

Utilization of Social Networking Sites by Rural Women

Dr. Serene Shekhar¹, Dr. Sarita Sanwal²

¹Associate Professor and Principal, Polytechnic in Nutrition and Community Science, Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University, Sardarkrushinagar, District-Banaskantha, Gujarat

²Professor and Principal, ASPEE College of Nutrition and Community Science, Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University, Sardarkrushinagar, District-Banaskantha, Gujarat

Abstract

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have transformed communication dynamics, creating both developmental opportunities and digital behavioral challenges across rural agrarian landscapes. This study examines the socio-economic profile of rural women in the adopted villages of Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University (SDAU), evaluates their SNS usage patterns and motives, assesses perceived positive and negative consequences, and determines statistical relationships between socio-demographic factors and SNS engagement. A multi-stage random sampling design was executed across 10 adopted villages in Banaskantha district during 2025–26, surveyed n=300 rural women using a structured, three-point scaled interview schedule. The study reveals that Smartphone ownership reached 87.00%, with WhatsApp (100.00%), Instagram (81.67%), and YouTube Shorts (67.33%) dominating platform usage. Core drivers included social interaction and entertainment, alongside practical information-seeking for nutritious cooking and deficiency mitigation. Significant positive correlations emerged between education, family income, and self-occupation with both overall SNS utilization and perceived positive impacts ($p < 0.05$). Conversely, age exhibited a strong inverse relationship with utilization ($r = -0.586$). Key negative outcomes centered on mobile addiction and unnecessary surfing. The study concludes that social networking sites serve as powerful drivers of socio and cognitive empowerment, knowledge acquisition and skill-building for rural women but it requires managing distractions and domestic role pressures to balance digital engagement with everyday family well-being.

Keywords: Rural Women, Social Networking Sites, Digital Literacy, Extension

Introduction:

Digital connectivity in rural India has transitioned from basic mobile voice communications to high-speed data consumption. Social Networking Sites (SNS) like WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram now serve as primary gateways for information flow, peer communication, and domestic decision-making among rural populations.

While digital adoption offers unprecedented opportunities for rural women, such as exposure to entrepreneurial ideas, health-nutritional information and self-expression and it also presents socio-behavioral challenges. These include time allocation conflicts, mobile dependency and exposure to unverified content.

This empirical study assesses the extent of SNS adoption, platform preferences, content preferences, and psychological and domestic consequences among rural women within the extension network of **Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University (SDAU)** in Banaskantha district, Gujarat. Thus, the present study aims to study the utilization of social networking Sites on rural women of adopted villages of SDAU with following objectives:

1. To study personal profile of rural women
2. To find utilization of social networking sites by rural women
3. To analyze effect of social networking sites on rural women
4. To find association between personal profile, utilization and effect of social networking sites of rural women

Methodology:

The present empirical study was executed across one year duration during 2025–26 across ten adopted villages under the jurisdiction of Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University (SDAU), situated in the Banaskantha district of Gujarat. A multistage random sampling technique was implemented to establish the study sample. In the initial stage, 10 villages namely Sadarpur, Johrapura, Kanzara, Bodal, Peplu, Vadaval, Mudetha, Nava Nesda, Vasna, and Khara; were randomly selected. Subsequently, 30 rural women were selected at random from each village, yielding a total sample size of $n = 300$ respondents.

Table:1 Distribution of respondents

S.No.	Name of village	No. of respondents
1.	Sadarpur	30
2.	Johrapura	30
3.	Kanzara	30
4.	Bodal	30
5.	Peplu	30
6.	Vadaval	30
7.	Mudetha	30
8.	Nava Nesda	30
9.	Vasna	30
10.	Khara	30
		300

To systematically evaluate the phenomena, the study operationalized key socio-demographic parameters as independent variables included age, marital status, caste, education, family type, family size, land holding, annual household income, self-occupation, and spouse occupation. The dependent variable was: Utilization of Social Networking Sites. Utilization of social networking sites was operationalized as online digital platforms used for communication, content sharing, and community building; such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, ShareChat, and Twitter/X and the Effect of Social Networking Sites.

Data collection was conducted using a specially structured, three-part interview schedule designed to capture personal background, platform usage parameters across functional domains (e.g., cooking,

nutrition, embroidery, childcare), and perceived positive and negative consequences. Dependent variable items were evaluated on a three-point continuum rated as Agree (3), Neutral (2), and Disagree (1). The gathered data were processed, coded, and analyzed using statistical tools, including frequencies, percentages, mean ranking scores, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients to determine significant associations between independent socio-demographic profiles and dependent digital outcomes.

Result and Discussions:

• Personal profile of rural women:

Table2: Distribution of respondents according to personal profile of rural women (n=300)

Age	Frequency	Per cent
Young (up to 35)	169	56.33
Middle (36-50)	66	22
Old (51 and above)	65	21.67
Marital status		
Married	245	81.67
Unmarried	44	14.67
Widow	11	3.67
Caste		
General	121	40.33
SEBC	126	42.00
SC	53	17.67
ST	0	0
Education		
Illiterate	54	18.00
Can read and write	31	10.33
Primary school education (1 st to 8 th)	82	27.33
Secondary school education (9 th to 10 th)	81	27.00
Higher Secondary school education (11 th to 12 th)	37	12.33
Graduate (PTC)	15	5.00
Post Graduate	0	0
Family type		
Nuclear	76	25.33
Joint	224	74.67
Family size		
Small (up to 4 members)	77	25.67
Medium (5-7 members)	175	58.33
Big (above 7 members)	48	16.00
Land Holding: (in hectare)		

Marginal (Up to 1.00 ha.)	64	21.33
Small (1.01 to 2.00 ha.)	75	25.00
Semi-medium (2.01 to 4.00 ha.)	101	33.67
Medium (4.01 to 10.00 ha.)	47	15.67
Large (Above 10.00 ha.)	13	4.33
Income		
Less than 200000	84	28.00
200001-400000	136	45.33
400001-600000	80	26.67
Family Occupation		
Self		
Home maker	131	43.66
Home maker+ Animal Husbandry	143	47.67
Anganwadi worker	11	3.67
Teacher	15	5.00
Husband		
Farming	74	24.67
Farming+ Animal Husbandry	137	45.67
Farming + Private work	89	29.67

The socio-demographic analysis of the 300 rural women across the ten SDAU-adopted villages reveals a predominantly young, married, and economically active population heavily integrated into both domestic management and agricultural livelihoods.

Over half of the respondents (**56.33%**) belong to the young age category (up to 35 years), indicating that digital platforms are being adopted primarily by younger demographics. The middle-aged (36–50 years) and older groups account for **22.00%** and **21.67%** of the sample, respectively. A vast majority of the respondents are married (**81.67%**), while **14.67%** are unmarried, and a small segment (**3.67%**) are widows.

The social composition shows a strong representation from Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) at **42.00%**, closely followed by the General category at **40.33%**. Scheduled Caste (SC) respondents constitute **17.67%** of the total sample, while no Scheduled Tribe (ST) respondents were recorded in the selected study areas.

Educational levels are moderate across the sample. Primary school education (1st to 8th grade) and secondary school education (9th to 10th grade) represent the largest segments at **27.33%** and **27.00%**, respectively. Higher secondary education accounts for **12.33%**, while **18.00%** of the women are illiterate, and **10.33%** can only read and write without formal schooling. Higher education adoption remains minimal, with only **5.00%** holding a university degree or Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC).

A significant majority of the rural women live in joint families (**74.67%**), compared to **25.33%** residing in nuclear family setups. In terms of household size, **58.33%** belong to medium-sized families consisting of 5 to 7 members. Small families (up to 4 members) account for **25.67%**, while large families with over 7 members make up **16.00%**.

Land distribution among respondent households is largely concentrated in the semi-medium (33.67%), small (25.00%), and marginal (21.33%) operational landholding categories (up to 4.00 hectares). Only 15.67% hold medium land assets, and a minor 4.33% fall into the large landholding category (above 10.00 ha). Regarding annual household income, the largest group (45.33%) earns between ₹2,00,001 and ₹4,00,000 annually, followed by 28.00% earning less than ₹2,00,000, and 26.67% generating between ₹4,00,001 and ₹6,00,000.

The self-occupational pattern highlights dual responsibilities; 47.67% of the women engage in home management combined with animal husbandry activities, while 43.66% identify purely as homemakers. Formal extension or public service roles are minor, with 5.00% working as school teachers and 3.67% serving as Anganwadi workers. Regarding spouse occupations, the predominant primary livelihood is integrated farming and animal husbandry (45.67%), followed by farming combined with private work (29.67%), and exclusive reliance on farming (24.67%).

The demography reflects an active, working-age rural female demographic with moderate educational background and strong involvement in animal husbandry.

• Utilization of social networking sites by rural women:

The device and utilization data show that smartphone adoption among rural women is high (87.00% personal ownership), supported primarily by 28-day recharge plans (52.00%) and 1.5 GB/day data allocations (50.33%), mirroring observations by Revi and Thomas (2021) regarding the rapid democratization of affordable mobile data infrastructure in non-urban sectors. WhatsApp has achieved universal adoption (100.00%), followed closely by visual, short-form platforms like Instagram (81.67%) and YouTube Shorts (67.33%), which aligns with findings by Patel and Singh (2022) on the preferential shift toward short visual formats that bypass literacy barriers among rural users.

A majority of respondents have used these platforms for over three years (56.67%), logging on multiple times daily (57.00%) during domestic rest periods at night (48.67%) and in the afternoon (35.67%) for less than three hours per session; this temporal engagement pattern corroborates research by Mukherjee et al. (2020) on how rural women integrate digital access into structured gaps within daily domestic routines.

While social interaction (Rank I) and entertainment (Rank II) drive general usage—a trend consistently highlighted in ICT development literature by Kumar and Sharma (2021)—functional searches heavily favor practical home management, specifically nutritious cooking (Rank I), deficiency management (Rank II), and tailoring (Rank III).

Consequently, respondents expressed the highest demand for future digital extension content focused on home remedies (Rank I), healthy snacks (Rank II), and homemade baking (Rank III), reinforcing conclusions by Devi et al. (2023) that rural women prioritize digital learning that delivers immediate household, health, and micro-entrepreneurial utility.

Table3: Distribution of respondents according to type of device used by rural women (n=300)

S.No.	Name of Device	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Mobile phone	261	87.00
2.	Tablet	2	0.67
3.	Any other (specify) shared mobile phone	37	12.33

Table4: Distribution of respondents according to type of recharge doneby rural women (n=300)

S.No.	Validity	Frequency	Per cent
1.	28 days	156	52.00
2.	56 days	109	36.33
3.	84 days	35	11.67

Table5: Distribution of respondents according to type of Data pack by rural women (n=300)

S.No.	Data pack	Frequency	Per cent
1.	1GB/day	117	39.00
2.	1.5GB/day	151	50.33
3.	2GB/day	32	10.67

Table6: Distribution of respondents according to type of social networking sites used by rural women (n=300)

S.No.	Social networking sites	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Facebook	79	26.33
2.	YouTube	154	51.33
3.	Instagram	245	81.67
4.	Twitter/ (X)	21	7.00
5.	Whats app	300	100.00
6.	Snapchat	115	38.33
7.	Sharechat	05	1.67
8.	Any other (specify) You tube shorts	202	67.33

***Multiple responses**

Table7: Distribution of respondents according extend of use of social networking sites by rural women (n=300)

S.No.	Social networking sites	Duration		
		Below 3 hrs	3 hrs. to 5 hrs	Above 5 hrs
1.	Facebook	72	6	1
2.	YouTube	81	62	11
3.	Instagram	155	140	05
4.	Twitter/ (X)	12	9	0
5.	Whats app	236	64	0
6.	Snapchat	75	40	0
7.	Sharechat	5	0	0
8.	You tube shorts	170	107	23

Table8: Distribution of respondents according to utilization pattern of social networking sites by rural women (n=300)

S.No.		Frequency	Per cent
A	Length of time using Social Networking Sites		
	Less than 1 year	27	9.00
	1 - 2 years	42	14.00
	2 - 3 years	61	20.33
	More than 3 years	170	56.67
B	Most preferred time to connect with Social Networking Sites	Frequency	Per cent
	Early morning	10	3.33
	Afternoon	107	35.67
	Evening	37	12.33
	Night	146	48.67
C	Frequency at which rural women connect on Social networking Sites	Frequency	Per cent
	Many times a day	171	57.00
	Once in a day	15	5.00
	3 – 4 times a day	112	37.33
	Once in a week	2	0.67
	On demand	0	0.00

Table9: Distribution of respondents according to reasons for using social networking sites by rural women (n=300)

S. No.	Reasons	Rank
1.	Social Interaction	I
2.	Companionship	VI
3.	News and current events	VIII
4.	Entertainment	II
5.	Fill up spare time	VII
6.	Spiritual	V
7.	Search for opinion/ideas for household	III
8.	Share my ideas/photos and videos	IV
9.	For Animal husbandry/ agriculture/business information	IX
10.	For weather information	X

Table10: Distribution of respondents according to type of information you searched by rural women (n=300)

S. No.	Topics	Frequency	Rank
1.	Childcare	87	VI
2.	Stitching, embroidery and knitting	182	III
3.	Money management	51	VIII
4.	Nutritious food cooking	248	I
5.	Food to overcome deficiency	199	II
6.	Entrepreneurial ideas	174	IV
7.	Government policy information	78	VII
8.	Consumer rights	05	X
9.	Women rights	02	XI
10.	Agriculture and Animal husbandry	38	IX
11.	Any other (specify) Self grooming	156	V

***Multiple responses**

Table11: Suggestions given by rural women to be included on networking sites. (n=300)

S. No.	Topics	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Tie and dye	103	IV
2.	Homemade toys for children	95	V
3.	Games for children	80	VI
4.	Homemade cookies	176	III
5.	Nutritious snacks	189	II
6.	Home remedies	202	I

• Effect of Social Networking Sites on rural women

The perceived impacts of social networking sites among rural women present a dual narrative of socio-cognitive empowerment balanced against behavioral disruptions. As indicated in Table 12, respondents identified connecting with friends (Score 900, Rank I), entertainment (Score 890, Rank II), and knowledge acquisition (Score 888, Rank III) as the leading positive outcomes, aligning with empirical findings by Kumar et al. (2021) and Burlacu et al. (2023), who observed that digital tools significantly enhance social connectivity, information access, and self-efficacy among rural female demographics. Conversely, Table 13 reveals that mobile addiction (Score 868, Rank I), aimless browsing (Score 856, Rank II), and delays in daily household chores (Score 818, Rank III) represent the most acute negative impacts, corroborating study outcomes by Sharma and Gupta (2022) regarding how unmanaged smartphone usage triggers domestic productivity losses and compulsive digital habits. Notably, while socio-behavioral drawbacks and cognitive distraction (Rank IV) scored high, critical concerns like physical ailments, privacy vulnerabilities (Rank XVII), and explicit mental health issues (Rank XVIII) recorded lower relative concern, reflecting similar trends noted in rural digital literacy research where immediate daily disruptions outweigh abstract cyber security or psychological risk perceptions.

Table12: Distribution of respondents according to their response for positive effect of Social Networking Sites. (n=300)

S. No.	Aspects	Score	Rank
1.	Internet helps connecting with friends	900	I
2.	Internet helps finding people with same interest	760	XI
3.	Internet keeps entertained	890	II
4.	Internet gives platform for self-expression	852	VIII
5.	Internet helps get support for any problem	883	IV
6.	Internet helps Change of lifestyle	778	X
7.	Internet helps Change of behavioral pattern	744	XII
8.	Internet helps in household work	341	XV
9.	Internet helps increasing awareness about worldly facts	828	IX
10.	Develop Empowerment through exploring new avenues	859	VI
11.	Develop communication and social skill	878	V
12.	Boosting self-confidence	669	XIV
13.	Internet gives platform for exploration of self-identity	679	XIII
14.	Increases knowledge	888	III
15.	Gives new ideas	858	VII

Table13: Distribution of respondents according to their response for negative effect of Social Networking Sites. (n=300)

S. No.	Aspects	Score	Rank
1.	Loss of productive work	549	XIV
2.	Unnecessary surfing	856	II
3.	Wasting time	676	XII
4.	Delay in household work	818	III
5.	Avoiding social gathering	685	XI
6.	Develop unrealistic view about things and relationship	752	VII
7.	Lack of in-person contact	768	VI
8.	Faces peer pressure	686	X
9.	Causes concentration issue	816	IV
10.	Weakens eyesight	523	XV
11.	Internet gives headache	522	XVI
12.	Facing Insomnia problem	697	IX
13.	Feel tiredness	611	XIII
14.	Cause addiction to mobile	868	I
15.	Social comparison (inferiority/superiority)	732	VIII

16.	Miss information /fake news	781	V
17.	Privacy concern	490	XVII
18.	Mental health issue (depression/ anxiety)	469	XVIII

• Association between personal profile, utilization and effect of social networking sites of rural women

The correlation analysis in Table 14 reveals key relationships between socio-economic independent variables and the utilization, positive effects, and negative effects of social networking sites among rural women. Age, shows a significant negative correlation with platform utilization ($r = -0.586$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that younger women engage more frequently with social media; a trend strongly corroborated by Kumar et al. (2021) and Patel & Singh (2022), who highlighted higher digital literacy and adoption rates among younger rural demographics. Conversely, education, income, and self-occupation exhibit statistically significant positive correlations with both social media utilization ($r = 0.601$, 0.471 , and 0.551 respectively, $p < 0.05$) and perceived positive effects ($r = 0.421$, 0.442 , and 0.523 respectively, $p < 0.05$). These findings reinforce conclusions by Devi et al. (2023) and Burlacu et al. (2023), who demonstrated that higher educational attainment, personal earning capacity, and economic independence enhance functional digital navigation and unlock greater socio-cognitive benefits. Regarding negative effects, marital status displays a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.525$, $p < 0.05$), aligning with research by Sharma & Gupta (2022) and Mukherjee et al. (2020) on how married women face heightened domestic role conflicts, time constraints, and familial pressures when integrating smartphone usage into household routines. Other socio-demographic variables such as caste, family type, family size, landholding and spouse occupation; did not yield statistically significant relationships across the dimensions.

Table14: Distribution of respondents according to their response for negative effect of Social Networking Sites. (n=300)

Independent Variables (X)	Utilization of social networking sites (Y)	Positive Effect of social networking sites (Y ₁)	Negative Effect of social networking sites (Y ₂)
1. Age (X ₁)	-0.586*	0.032	0.012
2. Marital status (X ₂)	0.027	-0.041	0.525*
3. Caste (X ₃)	0.112	0.122	0.009
4. Education(X ₄)	0.601*	0.421*	0.011
5. Family Type(X ₅)	0.051	0.051	-0.062
6. Family size(X ₆)	-0.074	0.050	0.122
7. Land holding (X ₇)	0.012	0.031	0.044
8. Income(X ₈)	0.471*	0.442*	0.056
9. Self-Occupation (X ₉)	0.551*	0.523*	0.222
10. Spouse -Occupation (X ₁₀)	0.011	0.022	0.212

Conclusion:

The comprehensive findings of this study demonstrate that digital technology and social networking sites (SNS) have established a deep presence among rural women, driven by personal smartphone ownership, affordable short-term connectivity plans, and accessible visual content formats. Platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube Shorts serve as major channels not only for social connection and leisure, but also for functional knowledge acquisition in area-specific domains such as household nutrition, micro-entrepreneurship, and skill development. This dual-use pattern i.e., balancing personal social ties with practical self-improvement aligns directly with the broader framework of digital empowerment in developing regions, as documented by Burlacu et al. (2023) and Devi et al. (2023). However, digital integration presents a clear trade-off between socio-cognitive gains and daily domestic disruptions. While higher education, personal income, and gainful self-occupation significantly enhance platform usage and its perceived positive impacts, issues such as mobile addiction, unmanaged browsing, and domestic role friction remain prevalent particularly among married women facing daily household time constraints (Sharma & Gupta, 2022; Mukherjee et al., 2020). Ultimately, as rural demographics shift toward visually driven digital platforms (Patel & Singh, 2022), extension agencies, community organizers, and policy planners must design targeted, practical digital learning content—specifically around home wellness, nutrition, and home-based livelihoods—that maximizes functional benefits while promoting balanced, productive technology habits.

Message for rural women:

Social networking sites have both positive and negative effect. Judicious use of Social networking sites is recommended to rural women for social interaction, while avoiding mobile addiction and unnecessary surfing..

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