) can stay without using their mobile phones for more than two hours, indicating a reasonable level of self-control. However, **20.2%** can remain without their mobile for only 1–2 hours, and **15.5%** for less than one hour, suggesting that a notable proportion of students may experience dependence on mobile devices.



Do you feel addicted to Social media?

The results indicate that 31.8% of students see themselves as addicted to social media, while 40.3% do not feel addicted. However, a considerable proportion (27.9%) are uncertain about their addiction status. This suggests mixed perceptions regarding social media dependence among students, highlighting the need for greater awareness about healthy and responsible usage patterns.

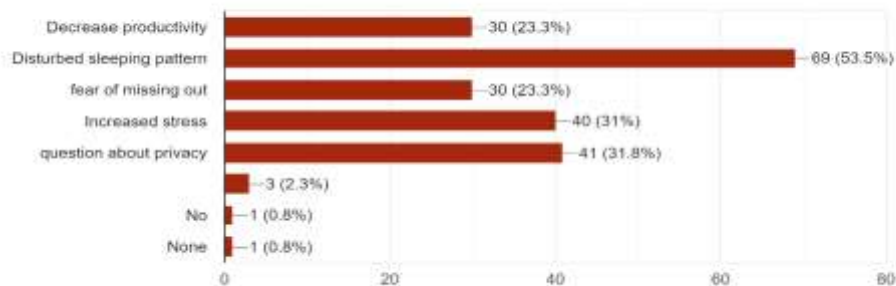
Which positive effect (if any) have you experienced due to social media use?
129 responses



Which positive effect (if any) have you experienced due to social media use?

The results show that **39.5% of students reported enhanced knowledge** as the main positive effect of social media use, followed by **31% who experienced better connectivity with people or communities**, and **22.5% who reported improved communication skills**. Only **7%** identified social media primarily as a source of news dissemination. Overall, the findings suggest that students largely perceive social media as a useful means for knowledge, communication, and social connection.

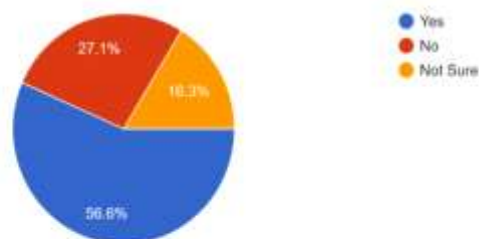
Which negative impacts (if any) have you experienced due to excessive social media usage?
129 responses



Which negative impacts (if any) have you experienced due to excessive social media usage?

The findings indicate that the most commonly reported negative impact of excessive social media use is **disturbed sleeping patterns (53.5%)**, followed by **questionable privacy concerns (31.8%)** and **increased stress (31%)**. Additionally, **23.3% of students reported decreased productivity**, and an equal proportion experienced **fear of missing out (FOMO)**. Very few students reported no negative effects. Overall, the results highlight that excessive social media use is associated with multiple adverse outcomes affecting students' health, well-being, and academic functioning.

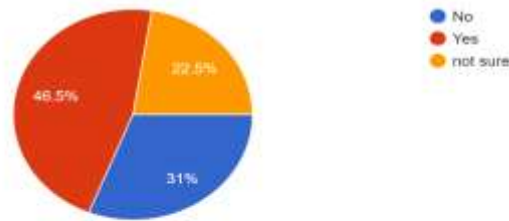
Do you think social media usage affects your mental health?
129 responses



Do you think social media usage affects your mental health?

The results indicate that a majority of students **56.6%** believe that social media usage affects their mental health, while **27.1%** reported no impact and **16.3%** were uncertain. This suggests that more than half of the respondents perceive a link between social media use and mental well-being, highlighting the need for awareness and interventions promoting healthy digital habits.

Do you think social media has improved your overall quality of life.
129 responses

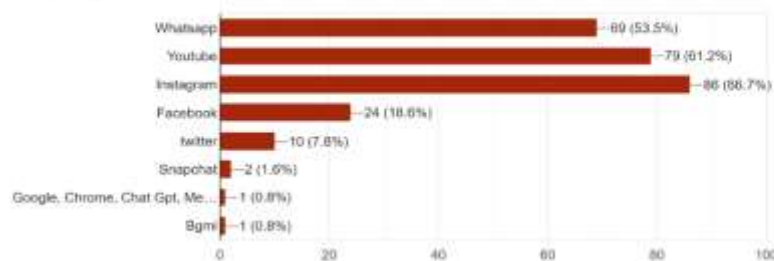


Do you think social media has improved your overall quality of life?

The findings show that **46.5% of students believe social media has improved their overall quality of life**, while **31% reported no improvement** and **22.5% were uncertain**. This indicates mixed perceptions regarding the impact of social media on quality of life, suggesting that although many students experience positive outcomes, a substantial proportion remain unconvinced or unsure about its overall benefits.

Which social media platform do you think is most engaging?

129 responses

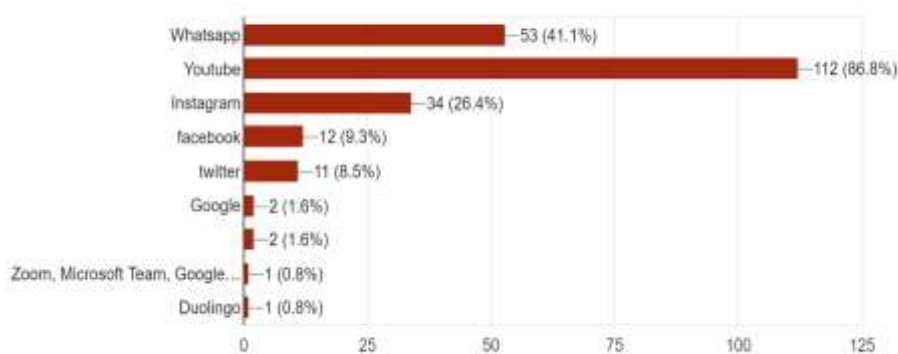


Which social media platform do you think is most engaging?

The results indicate that **Instagram (66.7%)** is perceived as the most engaging social media platform, followed by **YouTube (61.2%)** and **WhatsApp (53.5%)**. **Facebook (18.6%)** and **Twitter (7.8%)** were considered less engaging, while very few students selected other platforms such as Snapchat or Google-based applications. Overall, the findings suggest that visually rich and interactive platforms are more engaging for youth compared to text-based platforms.

Which social media platform according to you is best for educational purpose?

129 responses



Which social media platform according to you is best for educational purpose?

The findings indicate that **YouTube (86.8%)** is perceived as the most effective social media platform for educational purposes, followed by **WhatsApp (41.1%)** and **Instagram (26.4%)**. Only a small proportion of students identified **Facebook (9.3%)**, **Twitter (8.5%)**, or other platforms as useful for learning. Overall, the results suggest that students prefer video-based and easily accessible platforms for educational content, highlighting the importance of multimedia learning tools in digital education.

Discussion-

The study reveals widespread use of social media among undergraduate students, with the highest usage observed in the **18–20 years age group**, indicating early and intensive exposure to digital platforms. **WhatsApp**,

YouTube, and Instagram emerged as the most frequently used and engaging platforms, reflecting students' preference for instant communication and visual content. Most respondents reported spending **1–2 hours daily** on social media, however a major proportion of heavy users spend more than four hours per day.

Students mainly use social media for getting **information, entertainment, and staying connected with friends**, demonstrating its importance in academic support and social interaction. At the same time, concerns related to **sleep disturbance, stress, privacy issues, decreased productivity, and fear of missing out** were commonly reported. More than half of the respondents believe that social media affects their mental health, and about one-third perceive themselves as addicted, indicating emerging psychological and behavioural risks.

While many students acknowledged benefits such as enhanced knowledge and improved communication, perceptions regarding improvement in overall quality of life were mixed. These findings suggest that social media exerts both positive and negative influences on youth, depending largely on usage patterns and self-regulation.

Conclusion-

The study concludes that social media is an integral part of college students lives and serves as an important tool for learning, communication, and social connectivity. However, excessive and uncontrolled usage is associated with negative effects on sleep, mental health, academic performance and productivity. Therefore, there is a need to promote **awareness about responsible usage, self-regulation strategies and balanced screen time** among youth for holistic development. Educational institutions and families should encourage healthy online habits and guide students toward using social media primarily for constructive and educational purposes.

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