

The Dual Faces of Social Media: A Study on Its Positive and Negative Impact on Youth

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Abstract

The dual nature of social media and its influence on children aged 15 to 24 in Rhenock, a semi-urban area of Sikkim, are investigated in this study. Knowing its good and bad effects has become vital as social media grows increasingly entwined into daily life, especially among young people. The objective of this descriptive study is to evaluate the behavioral and sociopsychological consequences of young people's social media use. Structured questionnaires have gathered primary data emphasizing both the positive factors—namely social relationships, information access, employment possibilities, pleasure, and Self-expression) as well as negative variables including cyberbullying, decreased productivity, physical health concerns, and mental health problems. Furthermore, collected to spot trends have been sociodemographic data including gender, educational background, and access to the internet. The study aims to provide knowledge about the balanced use of social media, therefore informing educators, parents, and legislators of its subtle impact on young growth. In the local environment of Rhenock.

Keywords: Social Media, Youth, Positive impact, Negative impact, Outcome

Introduction

An online platform known as social media allows users to share information and maintain contact through virtual communication methods like text, video, images, and audio. The usage of social media increased significantly throughout the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s, and Facebook became one of the most popular platforms during that time. Social media has become a potent instrument in the digital era, influencing the daily lives, conduct, and way of thinking of people around the world. Young people frequently display a notable fondness for electronic devices, indicating a clear preference for the newest technological innovations. When it comes to using electronic devices and the vast array of services that these devices provide, they are actually the biggest consumer segment. including social networking, communication, and entertainment. The way that teenagers communicate, interact, and take in information has been transformed by social media networks like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp. It now affects people's behavior, way of life, and relationships, particularly among young people, and has grown to be a vital component of contemporary communication. Because we are always surrounded by the products of electronic technology, this period is commonly known as the electronic age. This time has seen both benefits and drawbacks, but if it has boosted the efficiency, speed, and productivity of young people. It has also exacerbated growing problems, such as the rise in social media addiction among Indian teenagers over the past ten years (Devi, 2023).

In the book *In Youth* (2009), Gill Jones states that the term "youth" usually applies to the time between childhood and adulthood, which is sometimes linked to the age range of 15 to 24. Youthfulness encompasses both positive and negative characteristics, such as strength and vulnerability, beauty and inexperience, vigor, and immaturity. Social media has a dual function in the lives of young users, according to Sumadevi S. (2023). On the bright side, it raises public awareness of global concerns, fosters education, facilitates self-expression, and improves connection. Young people may now exchange ideas, work together on academic or creative endeavors, and interact with a variety of communities regardless of where they are. Although it has many advantages, like better communication, access to information, and possibilities for creative expression and education, it also poses serious challenges. Problems such as addiction, mental health issues, cyberbullying, and social isolation can result from the widespread and uncontrolled usage of social media. Shrestha Lucky (2013) defined social media serves as a forum for people to come together, share their thoughts and ideas, and create and distribute information within online groups and networks. It provides a wide range of advantages, including facilitating communication, text messaging, sharing pictures and videos, sharing audio content, publishing content rapidly, and networking. individuals all around the world. Its effect on young people's lives has significantly increased as a result of the widespread usage of social media. This growing participation is changing modern lifestyles and impacting behavior.

Literature Review

Devi (2023) highlights that social media has both positive and negative effects, depending largely on how users engage with these platforms. The study, based on secondary data, analyzes the pros and cons of social media use among youth. Findings reveal that 90% of students spend most of their time on social media for entertainment purposes. It also plays a significant role in influencing consumer choices and decision-making. Young people in India and other countries frequently engage in social networking for activities such as entertainment, browsing, and chatting. However, this often leads them to have spent less time with family and friends, as well as reduce their participation in physical activities. Excessive use of social media has also been linked to a decline in academic performance. On the positive side, social media supports virtual learning, helps users reconnect with old friends, and provides quick and easy access to information.

Shabir et al. (2014) explores the impact of social media on youth in Bahawalpur City, focusing on usage patterns, platform preferences, and user attitudes. Their study confirmed that Facebook is the most preferred platform among youth with significant time spent daily on social media. A majority of students agreed that social media is beneficial for youth in the field of education. One of the key drawbacks of social media they found in their study was the excessive use of social media leads to a waste of time among the youth. They noted that while social media has educational benefits, it also reduces productivity and can distract students from their studies affecting their academic performance. This remains a common concern about the over use of social media impacting time management and focus.

Singh et al. (2017) conducted their study in Chandigarh, focusing on youth and their use of social media. They found that a large number of young people were engaged in excessive use of social media. The majority reported experiencing physical health issues such as persistent headaches, back pain, eye strain, and discomfort in the hands. Some also reported high blood pressure and mental health problems. According to the study, 47% of the youth were mentally affected by the overuse of social media. Despite

these negative effects, several participants expressed positive views about social media, stating that they could not imagine their lives without it.

Suhendar (2018) tries to highlight the rampant explosion of the use of social media that has influenced youth behavior by reviewing both the positive and negative impacts of social media on youth, particularly with regard to nation development. The research identifies that social media promotes easier communication, job and business opportunities, educational learning, social networking, etc. On the other hand, social media also promotes risk factors such as social isolation, exposure to inappropriate content, cybercrime, and decrease in academic levels and job performance. Moreover, the article focused youth as the main agents of change in strengthening state integrity and providing cultural unity, and they are a key demographic in sustaining development. The finding of the research states that the dual nature of social media is the main tool for empowerment and community engagement, as well as a source of distraction and moral degradation among youth. So, studies suggest that guidance from parents, educators, and policymakers can help youth utilize social media for the development of the nation.

Ahmad Dar and Dolly (2023) studied the impact of social media on today's generation of Indian youth. The research highlighted that social media has become an important part of modern life, which includes business, education, shopping, and sending emails on social networking websites and blogs. The researchers adopted descriptive and analytical methods along with the thematic analysis tool MAXQDA to substantiate the positive and negative impact of social media on youth. The finding of the study shows that social media has both a positive and negative impact, but it depends upon how youth use it in a proper manner. The study recommends that the government should strictly enforce laws that protect the privacy and safety of the youth because social media is an unquestionable part of modern life.

Jacob Amedie (2015) have drawn attention to the darker side of social media, how different platforms of social media can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and a decline in real human connection. Social media often encourages surface-level interactions, replacing deep, meaningful relationships with likes and comments. The constant online presence can become addictive, pulling us away from family, personal time, and even our own thoughts. Even more concerning, some studies show how these platforms are being misused by those with harmful intentions, including criminals and extremist groups. Altogether, the literature invites us to reflect more thoughtfully on how we use social media, not just to celebrate its benefits, but also to recognize and address its real emotional and societal costs.

Mastrodicasa and Metellus (2013) looks at how social media affects college students in both helpful and harmful ways. It shows that what really matters is how students use social media, not just how much time they spend on it. For example, using Facebook to plan events or stay connected with friends can help students feel more involved and supported. But using it just to pass time or avoid work can lead to feelings of loneliness, stress, and lower academic performance. The study also explains how social media shapes students' identity, relationships with peers and parents, and even their emotional well-being. Overall, the authors suggest that colleges should understand students' social media habits better so they can support their growth and learning in healthier ways.

Literature Gap

While several studies have examined the positive and negative impacts of social media on youth, most are geographically limited and do not reflect the experiences of young people from other regions. In the context of Sikkim, there is a lack of detailed research on how social media affects youth. Therefore, it is essential to explore both the positive and negative aspects of social media usage among young people in

this region, in order to gain a balanced understanding of its impact on their academic, emotional, and social development.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the everyday purpose of social media use among youth
2. To find out the amount of time spent on using social media
3. To identify the positive and negative impact of social media among the youth

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it aims to fill that gap by examining the impact of social media on the youth of Rhenock, Sikkim. By focusing on this specific region, the study provides localized insights that are often overlooked in broader national or international studies. It investigates not only the negative consequences, such as distractions from academics, emotional distress, or physical health concerns, but also the positive aspects, including connectivity, access to information, peer support, and opportunities for self-expression.

Understanding how social media affects young people in this region is important for people who work directly with youth in this region. The findings of this study can contribute to developing more effective, culturally relevant digital literacy programs and support systems. Moreover, it can help guide responsible social media use by highlighting both the opportunities and risks that comes with these platforms.

Methodology

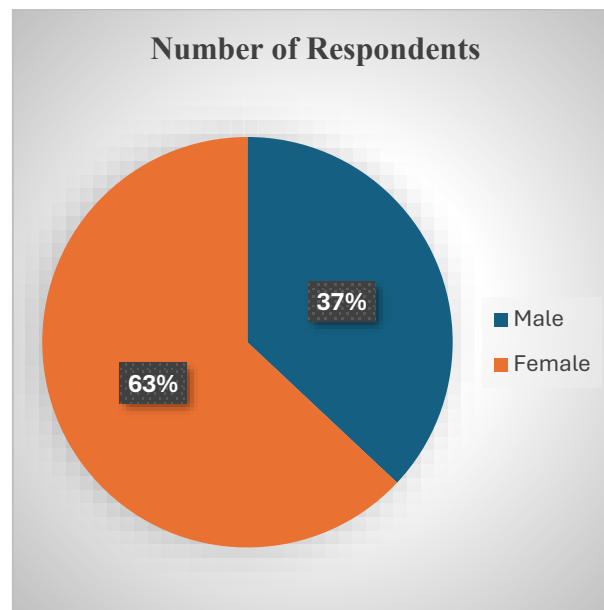
The present study is simple and descriptive in nature, aiming to provide a clear and understanding of social media usage among youth. To achieve this, a structured questionnaire survey was adopted as the primary method for data collection. This approach was selected to gather first-hand information directly from young individuals regarding their use of social media. The survey was designed to explore several key aspects, including the reasons why youth engage with social media platforms, the amount of time they spend on these platforms daily, and the positive and negative impacts of social media on their lives.

Selection of Sample

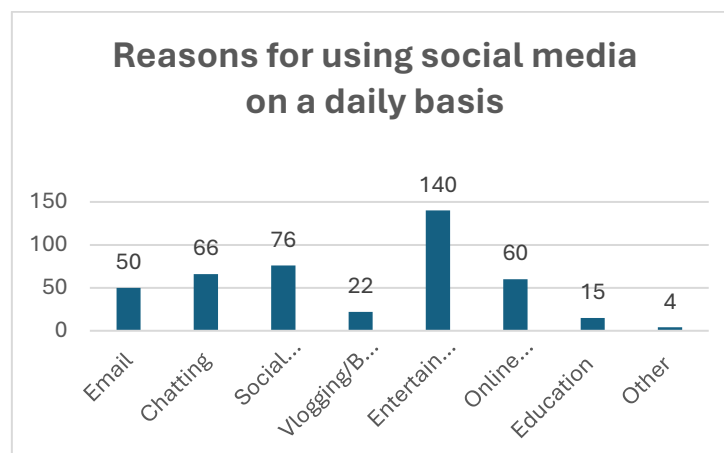
This study employed a purposive sampling method to ensure that the selected participants were relevant to the research objectives. Primary data was collected from a total of 200 respondents, comprising 100 school students and 100 college students, all within the age group of 15 to 25 years. This age range was chosen as it represents a critical developmental stage during which young individuals are highly active on social media and are likely to experience both its positive and negative impacts. The use of purposive sampling allowed focus specifically on youth who are most engaged with social media, thereby enhancing the relevance and depth of the study's findings.

Results and Discussion

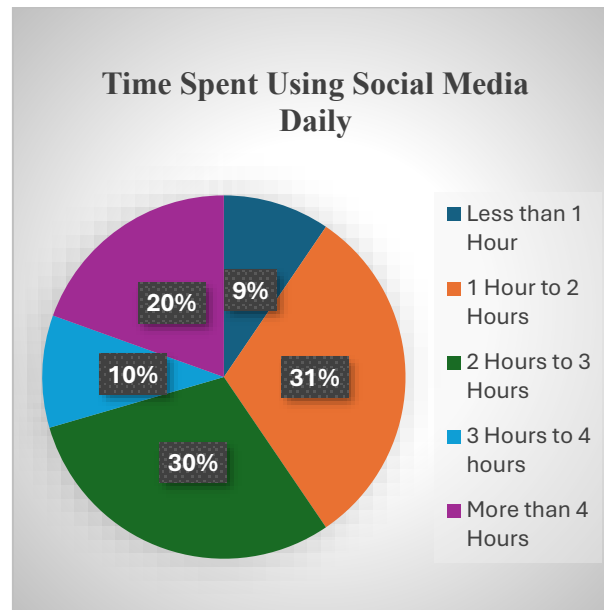
The following charts and bar graphs indicate demography of the respondents and both positive and negative impact of social media among the youth.



The total number of respondents was 200, out of which 37% were male and 63% were female.



The bar graph above illustrates the various reasons for using social media, based on a multiple-choice survey. Out of the total 200 participants, 50 indicated that they use social media for email communication, while 66 use it primarily for chatting. A total of 76 respondents reported using social media for social networking purposes, and 22 engage in vlogging or blogging. The most common reason for social media usage was entertainment, such as watching movies and music with 140 respondents selecting this option. Additionally, 60 participants use social media for online shopping, 15 for educational purposes, and a small number only 4 respondents indicated other reasons. These findings suggest that entertainment and social interaction are the main reasons for social media use among the surveyed youth.



The chart above illustrates the daily duration of time spent on social media by youth. According to which only 9% of respondents reported using social media for less than an hour every day. A larger portion, 31%, indicated that they spend between 1 to 2 hours on these platforms, making this the most common usage duration among the respondents. Additionally, 30% use social media for 2 to 3 hours daily, while 10% reported using it for 3 to 4 hours. Notably, 20% of the respondents spend more than 4 hours per day on social media. These findings suggest that while a significant number of youths manage moderate usage, a considerable portion also engage in prolonged social media activity, which may have implications for time management and digital well-being.

Positive Impact of social media on Creativity

Social media plays a vital role in enhancing connectivity and promoting learning among youth. It encourages self-expression and raises awareness about global issues. Today's young people can easily share ideas, collaborate on academic or creative projects, and engage with diverse communities. These platforms allow them to build meaningful connections with people from around the world, gain exposure to new perspectives, and often support their personal growth.

Sl.no	Statements	Yes	No
1.	Social media provides me a platform for self-expression	164	36
2.	Social media inspires me to create content (Art, Writing, music, vlog)	171	29
3.	I have learned new creative skills, example photo editing, storytelling designing, etc. through social media	184	16
4.	Social media expose me to new creative ideas and trends	190	10
5.	Social media has broadened my understanding of different cultures and learning different languages	179	21

Table1.1 Positive impact of social media on creativity

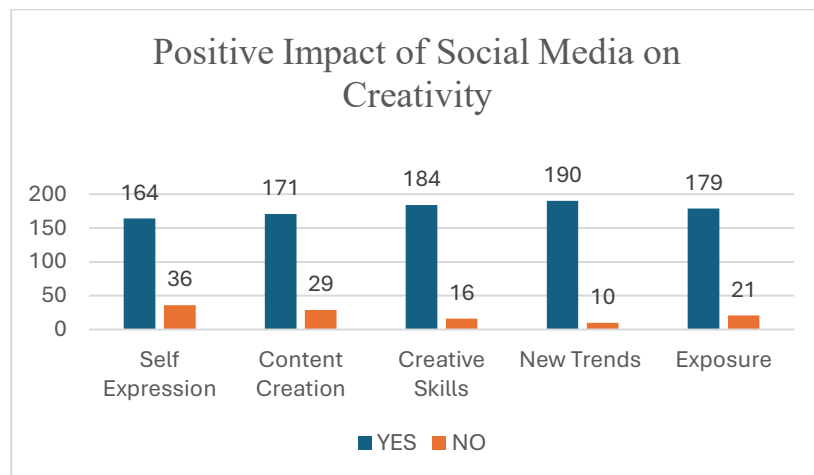


Fig1.1

The bar graph above illustrates the positive impact of social media on creativity among the youth. Out of 200 respondents, 164 have utilized social media as a place for self-expression, 171 respondents said that social media serves as an inspiration for their writing, painting, music, vlogging, and other forms of content creation. 184 people have acquired new creative abilities, like designing stories, editing photos, etc. Social media exposes individuals to fresh, innovative ideas and trends, according to 190 of the respondents. Additionally, for 179 people respondents, social media has improved intercultural understanding and language learning.

According to the report, most young people use social media as a platform for self-expression, which encourages them to be creative in writing, music, art, and vlogging. The research draws that students have utilized social media as a platform to discover new creative trends and ideas as well as to acquire new creative talents.

Positive Impact of social media on Career Opportunities

Social media contributes significantly to career development by providing educational content and resources. It plays a key role in digital marketing, offering valuable insights and tools for those interested in the field. Additionally, it keeps students informed about the latest advancements in technology, helping them stay current and competitive in their chosen careers.

Sl.no	Statements	Yes	No
1.	I follow educational and skill-based content to improve myself on social media	167	32
2.	Social media expose me to various job opportunities	150	50
3.	It has motivated me to consider a career related to content creation/digital marketing	150	50

4.	I follow career related pages or guidance and motivation	162	38
5.	It keeps me informed about future trends in technology	185	15

Table 1.2. Positive impact of social media on career opportunities

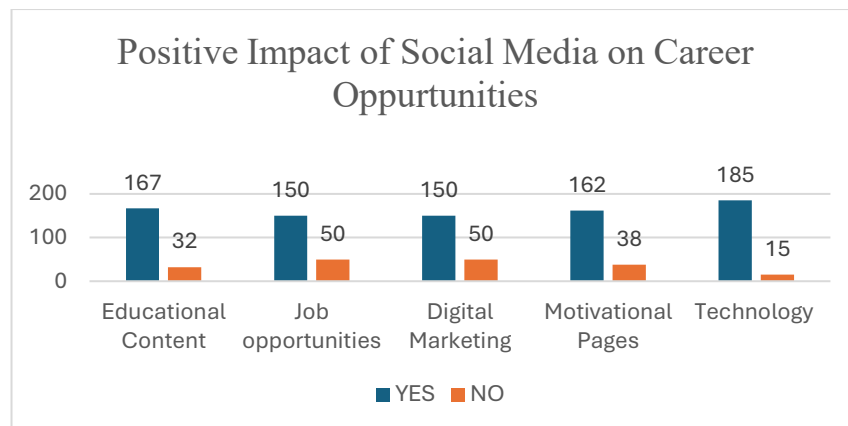


Fig 1.2

The bar graph above illustrates the positive impact of social media on career opportunities among the youth. Based on multiple-choice survey, 167 out of 200 respondents follow educational and skill-based content to advance their career-related fields. However, for 150 of the respondents, social media offered them employment prospects. Similarly, 150 youth responded that social media inspired them to participate in digital marketing and content production, but 50 respondents are not benefiting. Furthermore, according to 162 respondents, it is a platform for career-related pages that provide inspiration and guidance. According to 185 respondents, social media also aids in their awareness of various upcoming technology advances.

The finding of the study shows that social media offers young people in school and college excellent career-related chances. According to the survey, following career related pages on social media, offers them advice and motivation, helps them make better job decisions. It also keeps them up to date on upcoming technological advancements.

Positive Impact of social media on Social Bonding

Social media helps strengthen social bonds by allowing people to stay connected with friends and family, no matter the distance. It provides a space to share life updates, celebrate achievements, and offer support during difficult times. By joining groups and communities with shared interests, individuals can also form new friendships and feel a sense of belonging.

Sl.no	Statements	Yes	No
1.	Social media keeps me connected with friends	189	11
2.	Social media is a source of emotional support	116	84

3.	Social media helps me connect with people with shared interest	166	34
4.	Social media helps me in sharing and receiving information	189	11
5.	Social media acts as a safe space	100	100

Table 1.3. Statement showing the positive impact of social media on social bonding

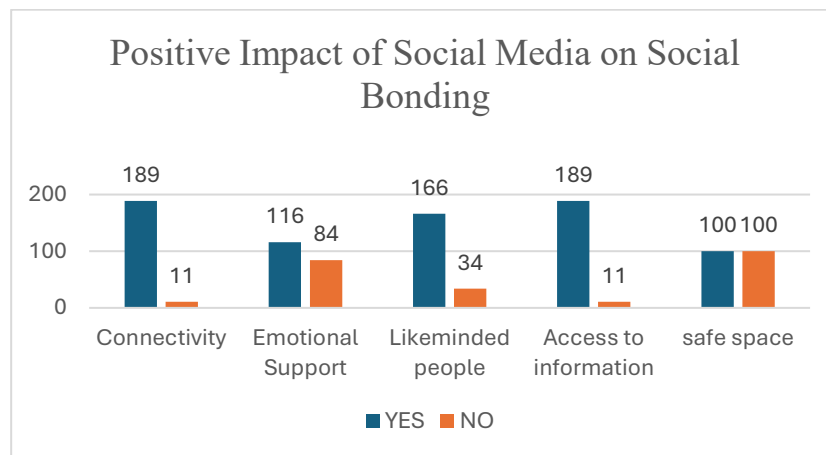


Fig 1.3

The bar graph illustrates the positive impact of social media on social bonding among youth. Out of the 200 participants in the study, 189 reported using social media primarily for staying connected with friends, highlighting its role in maintaining connection. Furthermore, 116 participants stated that they seek emotional support from their virtual friends through these platforms, while 166 use social media to connect with like-minded individuals, to promote a community of shared interests. Additionally, 189 youth emphasized the importance of social media in providing access to important information, and 100 participants shared that they view these platforms as a safe space where they can freely express themselves. These findings collectively indicate that social media plays a significant and positive role in enhancing social bonding, building emotional connection, support, and shared understanding among young people in the digital age.

Negative Impact of social media on Physical Health

Excessive use of social media can negatively affect physical health of a person, leading to issues like headaches, backpain, and eye strain. Spending long hours on screens often causes discomfort and physical stress. It can tire the eyes and can lead to eye strain. Over time, these problems can impact overall wellbeing and reduce productivity.

Sl.no.	Statements	Yes	No
1.	I feel pressured to look perfect due to social media	66	134
2.	I get constant headache/ backpain/ eye strain due to prolonged use of social media	107	93

3.	I tend to get skip meals/delay eating due to social media	39	161
4.	I feel fatigue and lack of energy from constant social media engagement	70	130
5.	I tend to use social media late night that makes it hard for me to sleep	79	121

Table 2.1. Statement showing the negative impact of social media on physical health

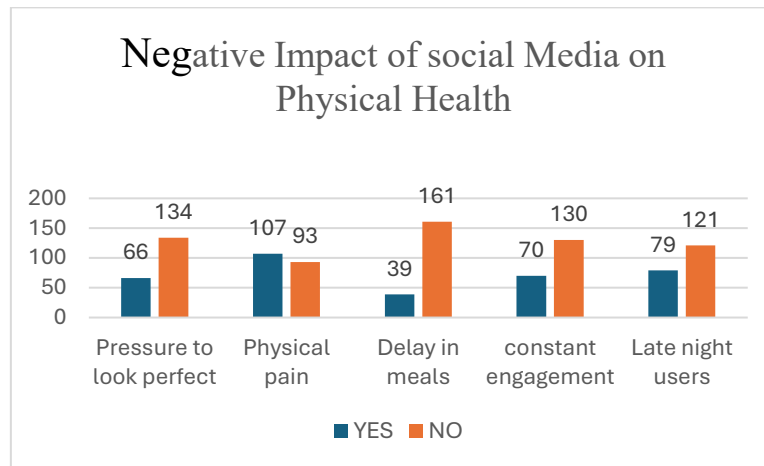


Fig 2.1

The bar graph above highlights the negative impact of social media on physical health among youth. Out of the 200 respondents, only 66 reported feeling pressure to maintain a perfect look as a result of social media influence. While 107 individuals experienced physical discomfort or pain due to prolonged screen time, only 39 admitted to delaying their meals because of excessive engagement with social media platforms. Moreover, just 70 respondents stated that they are constantly active on social media, and 79 acknowledged being late-night users. These findings suggest that although certain negative effects on physical health do exist, such as discomfort, body pain, eye strain, and poor sleep habits, the overall impact appears to be moderate. This implies that while social media can influence physical well-being, its adverse effects in this context are not as widespread or severe among the majority of the participants.

Negative impact of social media on Mental Health

Although internet addiction is not yet officially recognized as a disorder, people, especially young individuals are increasingly exhibiting its symptoms at an alarming rate (Al-Meyenes ,2015). Frequent and prolonged use of social media has been linked to heightened feelings of anxiety, stress, and depression (Naslund et al., 2020).

Sl.no	Statements	Yes	No
6.	I tend to experience mental tiredness due to social media	77	123
7.	I tend to experience anxiety and stress due to overuse of social media	58	142
8.	Social media makes me feel I'm not doing enough in life	107	93
9.	I get upset if I don't get enough likes and comments on my posts in social media	50	150

10	I get upset if I don't get enough likes and comments on my posts in social media	76	124
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Table 2.2. Statement showing the negative impact of social media on mental health

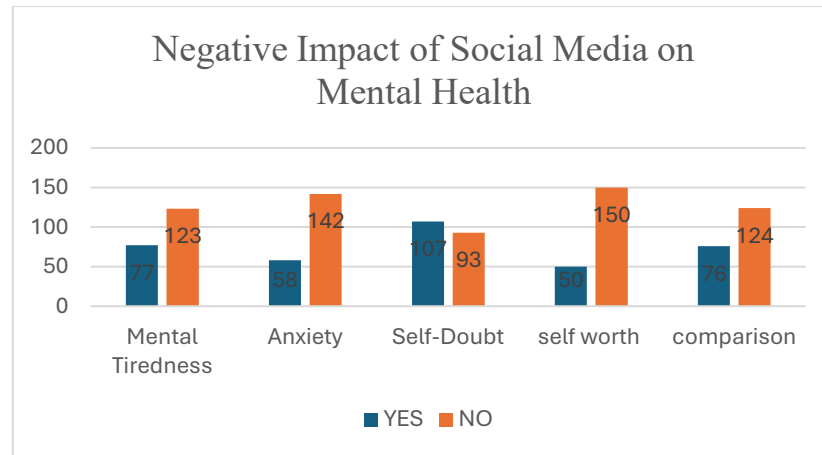


Fig 2.2

The bar graph above illustrates the negative effects of social media on the mental health of young people. Out of 200 respondents, 77 reported feeling mentally exhausted due to constant social media use. Around 58 individuals experienced anxiety as a result of using these platforms. A significant number of 107 respondents shared that social media often leads them to feel they are not doing enough in life, contributing to self-doubt. Additionally, about 50 participants admitted feeling upset when they don't receive enough likes or comments. Lastly, 76 respondents said they frequently compare their lives to others on social media, which has a harmful impact on their mental well-being.

The findings suggest that social media use has a clear and measurable negative impact on the mental health of young people. A large portion of respondents reported emotional distress linked to their online experiences, including mental exhaustion, anxiety, and self-doubt. The most commonly reported issue by over half of the participants were the feeling that they aren't doing enough in life, likely caused by constant exposure to others' seemingly perfect lives on social media. Additionally, the pressure to gain likes and comments, as well as the habit of comparing oneself to others, appears to significantly contribute to low self-esteem and emotional strain. These patterns highlight how social media, when not used mindfully, can promote unrealistic expectations and affect young users' overall mental well-being.

Negative impact of social media on Privacy Concerns

According to a study by Hootsuite, approximately 3.48 billion people are now connected to some form of social media, and this number continues to grow each year. However, as the use of social media expands, so do concerns about privacy and online safety. Issues such as cyberbullying, misuse of personal data, and online stalking have become increasingly common, raising serious questions about the risks associated with these platforms.

Sl.no	Statements	Yes	No
1.	I have experienced cyber bullying	31	169
2.	I worry about my personal information being shared on social media.	139	61

3.	I worry about strangers, misusing my photos and videos on social media.	131	69
4.	I have seen or experienced someone's privacy being invaded on social media.	137	63
5.	I fear that someone might be stalking me on social media.	116	84

Table 2.3. Statement showing the negative impact of social media on privacy concerns

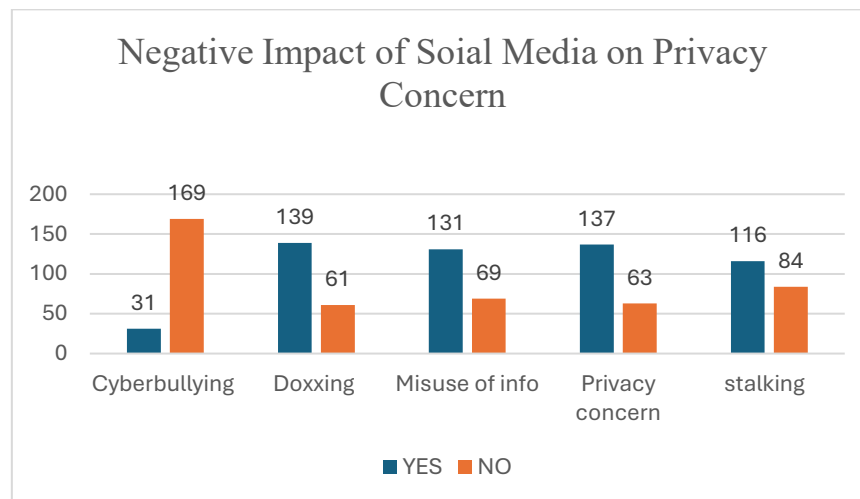


Fig 2.3

The bar graph above illustrates how deeply privacy concerns related to social media affect students. Based on the multiple-choice survey, Among the 200 respondents, 31 reported experiencing some form of cyberbullying. A significant majority 139 students eared that their personal information could be shared or doxed. Similarly, 131 expressed concerns about the misuse of their data on these platforms. Furthermore, 137 respondents had witnessed someone else's privacy being invaded, and 116 reported feeling uneasy about being stalked online.

The interpretation of these findings suggests that privacy concerns are a major source of stress and insecurity among students who use social media. The high number of students who fear their personal information could be misused or exposed indicates a lack of trust in how social media platforms handle user data. The fact that so many have witnessed or experienced cyberbullying, stalking, or privacy invasion reflects how common and normalized these issues have become in the online environment. This growing sense of vulnerability can contribute to feelings of anxiety, fear, and reluctance to fully engage online, which may, in turn, affect students' mental well-being and their ability to use social media in a safe and healthy way.

Major findings of the study.

The findings of the study reveal that social media plays a significant role in the lives of young people, offering both positive and negative impacts. Most respondents use social media primarily for entertainment and social interaction, while others engage in online shopping, chatting, and limited educational use. A considerable number spend 1–3 hours daily on these platforms, though a notable portion spends over 4 hours, indicating moderate to high usage. Social media has a strong positive influence on

creativity, with many using it for self-expression, learning new skills, and exploring innovative ideas. It also enhances career opportunities by providing access to educational content, job prospects, and guidance in digital fields. In terms of social bonding, it helps youth stay connected, build communities, and seek emotional support. However, the study also highlights concerns regarding physical health, such as discomfort from prolonged screen time, and mental health issues like anxiety, self-doubt, and social comparison. Further, privacy and safety remain major concerns, with many fearing data misuse, cyberbullying, and stalking. Overall, while social media offers valuable benefits for creativity, career, and connection, it also presents challenges that require mindful usage.

Conclusion

The study highlights that social media has become an integral part of young people's lives, offering both significant benefits and challenges. It serves as a powerful tool for creativity, career development, and social bonding, allowing youth to express themselves, gain inspiration, learn new skills, and stay connected with others. However, the findings also reveal that excessive or unmindful use can lead to physical discomfort, mental health issues, and serious privacy concerns. While the positive impacts of social media are substantial, it is essential for young users to develop healthy usage habits and be aware of its potential risks. Promoting digital literacy, self-regulation, and responsible online behavior can help ensure that social media remains a constructive force in the lives of the youth.

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