A Study of Behavioural Insights into Social Media Use by Students"

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Abstract

This study examines the behavioural patterns of social media use among students, focusing on frequency, purpose, timing, and parental influence. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 511 students representing diverse demographic groups. Results reveal that the majority of students are highly active on platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, spending considerable time online, often during late evenings and weekends. While social media is primarily used for communication and information sharing, behavioural concerns such as excessive screen time, late-night usage, and limited parental oversight are prominent. The study highlights the need for awareness programs on digital balance and responsible online behaviour.

Keywords: social media behaviour, usage patterns, parental influence, digital habits

Introduction

Social media platforms have become central to how students communicate, learn, and build relationships. The average student now spends several hours daily on social networks, using them for education, entertainment, and personal expression. The way students engage with these platforms—frequency of use, type of content consumed, and time spent online—offers important behavioural insights.This study explores how students use social media, how often they engage with different platforms, when their activity peaks, and the role of parental approval in shaping online conduct.The questionnaire used in this research covered aspects such as the number of accounts maintained, platforms preferred, usage duration, purpose of using social media and

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behavioural variations during exams and holidays. The aim is to better understand the digital lifestyle of students and identify patterns that influence both academic focus and social well-being.

Literature , Review
Usage Patterns

Students today maintain multiple social media accounts and interact across several platforms daily (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube dominate student activity, providing venues for communication, learning, and entertainment (Tang & Hew, 2022). Frequent engagement, especially in the evenings, reflects social dependency and an emerging "always online" culture.

Motivations and Purposes

The primary motivations for student use include social interaction, information sharing, and collaboration (Al-Rahmi et al., 2021). Students also report using these platforms for relaxation, creative self-expression, and to stay informed about current events (Rahman et al., 2021).

Behavioral Consequences

Behavioural consequences depend on duration and intent of use. Excessive multitasking and late-night scrolling are linked to sleep problems and reduced academic concentration (Xanidis & Brignell, 2020). However, structured use for study groups or information exchange supports academic success and communication skills (Bano et al., 2021).

Privacy and Parental Influence

Students' management of online identity varies: some use real names, others maintain pseudonyms to protect privacy. Limited parental supervision and growing autonomy among older students contribute to differing online behaviours (Assunção et al., 2021).

Moderating Factors

Gender, age, and socio-economic background shape behaviour, with older or urban students showing higher engagement rates and longer screen times (Feng et al., 2022; Gökçearslan et al., 2021).

Methodology

A **descriptive quantitative survey** design was used to examine social media behaviour among students.

The study surveyed **511 students**. The sample included 57.3% females and 42.7% males. Most participants (83.8%) were from urban areas, while 16.2% belonged to rural regions.

Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** with close-ended questions covering:

- Demographics (gender, income, residence)

- Social media usage (accounts, platforms, time spent)

- Frequency and timing of use (exam/holiday variations, late-night habits)

- Parental approval

- Purpose of social media use

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to analyse responses. Graphs and charts summarized behavioural patterns to identify trends in platform use, timing, and motivations.

Data Analysis

1. **Platform Use and Engagement:**

- Majority of the respondents at 94.5% are active on social media.
- Social media platforms in order of preference are Instagram (87.3%), WhatsApp (79.8%), and YouTube (74.8%), Snapchat (65%), Facebook (53.2%) and Spotify at (50.1%) .
- 49% respondents have 1–2 accounts, 22% have 2–3 accounts, 12% have 3-4 accounts, 11% have 5 and more accounts while 6% have no accounts

2. **Frequency and Duration of Use:**

- 61% respondents spend more than **29 hours per week**, showing very high social media activity, 33% respondents display medium usage while 6% show low social media usage

- 30% respondents engage in social media activity late evening and at night regularly; 59% sometimes and interestingly 11% never use social media late evening or at night.

3. **Behavioural Variations:**

- **During exams:** 59% respondents reported reduced usage, 7% showed an increase and 34% reported no change in social media activity.

- **During holidays:** 41% respondents reported an increase in social media activity, reflecting leisure-driven behaviour, 22% showed a decrease and 37% reported no change.

4. **Parental Approval:**

- 64% respondents do not seek parental permission for social media use, indicating autonomy in digital habits while 36% respondents have parental approval for social media presence.

5. **Identity Preferences:**

66% use real identities, while 34% use pseudonyms or fake profiles for anonymity.

6. **Purpose of Social media use:**

72% respondents agreed to using social media as a tool of communication.
54% respondents used it for sharing pictures and videos, 53% used it for sharing information, 40% for sharing jokes and 38% for making friends indicating social interaction, relaxation and information sharing as primary motives.

Findings

1. **High engagement:** Nearly all respondents actively use multiple social media platforms.

2. **Dominance of visual platforms:** Instagram and YouTube are preferred due to their multimedia features.

3. **Heavy time investment:** Students exhibit high daily and weekly engagement, with many exceeding 4 hours per day.

4. **Situational use:** Usage declines during exam periods but rises during holidays.

5. **Behavioral imbalance:** Late-night activity and high screen exposure indicate digital overuse.

6. **Parental detachment:** A majority do not seek parental consent, showing independence but also potential exposure to risks.

7. **Privacy concerns:** A significant portion uses pseudonyms, suggesting awareness of online safety issues.

Suggestions

1. **Promote Healthy Digital Habits:** Institutions should conduct workshops encouraging time management and balanced online routines.

2. **Integrate Digital Literacy Programs:** Students should learn about safe sharing, privacy protection, and critical evaluation of online content.

3. **Encourage Mindful Usage:** Self-regulation tools like screen timers and "digital detox" routines can help reduce overuse.

4. **Strengthen Parental Guidance:** Parents should maintain open discussions about social media experiences rather than impose restrictions.

5. **Institutional Monitoring:** Colleges can integrate social media for academic engagement while monitoring excessive or harmful use patterns.

Conclusion

The study reveals that social media has become an indispensable component of student life, shaping both their communication habits and lifestyle. While it offers opportunities for collaboration and learning, excessive and unregulated use poses behavioural challenges, including distraction, sleep disturbance, and dependency. Parental involvement and institutional guidance play key roles in promoting balanced and responsible use. To ensure positive outcomes, awareness, education, and mindful engagement must form the foundation of students' digital behaviour.

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