

Rural Youth and Social Media: A Sociological Understanding

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ABSTRACT

Social media are one of the important platforms these days for education, entertainment, and business. Interactive modes of these media help to express innovative ideas and out-of-the-box thinking. Youths are the prime targets and use social media for various purposes. Irrespective of their place of residence, youth from rural and urban settings use these social media handles, which may have both desirable and adverse effects. Against this backdrop, the present study analyzes the challenges faced by the respondents while using social media. An interview schedule was administered to the respondents (N=50). These respondents were selected purposively if they fall specific inclusive criteria like the age of respondent will be in the range of 14-35 and they have to use at least any one of the social media like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, share chat, etc. The study concludes that the duration of using social media and the purpose of using social media are the key factors that determine the effectiveness of social media because youths who use social media for longer hours faced various challenges in their academics and daily life. Respondents who all used social media for entertainment purposes, and they faced many challenges in their academics. Overall, the study recommends that even though social media simplifies the various activities of human life, there is a need to use social media within a limit.

Key Words : Youths, Social media, Academics, Duration, Purpose

INTRODUCTION

We are living in the transformative and information age. Social media are game changers in this techno world. Individuals not only consume the data and also become producers of the information. In recent years, social media's transformative power has revolutionized how we communicate, connect, and consume information. While its effects on cities and global communities worldwide have been well-documented, the influence of social media on rural youth remains a growing phenomenon with notable implications for their personal, social, and economic development. Social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media has emerged as a potent catalyst, opening up previously unattainable

chances for empowerment, education, and connectivity for rural youth as the digital divide closes and technology becomes more widely available.

With the introduction of social media platforms, the rural landscape, which is sometimes defined by geographic isolation, a scarcity of resources, and primitive beliefs, has undergone a tremendous change. Rural areas have historically struggled with issues including poor access to quality education, minimal exposure to diverse points of view, and constrained economic possibilities. These boundaries, however, have been broken down by social media's democratizing potential, providing access to a plethora of data, expertise, and international networks.

One of the significant impacts of social media on rural youth is the educational advances it has unleashed. Before the advent of the digital era, students in rural areas commonly suffered a lack of educational resources and

guidance. Social media platforms have evolved into online classrooms where young people may access educational materials, connect with professionals, and participate in interactive educational settings. Online courses, webinars, and educational videos have become readily available, enabling rural youth to bridge the educational gap and acquire knowledge that was once inaccessible. Social media has given rural youth the knowledge and skills they need to improve their employability and support the growth of their communities.

However, as social media mixes with rural youths, it also creates several issues that need to be tackled. The overuse of social media and the possibility of addiction can significantly impact one's mental health and general well-being. Additionally, The social structure of rural communities can also suffer from the spread of false information and being vulnerable to online dangers like cyber bullying. In order to access the digital world securely and effectively, it is essential to create digital literacy campaigns, encourage responsible online activity, and cultivate critical thinking abilities in rural youths.

Rural youth have experienced significant effects from social media, which overcomes geographic boundaries and opens up new opportunities. Rural youth can explore entrepreneurship, share their opinions, and receive the best education through social media. However, to safeguard the wellbeing and long-term survival of rural communities, it becomes essential to understand and solve the issues related to social media usage. By utilizing the power of social media effectively, rural youth can shape their futures, reduce the gap between the rural-urban, and contribute meaningfully to our globalized society.

Social media is employed in both good and poor ways, with most participants reporting a mixed bag of results (both good and bad). Some disadvantages and risks included difficulties in self-regulating use, anxiety about social media analytics, interactions with "triggering" content, anger and meanness, self-deprecating comparisons, and high hopes for friendship. Among the advantages and benefits were instruments for mental health and coping, social contact, social support, affect-enhancing content, and shared interests. (Weinstein *et al.*, 2021) Social media significantly impacts the economy, society, and world community. Social networking websites are among the sites that receive the highest traffic on the Internet. How people engage and communicate online has been drastically altered by them. Use of social media

Today's youth prefer to spend their free time perusing online. Gaming websites and virtual worlds like Club Penguin, Second Life, The Sims, Chat & Calling, and social media websites include Facebook, Snapchat, Tumblr, MySpace, Google+, Yahoo, and Twitter. Blogs, video hosting services like YouTube, and apps like WhatsApp, IMO, Instagram, and Skype (Ocansey, 2016). Thanks to the rise of social media, anyone with an internet connection can now communicate with thousands of other people. Social media is widely used; therefore, creating a business website out of it is very popular, especially among business owners who want to see what their firms might be capable of. Due to social media's low-cost capability to disseminate information about products and businesses to niche markets, any entrepreneur can benefit from a variety of advantages and outcomes from marketing their goods and services on social media, such as an increase in fans and advertisement views as well as an improvement in sales and return on investment (Noor AzuanHashim *et al.*, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out among the youngsters residing in Nallagoundampatti village of Omalur taluk of Salem district. The village is very near the Government university and government engineering college. By using the Purposive sampling method, fifty respondents are selected, provided they should use at least any one of the social media and fall in the age category of 14 to 35. The study aims to analyze the role of social media in their daily activities and routine social media usage. It also analyses the challenges faced by the respondents while using social media. In order to fulfill the objectives, the study adopts a descriptive research design and used an interview schedule to elicit information from the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social media are inevitable and may sometimes be considered a great boon for learners. Table 1 discuss the daily routine of youths on social media handles. The data revealed that nearly half proportion (48%) used social media for the duration of 3-4 hours; among them, most of the youths used social media for academic needs, and to upgrade their skills, followed by two fifth (40%) of the respondents used social media for the duration of 2-3 hours, 8 percent of the respondent used social media for

Table 1 : Role of social media in their daily activities and their routine in social media

Sr. No.	Statements	N=50	Percentage (%)	
1.	Duration of using social media (per day)	1-2 hours	4	8%
		2-3 hours	20	40%
		3-4 hours	24	48%
		More than 4 hours	2	4%
2.	Frequently used applications	WhatsApp	17	34%
		Facebook	8	16%
		Instagram	19	38%
		Others	6	12%
3.	Purpose of using social media	Entertainment	16	32%
		Earning	4	8%
		Studies	21	42%
		Communicate with other	9	18%
4.	Frequency of uploading status on the social media	Daily	40	80%
		Weekly once	3	6%
		Rarely	2	4%
		Never	5	10%
5.	Preference to share your feeling with	Family	11	22%
		Friends	16	32%
		Status	23	46%
6.	Using social media for banking & paying bills	Often	9	18%
		Sometimes	21	42%
		Never	20	40%

1-2 hours. Only 4 percent of the respondents used social media for more than 4 hours because they used it for entertainment. They are also involved in online games, which reflects on their academics (they frequently faced academic challenges). They also stated that because of the prolonged usage of social media, they cannot concentrate on their academics. Overall, the result explores that while the duration of use of social media increased, that affects their academics considerably.

Nearly two fifth (38%) of the respondents stated that Instagram is a frequently used social media account; mostly, Instagram are used for entertainment (Watching Reels). Just over one-third (34%) of the respondents stated that WhatsApp is a frequently used social media platform, mostly WhatsApp application group is used for educational purposes and interaction, and 16 percent of the respondents used Facebook as a significant social media account. Most respondents stated that Facebook acts as a public sphere (A place to express their feelings and comments, including politics). Rest (12%) of them used Messenger, share chat, Pinterest, Twitter, Linked In etc.

It was found that two fifth (42%) of the respondents used social media majorly for studies; mostly, they used Facebook and WhatsApp for studies and created a

separate group for studies. Some of them used social media to prepare for competitive examinations. Nearly one-third (32%) of the respondents used social media for entertainment; among them, most of them used social media for more than 3 hours, indicating that people who all used it for entertainment purposes spend more time on social media. About 18 percent of the respondents used social media for entertainment purposes. Only 8 percent of the respondents used social media for earning purposes; they used it to advertise their work and upgrade their skills. Recently they used social media for accounting purposes too.

The result expresses that a sizeable portion of the respondents had the habit of uploading their status daily because they feel social media is a platform that is used to express their feelings, expression (public sphere). Only 10 percent of the respondents do not have the habit uploading status because they feel that social media is not a platform to express their feelings, and they also stated that using social media to express their feeling is a myth (hyperreality)

The table shows that nearly half the proportion (46%) of the respondents preferred status to express their feelings which indicates they feel that social media is a public sphere. It also says that social media started

to occupy human beings' place, apart from the diminishing values of a human being. Nearly one-third (32%) of the respondents prefer friends to share their feelings. And rest (22%) of them prefer family to share their feelings.

Regarding the role of social media in paying bills, 42 percent of the respondents occasionally used social media for banking and paying bills because during the time of emergency, only they used social media for paying bills. Apart from that, they did not prefer an online mode of transaction. One-fifth (40%) of the respondents did not have a habit of using social media for banking and paying bills because some felt that sending money online was unsafe, and some did not know about online transactions. Only 18 percent of the respondents often used social media for banking and paying bills, and they feel that social media simplified most of the work and also stated that it saves their timing also.

Challenges faced by the respondents are discussed in Table 2. According to data, more than half of the respondents (54%) sometimes had the habit of using social media at midnight; 36 percent of the respondents often used social media at midnight, and most of them are used for playing online games and watching Reels. Only 10 percent of the respondents did not habitually use social media at midnight, and they are used for academic purposes.

The result expressed that three fifth (62%) of the respondents regularly faced conflict among family members while using social media because of social

media usage. They are not able to do their daily routine (familial responsibilities). Nearly one-third (32%) of the respondents occasionally faced conflict among family members, and 8 percent of the respondents never faced conflict among family members because they used social media for less than 2 hours (it inferences that while increasing the duration of social media familial conflict among family members also increased)

Nearly three fourth (74%) of the respondents got scolded by their parents while using social media. Out of them compared, male females got more reamed while using social media, and 16 percent of the respondents occasionally got scolded by their parents while using social media. Only 8 percent of the respondents never got scolded while using social media. People who are all never got scolded by their parents; they used social media for less than 2 hours.

The result reveals that more than half proportion (52%) of the respondents stated that usage of social media regularly affects their academics because they stated that using social media affects the attention of the respondents so that they cannot concentrate on academics. More than one-fourth (28%) of the respondents occasionally faced academic problems while using social media. Only one-fifth (20%) of the respondents never met problems in academics while using social media; out of the ten respondents, 7 of them were in the age group 23-24, rest of them were less than 22 years they felt that social media usage affects academic

Table: 2 : Challenges faced by the respondents while using social media

Sr. No.	Statements		N=50	Percentage (%)
1.	Using social media at late night (without sleep)	Often	18	36%
		Sometimes	27	54%
		Never	5	10%
2.	Frequency of facing conflict in family while using social media	Often	31	60%
		Sometimes	16	32%
		Never	4	8%
3.	Parents scolds your for using social media	Often	37	74%
		Sometimes	8	16%
		Never	4	8%
4.	Social media usage affects my academic performance	Often	26	52%
		Sometimes	14	28%
		Never	10	20%
5.	Social media usage affects intimacy among the family members	Often	14	28%
		Sometimes	17	34%
		Never	19	38%
6.	Social media usage affects my physical activities	Often	28	56%
		Sometimes	10	20%
		Never	12	24%

performance. The inferences draw from the data that people in the 22+ age group have better mental stability.

The table brings out that nearly two fifth (38%) of the respondents feels that social media usage never affects intimacy among family members because they think that social media is a tool used for developing intimacy among people, more than one-third (34%) of the respondents occasionally feels that social media usage affects the intimacy among the family members. Because they feel through virtual communication, face-to-face interaction is affected very much. It was found that 28 percent of the respondents felt that social media usage affects intimacy among family members.

The result shows that nearly three fifth (56%) of the respondents feels that social media usage affects physical activities because they said that it simplifies the many activities of human beings so that physical work is reduced, and while watching social media for long hours that also destroy the physical activities. Nearly one-fourth (24%) of the respondents feel that social media usage never affects physical activities, and one-fifth (20%) of the respondents feel that social media usage occasionally affects physical activities.

Conclusion:

Social media is a tool that was made for communication purposes, but it made a massive impact on humans in various fields to simplify human activities. The study was executed in the rural area youths; the study found that social media started to influence rural areas, too; it significantly impacted education, learning new things, and business. But on the other side, it creates some challenges for rural youths because of social media

addiction; most students cannot concentrate on academics, affecting their studies. Social media leads a student to an imaginary world (hyper-reality). The study concludes that the duration of using social media and the purpose of using social media are the key factors that determine the effectiveness of social media because youths who use social media for longer hours face various challenges in their academics and daily life. Respondents who all used social media for entertainment faced many academic challenges. Overall, the study recommends that even though social media simplifies the various activities of human life, there is a need to use social media within a limit.

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