

# Impact of social media networks on students' psychological health: a case study of Bengaluru HEIs

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## Abstract

Social Media is a really important and massive phenomenon in the modern era. It has influenced every walk and has an impact on every sector. Educational institutions, businesses, and organisations all around the globe have had to adapt to novel methods of learning, working, and living especially during Covid-19 and the consumption of social media alongside has drastically increased. Due to societal conventions of segregation and countrywide lockdowns, the usage of social media has exponentially risen and it creates a need to review the impact of usage of social media and its impression on psychological health.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Health, New Media Tools, Students, psychological health

## Introduction :

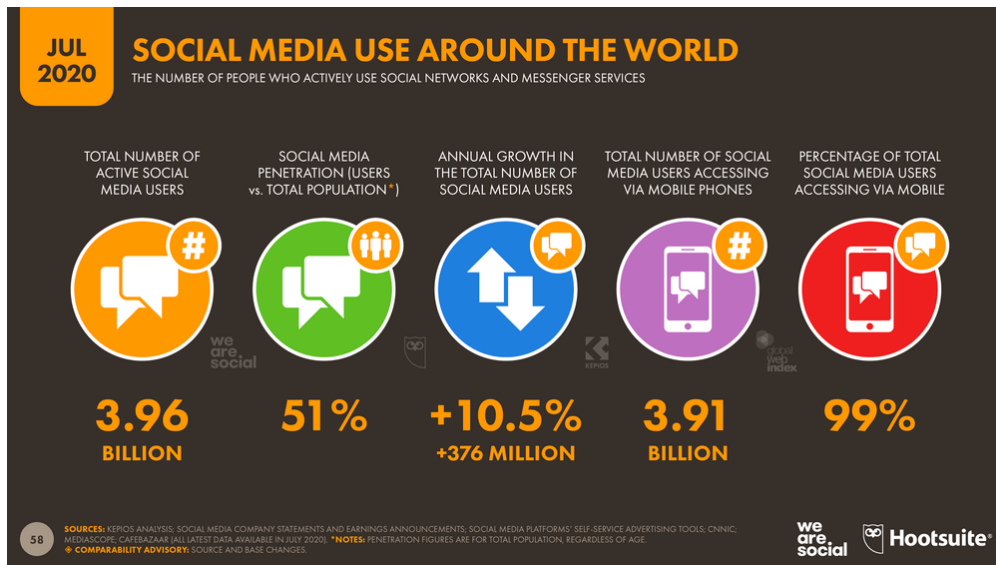
Social media is an internet-based form of communication. Social media platforms allow users to have conversations, share information, and create web content. There are many forms of social media, including blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, social networking sites, photo-sharing sites, instant messaging, video-sharing sites, podcasts, widgets, virtual worlds, and more. social media platforms enable people to connect with others who share their interests. The types of media posted and exchanged by users of social media may include images, blog entries, videos, direct and group messages, podcasts, newsletters, or music. Social networking sites are a form of social media wherein users actively engage with their peers, followers, and the public in general.

Before social networking sites, which emerged following the introduction of the World Wide Web in 1991, computer users connected through bulletin board systems (BBS) and subscription programs like America Online (AOL). Classmates.com and SixDegrees.com are considered the first social networking sites, but neither approached the scale of twenty-first-century social media giants like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Social media applications for mobile devices commonly referred to as apps became more popular as the use of smartphones and tablets grew in the 2010s. Mobile apps have allowed people to use social media sites in novel settings and ways such as live streaming an interaction In little more than a decade, the impact of social media has gone from being an entertaining extra to a fully integrated part of nearly every aspect of daily life for many.

The internet and social media provide young people with a range of benefits, and opportunities to empower themselves in a variety of ways. Young people can maintain social connections and support networks that otherwise wouldn't be possible, and can access more information than ever before. The communities and social interactions young people form online can be invaluable for bolstering and developing young people's self-confidence and social skills. The use of social media and networking services such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat have become an integral part of our daily lives. While many associate social media with the degradation of young people's social networks and communication skills. Especially during Covid-19, social media usage

around the world has notably increased. The below data figures out the surge of social media usage.

Figure -1 Social Media Usage around the world

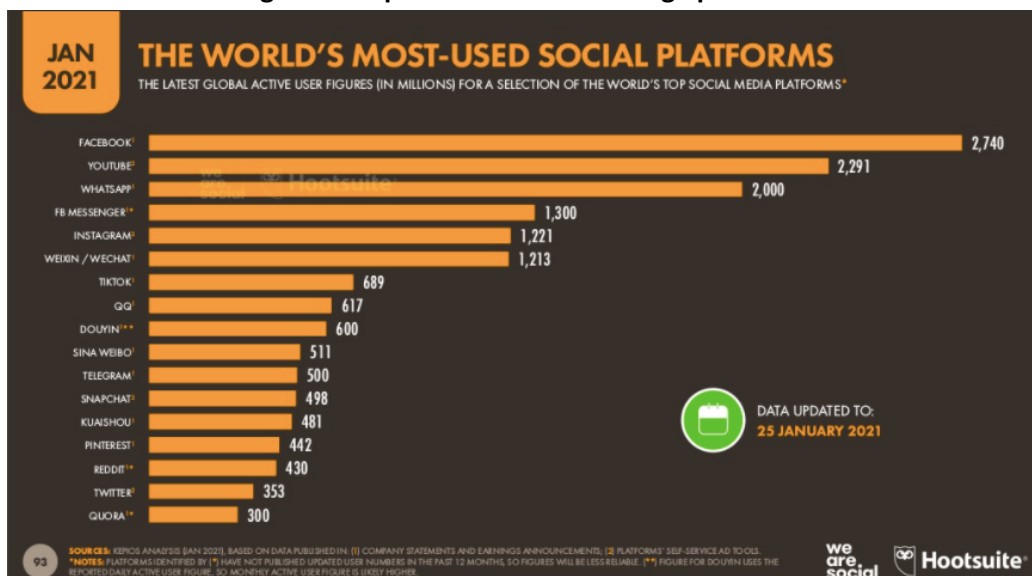


Source:

Hootsuite a special report by Datareportal July 2020, examines changes in social media usage during the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown period. Notably a monumental increase in online and digital activities.

Also, the below data shows compilation shows the importance of messenger applications like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and WeChat. It also highlights the rapid growth of Tiktok to become one of the main social networks.

Figure -2 Popular Social Media Usage platform



Source:

Hootsuite a special report by Datareportal July 2020, popular social media usage platforms

Human beings are social creatures. We need the companionship of others to thrive in life, and the strength of our connections has a huge impact on our mental health and happiness. Being socially connected to others can ease stress, anxiety, and depression, boost self-worth, provide comfort and joy, prevent loneliness, and even add years to your life. On the other end, lacking strong social connections can pose a serious risk to your mental and emotional health. Without a doubt, many of us rely on social media platforms to find and connect. While each has its benefits, it's important to remember that social media can never be a replacement for real-world human connection. It requires in-person contact to make one feel happier, healthier, and more positive. Ironically for technology that's designed to bring people closer together, spending too much time engaging with social media can make you feel lonelier and more isolated—and exacerbate mental health problems.

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which people understand their abilities, solve everyday life problems, work well, and make a significant contribution to the lives of their communities. There is debate presently going on regarding the benefits and negative impacts of social media on mental health. Social networking is a crucial element in protecting our mental health. Both the quantity and quality of social relationships affect mental health, health behaviour, physical health, and mortality risk. The Displaced Behaviour Theory may help explain why social media shows a connection with mental health. According to the theory, people who spend more time in sedentary behaviours such as social media users have less time for face-to-face social interaction, both of which have been proven to be protective against mental disorders. On the other hand, social theories found how social media use affects mental health by influencing how people view, maintain, and interact with their social networks. Several studies have been conducted on the impacts of social media, and it has been indicated that the prolonged use of social media platforms such as Facebook may be related to negative signs and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Furthermore, social media can create a lot of pressure to create the stereotype that others want to see and also be as popular as others.

Social media use is an ever-increasing phenomenon of the 21st century. Young individuals pervasively use social media for a variety of reasons including entertainment, identity formation, social enhancement (augmenting offline social status through online interactions), and maintaining interpersonal connections. Social media use is positively associated with college students' communication network heterogeneity, which, in turn, is positively related to mental health. In this regard, the main purpose of the study is to know the different types of social media networks used by students along with the positive and negative impacts concerning general health and psychological issues. The study also focuses on highlighting the drastic change in the use of social media platforms by individuals during the global pandemic and the direct and indirect influence on their psychological well-being.

#### **Objectives :**

- ∅ To study the usage of social media networks used by students.
- ∅ To explore the impact of social media networks on general and psychological health.

#### **Methodology :**

The present study is a conceptual paper and completely depends upon the primary data collected through planned questionnaires with residents of both urban and rural Bangalore. The organised

questionnaire aided the study in answering all of the research questions. The survey had 1522 student respondents, the data was collected using a purposive random sample approach secondary sources. The purpose of this paper is to explore the facts on the surge of digital media usage during the Covid-19 pandemic with the review of authentic reports published on different platforms. Especially the researcher review the facts to highlight the change and shift and its influence on young minds.

**Table - 1 Distribution of study respondents Students based on**

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18yrs – 22yrs	1439	94.5
23yrs – 28yrs	69	4.5
29yrs – 36yrs	10	0.7
37yrs – 44yrs	2	0.1
45yrs and above	2	0.1

Above table 1 discuss the age distribution of the students. Around 4.5% of the population were in the age group of 23yrs to 28yrs. Approximately 95% of the student population is between the age group of 18 to 22 years. As the study respondents were from Undergraduate Colleges and Postgraduate Colleges, given the pandemic scenario, it was challenging to interact with PhD and Post-Doc Students. However, Undergraduate and Postgraduate were available to interact, hence the majority of the respondents are in the age group of 8yrs to 22yrs. It was interesting to find a couple of people who were of odd ages and passionate to pursue their higher education.

**Table -2 Time spent on media**

Media	<1 hour	1 to 3 hours	3 to 5 hours	≥5 hours
Newspapers	1331 (87.5)	149 (9.8)	33 (2.2)	9 (0.6)
Magazine	1398 (91.9)	97 (6.4)	20 (1.3)	7 (0.5)
Radio	1318 (86.6)	164 (10.8)	26 (1.7)	14 (0.9)
Television	569 (37.4)	644 (42.3)	219 (14.4)	90 (5.9)
Films	503 (33)	683 (44.9)	269 (17.7)	67 (4.4)
Laptop/Computer	633 (41.6)	427 (28.1)	332 (21.8)	130 (8.5)
Smartphone	144 (9.5)	394 (25.9)	523 (34.4)	461 (30.3)
Internet Services at Phone	248 (16.3)	411 (27)	462 (30.4)	401 (26.3)

Internet Services at Computer	714 (46.9)	335 (22)	290 (19.1)	183 (12)
OTT Platforms	806 (53)	373 (24.5)	243 (16)	100 (6.6)

The above table 2 distributes the students who participated in the study responses for the times spent on their preferred media as <1 hour, 1 to 3 hours, 3 to 5 hours and >= 5 hours. 87.5% of the students responded that they spent <1 hour on newspapers. Approximately, 92% of the students responded that they spent <1 hour on Magazines. Approximately, 45% of the students responded that they would watch films for about 1 to 3 hours. As high as 42.3% of the students responded that they would watch Television for 1 to 3 hours. 86.6% of the students listed they would spend only less than an hour listening to the radio. Time spent less than an hour on Laptop/Computer, Internet services at computer and OTT platforms were 41.6%, 46.9% and 53% respectively. The highest response for spending time about 5 or more 5 hours was on a smartphone with a response rate of 30.3%. And second, highest media that had a response of spending more than 5 hours of a day in internet services at pone with 26.3% response rate.

**Table -3 Attitude towards social media between students from urban and rural.**

Factor	Urban (n = 1237)	Rural (n = 285)	p-value
Major source of information	845 (68.3)	198 (69.5)	0.270
Efficient source of information	881 (71.2)	184 (64.6)	0.043*
Help to acquire new knowledge	1037 (83.8)	232 (81.4)	0.304
Should be priority in education	850 (68.7)	196 (68.8)	0.304
Very ease and comfortable to use	844 (68.2)	169 (59.3)	0.013*
Complicates my task in classroom	436 (35.2)	100 (35.1)	0.796
Entertainment tool than learning tool	422 (34.1)	98 (34.4)	0.247
Learning is better when added with the traditional method	689 (55.7)	159 (55.8)	0.989

Above table 3 shares the attitude on social media. The p-value was calculated using the chi-square test. \*Significant at 5% level of significance. The above table compares the response for each of the listed factors of attitude towards computers between urban and rural students. Rural students voted significantly lesser than the urban students in the social media being an efficient source of information, the social media being very easy and comfortable to use, social media helping to

connect people. Only 59.3 per cent of rural students agree that social media is very easy and comfortable to use whereas 68.2% of urban students say social media is very easy and comfortable to use. Only 50% of the rural students think social media helps connect with people whereas 62% of urban students believe social media helps to connect with people.

**Table -4 Opinion on social media between students from urban and rural.**

Factor	Urban (n = 1237)	Rural (n = 285)	p-value
Kills my creativity	352 (28.5)	70 (24.6)	0.151
Hinder my learning	336 (27.2)	68 (23.9)	0.499
Reduced writing skill	577 (46.6)	126 (44.2)	0.758
Social media have increased Stress	764 (61.8)	144 (50.5)	0.002*
Social media have influence for isolation	517 (41.8)	110 (38.6)	0.519
During pandemic was a platform to decrease depression	984 (79.5)	221 (77.5)	0.340
Increased negativity in thoughts	783 (63.3)	167 (58.6)	0.269
Effective tool for teaching	716 (57.9)	171 (60.0)	0.716

Above table 4 shares the opinion on social media. The p-value was calculated using the chi-square test. \* Significant at 5% level of significance. The above table compares the response for each of the listed factors of opinion on social media between urban and rural students. The majority opined that social media have increased stress and social media have an influence on isolation. Also, it has inputs for negative thoughts.

**Discussion & Findings :**

The above content analysis and primary data findings signify that there is a direct shift in usage of social media and has an impact on their psychological health. Mangold W., G., and Faulds, D.J. (2009) found that social media can be considered as an “element” through which students are linked with thousands of people. While in traditional/ typical sense students heisted to with others but now in this domain of non-traditional sense, they can easily communicate. Deepa M, and Dr V. Krishnapriya (2020) study revealed that there was a difference between the number of social networking sites and symptoms of depression and anxiety. In addition, the study also revealed that there is a strong relationship between symptoms of anxiety and depression, this study also confirmed there was a relationship between feeling anxious and serious active on social networking sites than in real life.

The number of studies published in this field has shown a substantial increase from the start of the millennium. This is consistent with the advancements of different forms of social media being used. This systematic review aimed to assess the effect of social media on mental health. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, E-mail or YouTube are the popular forms of social media that have increased dramatically in use with time, this study also highlighted that Facebook was the most commonly assessed form of social media, the commonly targeted population were university students and young adults under the study conducted by Manojkumar Sharma to understand the influence of social media on mental health. Most of the earlier studies were conducted in developed countries with different socio-cultural backgrounds from that of India. As per the research conducted by D.M. Boyd and N.B. Ellison conducted a study on social networking sites indicated that social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

The study led by Dr Igor V. Pantic, Institute of Medical Physiology, School of Medicine, University of Belgrade, to find the relationship between the use of Social Networking Sites and mental problems to this day remains controversial, and research on this issue is faced with numerous challenges. His research also analyzed that the impact of social networking on the quality of life of college-going adolescents.

According to research conducted from the universities in Punjab by KashifIshaq, et., al., on the impact of social media on students' health that showed no significant association between social media and students Health. The main reason was that students were addicted to browsing social media, even they were not aware of suffering from the bundle of physical and psychological health issues. Adolescents used social media to get health-related information.

Daniel A. González-Padilla in their study Social media influence in the COVID-19 Pandemic mentions Social media has advantages and disadvantages, the responsible use of these tools can help during a pandemic to quickly spread new important information, sharing diagnostic, treatment and follow-up protocols, comparing different approaches from other parts of the World to adapt them to our setting and available resources, with the downside of possible dissemination of fake data, myths, and pessimist information that combined with quarantine states may lead to anxiety, depression, and in some extreme cases, the suicide. Therefore, it is advisable not to contribute to the infodemic and follow a responsible use of social media when disseminating information.

Alternatively Heena Sahni, Hunny Sharma in their study Role of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic: Beneficial, destructive, or reconstructive? reveal that the false rumour about COVID-19 is disseminated faster than the virus, and it appears that HCPs are actively battling against two faces of the virus and the associated misinformation simultaneously. The key approach suggested in this review was also to correct misconceptions by health institutions experts. Although some studies stress that correct knowledge can be unsuccessful during any public health crisis but at the same time many researchers demonstrated the efficacy of providing and transmitting truthful facts by health experts. We also suggest various methods for correcting misconceptions about health through social media, which involves timely expert advice, regular public health awareness, and correction program with periodic communication among general people and on media algorithms.

Over time social media has transitioned and diversified over various platforms.

To support the study table 2 states that Internet services at computer and OTT platforms were 41.6%, 46.9% and 53% respectively more demanded. The highest response for spending time about 5 or more 5 hours was on a smartphone with a response rate of 30.3%. And second, highest media that had a response of spending more than 5 hours of a day in internet services at phone with 26.3% response rate.

Also, table 3 shares the attitude on social media. Rural students voted significantly lesser than the urban students in the social media being an efficient source of information, the social media being very easy and comfortable to use, social media helping to connect people. Only 59.3 per cent of rural students agree that social media is very easy and comfortable to use whereas 68.2% of urban students say social media is very easy and comfortable to use. Only 50% of the rural students think social media helps connect with people whereas 62% of urban students believe social media helps to connect with people.

Lastly, the respondents share the opinion on social media. The response for each of the listed factors of opinion on social media between urban and rural students. The majority opined that social media have increased stress and social media have an influence on isolation. Also, it has inputs for negative thoughts.

#### **Conclusion:**

The present study demonstrates that the effects are also far-reaching. Although there are benefits in using social media, one cannot ignore the advancements in technology helping to increase access to social media and causing a greater number of negative effects. Day by day consumption of media negatively affects children, pre-teens, and adolescence by making them inclined to various mental health issues.

Multiple studies have found a strong connection between the use of social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts. On the other hand, the use of these social networking sites or the internet impacts the physical, mental and spiritual health of individuals. Social networking has provided an indispensable method of communication and ignores geographical and cultural barriers. On a positive note, it improves health and professional life by giving information on health and well-being, improving eye-hand coordination, providing information on career opportunities, timely work-related data transmission. Social Media is like a "DEEP OCEAN". During the pandemic, social media has become a perfect partner yet in addition an expected menace. A significant impediment of social media is the capacity to rapidly spread fake data which can confound and occupy young minds with false or fake information. Also, the youngsters should be educated and influenced to depend on instructions received from authentic sources and doctors, also verify and reassure the information received. There are many lessons learned during this Covid-19 pandemic, which will serve as an outline for coping with future pandemics, but the near future requires a sustainable new standard of management, understanding, and education to guide youngsters to use social media productively.

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