

Impact of Social Networking Sites on Youth Behaviour: A Study on College Students in Warangal

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Abstract:

Social networking sites have become an important part of the everyday lives of college students, influencing communication, academic activities, relationships and lifestyle. This research examines their impact on the behaviour of college students in Warangal, Telangana. The study was conducted at New Science PG College, Warangal, among 60 students using a descriptive and empirical research design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire covering social networking usage, purposes, academic behaviour, communication, family and peer relationships, emotional patterns and lifestyle. The findings reveal a high level of engagement, with 66.67% of respondents spending five or more hours per day on social networking sites. WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube were the most commonly used platforms. Sharing photos and videos, communication with friends and entertainment was the major purposes of use. Social networking sites supported communication, peer relationships and access to educational information, while some respondents reported reduced concentration, increased screen time, changes in sleeping schedules, social comparison and reduced family interaction. The findings indicate that social networking sites have both positive and negative influences on students' behaviour and daily lives.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Youth Behaviour, College Students, Social Media, Academic Behaviour, Peer Relationships and etc.

Introduction

The emergence of social networking sites has transformed the human relationships, nature and pattern of social interaction in contemporary society. The rapid expansion of smartphones, affordable internet connectivity and digital communication has made social networking an integral part of everyday life, particularly among young people. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Telegram are increasingly used for communication, entertainment, information sharing, education, expression of feelings and maintenance of social relationships. Youth constitute one of the most active categories of social networking users. College students are particularly significant because the college period represents an important stage of socialisation, identity formation, development of interpersonal relationships and preparation for adult life. During this period, peer groups, educational institutions, family relationships and emerging digital communities interact in shaping attitudes and behaviour. Social networking sites have created new opportunities for young people to communicate beyond

geographical and institutional boundaries. Students can maintain contact with friends and classmates, participate in online groups, exchange educational materials, follow current affairs and access career-related information. Social networking platforms can therefore contribute to social connectivity and access to knowledge. At the same time, intensive social networking use has generated concerns regarding its possible influence on youth behaviour. Excessive engagement may be associated with distraction from academic activities, increased screen time, changes in sleeping patterns and reduced face-to-face interaction. The continuous visibility of other people's activities may also create opportunities for social comparison and increased concern about peer opinions. The sociological importance of social networking therefore lies in its capacity to influence patterns of interaction, socialisation and identity formation. It does not operate exclusively as a positive or negative force. Its consequences may depend upon the purpose of use, duration of engagement, type of platform and individual circumstances.

Review of Literature

1. Putta, Kohir and Chavan (2022) examined the relationship between social networking site use and psychological well-being among 629 college students in Telangana. The study found that social media use was not significantly related to overall psychological well-being among all respondents. However, differences were observed across urban, rural and semi-urban youth, with SNS usage showing significant associations with specific aspects of well-being such as autonomy, personal growth, relationships and self-acceptance. The study highlights the importance of social and geographical context in understanding the effects of social networking on youth.
2. The ASER 2024 survey provides useful information about smartphone and social-media use among adolescents in rural Telangana. The findings showed that many adolescents aged 14–16 use smartphones for social networking and other online activities. However, a considerable number had limited knowledge of basic online safety practices, such as blocking or reporting unwanted users, keeping social-media profiles private and changing passwords. The findings suggest that although young people have increasing access to smartphones and social media, their digital literacy and awareness of online safety need further improvement.
3. Nagaraju et al. (2024) studied 406 management students in Andhra Pradesh to understand the relationship between social-media use, study habits and academic performance. The study found that social-media use affected students' study habits and was negatively related to their academic performance. It also showed that study habits played an important role in explaining how social-media use was related to students' academic performance.
4. Shreenath and Varghese (2025) studied social-media addiction among adolescents in Telangana and examined its relationship with family and peer relationships. The study found that social-media use was associated with adolescents' interactions with their parents and friends. It highlighted the role of family and peer relationships in understanding excessive social-media use among young people.
5. Kukudala and Ramana (2025) studied the role of social media in shaping adolescents in Telangana. The study focused on social interaction, mental well-being and cultural identity. The findings showed that social media helps adolescents communicate, connect with others and share information. However, excessive use may also affect mental well-being and influence social relationships and cultural values. The study highlights the importance of understanding social media as part of young people's social and cultural life.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the pattern and purpose of social media use among college students, including the platforms used and time spent on them.
2. To examine the influence of social media on students' academic, communication, family and peer relationships.
3. To understand the effects of social media on students' emotions, lifestyle, daily activities and overall behaviour.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and empirical research design to examine the impact of social networking sites on the behaviour of college students at New Science PG College, Warangal, Telangana. The descriptive component focuses on the patterns, purposes and duration of social networking use, while the empirical component examines its association with students' academic behaviour, communication, family and peer relationships, emotional responses, lifestyle and overall behaviour.

Sources of Data

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly from college students through a structured questionnaire. Secondary information was obtained from books, research articles, academic journals, reports and other relevant sources relating to social networking sites, youth and social behaviour.

Study Area and Sample Size

The study is confined to New Science PG College, Warangal, Telangana. The total sample size is 60 students (N=60), and the random sampling technique was adopted for the selection of respondents.

Data Collection and Analysis

The structured questionnaire covered socio-demographic characteristics, social networking platforms used, frequency and duration of use, purposes of use, academic behaviour, communication, family and peer relationships, emotional responses, lifestyle and daily routines. The collected data were classified, tabulated and analysed using frequency and percentage distributions. The Chi-square test was used, wherever appropriate, to examine the association between social networking use and selected behavioural variables. The hypotheses were tested at the 5 per cent level of significance.

Data Tabulation and Interpretation

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

S. No.	Variable	Category	Respondents	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	28	46.67
		Female	32	53.33
2	Age	20–23	18	30.00
		23–26	31	51.67
		26 and above	11	18.33
3	Residence	Rural	25	41.67
		Urban	35	58.33
Total			60	100.00

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that among the total number of 60 respondents, females constituted the larger proportion, accounting for 53.33%, while males represented 46.67%. With regard to age, the highest proportion of respondents (51.67%) belonged to the 23–26 years age group, followed by 30.00% in the 20–23 years group and 18.33% who were aged 26 years and above. In terms of residence, 58.33% of the respondents were from urban areas, whereas 41.67% were from rural areas. Thus, the respondents represented different gender, age and residential backgrounds.

Table 2: Social Networking Platforms Used by Respondents

S. No.	Platform	Respondents	Percentage
1	WhatsApp	57	95.00
2	Instagram	51	85.00
3	YouTube	49	81.67
4	Facebook	54	90.00
5	Telegram	21	35.00
6	X/Twitter	8	13.33

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that among the total number of 60 respondents, WhatsApp was the most widely used social networking platform, with 57 respondents (95.00%) reporting its use. This was followed by Facebook, used by 54 respondents (90.00%), Instagram by 51 respondents (85.00%), and YouTube by 49 respondents (81.67%). Telegram was used by 21 respondents (35.00%), while X/Twitter was used by only 8 respondents (13.33%). The findings indicate that respondents used multiple social networking platforms, with WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube being the most commonly used platforms.

Table 3: Daily Time Spent on Social Networking Sites

S. No.	Duration	Respondents	Percentage
1	Less than 1 hour	03	5.00
2	1–3 hours	08	13.33
3	3–5 hours	09	15.00
4	5–7 hours	33	55.00
5	More than 7 hours	07	11.67
Total		60	100.00

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that among the 60 respondents, 55.00% spent 5–7 hours per day on social networking sites, while 11.67% spent more than 7 hours. Thus, 66.67% of respondents spent at least five hours daily on social networking platforms. In contrast, only 18.33% spent less than three hours. This indicates a high level of social media engagement among the students. Such extensive use may influence the time available for studies, sleep, physical activities and face-to-face interaction. However, the impact depends on how students use these platforms and therefore requires further examination.

Table 4: Purpose of Using Social Networking Sites

S. No.	Purpose	Respondents	Percentage
1	Communication with friends	50	83.33
2	Entertainment	46	76.67
3	Educational information	28	46.67
4	Sharing photos/videos	57	95.00
5	News/current affairs	25	41.67
6	Career information	19	31.67
7	Others	7	11.67

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that sharing photos and videos was the most common purpose of social networking use, reported by 95.00% of respondents, followed by communication with friends (83.33%) and entertainment (76.67%). Educational information was reported by 46.67%, while 41.67% used social networking sites for news and current affairs. Career-related use was comparatively low at 31.67%. The findings suggest that students primarily use social networking sites for social interaction, content sharing and entertainment rather than academic and career-related purposes. This pattern indicates that although social media provides opportunities for learning and information access, recreational and interpersonal activities remain more prominent in students' usage.

Table 5: Influence on Communication Behaviour

S. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Improved communication with friends	25	41.67
2	Increased frequency of communication	18	30.00
3	No significant change	8	13.33
4	Reduced face-to-face communication	7	11.67
5	Increased communication difficulties	2	3.33
Total		60	100.00

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that among the 60 respondents, 41.67% reported improved communication with friends and 30.00% reported an increased frequency of communication. Together, these findings indicate that social networking sites facilitated communication for a considerable proportion of students. However, 11.67% reported reduced face-to-face communication, while 3.33% experienced increased communication difficulties. Another 13.33% reported no significant change. Overall, the findings suggest that social networking sites mainly supported communication among the respondents, particularly with friends, while a smaller proportion experienced reduced direct interaction or communication difficulties. The results therefore indicate both supportive and potentially limiting effects on students' communication behaviour.

Table 6: Influence on Academic Behaviour

S. No.	Impact	Respondents	Percentage
1	Improved access to educational information	22	36.67
2	Improved academic communication	12	20.00
3	No significant impact	10	16.67
4	Reduced concentration	9	15.00
5	Reduced study time	5	8.33
6	Increased procrastination	2	3.33
Total		60	100.00

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that among the 60 respondents, 36.67% reported improved access to educational information through social networking sites, while 20.00% experienced improved academic communication. This indicates that social media can provide useful educational resources and support academic interaction. However, 15.00% reported reduced concentration, 8.33% reported reduced study time, and 3.33% experienced increased procrastination. About 16.67% reported no significant impact. Overall, the findings indicate that social networking sites have both positive and negative effects on academic behaviour. Their usefulness for learning may be accompanied by distractions that can affect students' concentration, study time and academic routines.

7: Influence on Family and Peer Relationships

S. No.	Influence	Respondents	Percentage
1	Strengthened peer relationships	23	38.33
2	Expanded peer network	16	26.67
3	No significant change	9	15.00
4	Reduced family interaction	7	11.67
5	Increased interpersonal conflicts	5	8.33
Total		60	100.00

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that social networking sites had a relatively positive influence on peer relationships among the respondents. About 38.33% reported strengthened peer relationships, while 26.67% stated that social media helped expand their peer network. However, 15.00% reported no significant change in their relationships. On the negative side, 11.67% experienced reduced family interaction and 8.33% reported increased interpersonal conflicts. The findings suggest that social networking sites can facilitate peer connectivity and expand social networks, but greater dependence on online interaction may also affect family interaction and contribute to interpersonal conflicts among some students.

Table 8: Influence on Emotional and Behavioural Patterns

S. No.	Behavioural Change	Respondents	Percentage
1	Increased desire for social interaction	19	31.67
2	Greater concern about others' opinions	14	23.33

3	Increased social comparison	11	18.33
4	Anxiety when unable to access social media	6	10.00
5	No significant change	10	16.67
Total		60	100.00

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that among the 60 respondents, 31.67% reported an increased desire for social interaction, making it the most commonly observed behavioural change. This was followed by greater concern about others' opinions (23.33%) and increased social comparison (18.33%). About 10.00% experienced anxiety when unable to access social media, while 16.67% reported no significant change. The findings indicate that social networking sites influence students' emotional and behavioural patterns in different ways. While social media may encourage social interaction, it may also increase concern about social approval, comparison with others and, for some students, anxiety related to limited access.

Table 9: Influence on Lifestyle and Daily Routine

S. No.	Change	Respondents	Percentage
1	Increased screen time	27	45.00
2	Change in sleeping schedule	13	21.67
3	Reduced outdoor activities	8	13.33
4	No significant change	9	15.00
5	Other changes	3	5.00
Total		60	100.00

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that among the 60 respondents, 45.00% reported increased screen time as the major change in their lifestyle and daily routine. This was followed by changes in sleeping schedules, reported by 21.67% of respondents, while 13.33% experienced reduced outdoor activities. About 15.00% reported no significant change, and 5.00% experienced other changes. The findings indicate that social networking sites are associated with noticeable changes in students' daily routines, particularly increased screen exposure and altered sleeping patterns. Reduced outdoor activities among some respondents also suggest possible changes in physical and recreational habits. However, a proportion of students reported no significant change, indicating variation in individual experiences.

Table 10: Overall Perception of Social Networking Impact:

S. No.	Perception	Respondents	Percentage
1	Mainly positive	11	18.33
2	More positive than negative	21	35.00
3	Both positive and negative	19	31.67
4	More negative than positive	7	11.67
5	Mainly negative	2	3.33
Total		60	100.00

Source: Field data

From the above table, it can be noted that among the 60 respondents, 35.00% perceived the impact of social networking sites as more positive than negative, followed by 31.67% who reported both positive and negative effects. About 18.33% considered the impact mainly positive, while 11.67% perceived it as more negative than positive and 3.33% considered it mainly negative. Thus, 53.33% of respondents viewed the impact as positive to a greater extent, whereas 15.00% perceived it as negative to a greater extent. The findings suggest that students generally recognise the usefulness of social networking sites while also being aware of certain negative effects on their academic, emotional and daily-life activities.

Findings:

1. **Socio-demographic profile and social media use:** The findings show that female respondents constituted 53.33%, while males accounted for 46.67%. The largest age group was 23–26 years (51.67%), and 58.33% of respondents were from urban areas. This indicates that the study included respondents from different demographic backgrounds, with a slightly higher representation of females and urban students.
2. **Use of social networking platforms:** The findings indicate that WhatsApp was the most widely used platform (95.00%), followed by Facebook (90.00%), Instagram (85.00%) and YouTube (81.67%). Telegram (35.00%) and X/Twitter (13.33%) were less commonly used. This pattern suggests that students preferred platforms that support direct communication, multimedia content, social networking and entertainment.
3. **Time spent on social networking sites:** A major finding was that 55.00% of respondents spent 5–7 hours per day on social networking sites, while 11.67% spent more than seven hours. Thus, 66.67% spent at least five hours daily on these platforms. This indicates a high level of social networking engagement and suggests that these platforms occupy a substantial portion of students' daily time.
4. **Purpose of social networking use:** The findings show that sharing photos and videos was the most common purpose (95.00%), followed by communication with friends (83.33%) and entertainment (76.67%). Educational information was reported by 46.67%, while career information was reported by only 31.67%. This suggests that students mainly use social networking sites for social and recreational purposes, although these platforms also provide opportunities for educational and career-related information.
5. **Influence on communication behaviour:** The findings reveal that 41.67% of respondents reported improved communication with friends and 30.00% reported increased communication frequency. However, 11.67% experienced reduced face-to-face communication and 3.33% reported increased communication difficulties. The results therefore indicate that social networking can facilitate communication while also changing patterns of direct interpersonal interaction.
6. **Influence on academic behaviour:** The findings show that 36.67% of respondents experienced improved access to educational information and 20.00% reported improved academic communication. In contrast, 15.00% reported reduced concentration, 8.33% reduced study time and 3.33% increased procrastination. These findings indicate that social networking sites can support academic activities, but intensive use may also create distractions and interfere with students' study routines.
7. **Influence on family and peer relationships:** The findings indicate that 38.33% of respondents reported strengthened peer relationships and 26.67% reported an expanded peer network. However, 11.67% experienced reduced family interaction and 8.33% reported increased interpersonal conflicts.

This demonstrates that social networking can expand peer connections while potentially affecting family interaction and interpersonal relationships among some students.

8. **Influence on emotional and behavioural patterns:** The findings show that 31.67% of respondents experienced an increased desire for social interaction, while 23.33% reported greater concern about others' opinions and 18.33% reported increased social comparison. Further, 10.00% experienced anxiety when unable to access social media. These findings suggest that social networking may influence students' emotional responses, social expectations and perceptions of themselves in relation to others.
9. **Influence on lifestyle and daily routine:** The findings reveal that increased screen time was the most commonly reported change, affecting 45.00% of respondents. Changes in sleeping schedules were reported by 21.67%, while 13.33% reported reduced outdoor activities. These findings suggest that extensive social networking use may be associated with changes in students' time-use patterns, sleep routines and physical or recreational activities.
10. **Overall perception of social networking impact:** The findings show that 35.00% of respondents considered the impact of social networking sites more positive than negative, while 31.67% identified both positive and negative effects. About 18.33% perceived the impact as mainly positive, whereas 11.67% considered it more negative than positive and 3.33% mainly negative. This indicates that students recognise both the benefits and limitations of social networking rather than viewing its impact in a completely positive or negative manner.

Suggestions

1. **Promote balanced usage:** Students should be encouraged to maintain a reasonable daily limit on social networking use and avoid unnecessary or prolonged screen exposure.
2. **Encourage academic use:** Students should be guided to make greater use of social networking platforms for educational resources, academic communication, skill development and career information.
3. **Develop digital literacy:** Colleges should organise programmes on responsible social media use, online safety, privacy, misinformation, cyber bullying and appropriate digital behaviour.
4. **Improve time management:** Students should be encouraged to prepare daily schedules that provide adequate time for studies, social networking, sleep, physical activities and other responsibilities.
5. **Reduce academic distractions:** Students should avoid unnecessary social media use during study hours and use notification controls or designated study periods to improve concentration.
6. **Encourage healthy sleep habits:** Students should be made aware of the importance of maintaining regular sleeping schedules and avoiding prolonged social networking use, particularly before bedtime.
7. **Strengthen face-to-face interaction:** Colleges and families should encourage students to participate in direct social interaction, group discussions, cultural activities and other activities that develop interpersonal skills.
8. **Promote physical and outdoor activities:** Students should be encouraged to participate in sports, exercise and outdoor recreational activities to maintain a balanced lifestyle.
9. **Provide counselling and guidance:** Educational institutions can provide counselling or guidance programmes for students who experience excessive social media use, social comparison, anxiety or difficulties in controlling their usage.

10. **Encourage responsible social networking:** Students should be encouraged to critically evaluate online content, avoid unhealthy comparisons with others and use social networking platforms in a purposeful and constructive manner.
11. **Strengthen parental and institutional awareness:** Parents, teachers and college authorities should work together to create awareness about both the opportunities and potential challenges associated with excessive social networking use.

Conclusion:

Social networking sites have become an important part of the daily lives of college students at New Science PG College, Warangal, influencing their communication, academic behaviour, peer and family relationships, emotional patterns and lifestyle. The findings indicate a high level of engagement, with 66.67% of respondents spending five or more hours per day on social networking sites. Students mainly used these platforms for sharing photos and videos, communication with friends and entertainment, while educational and career-related use was comparatively lower. Social networking sites provided benefits such as improved communication, stronger peer relationships and better access to educational information. At the same time, some students experienced reduced concentration, reduced study time, changes in sleeping schedules, increased screen time, social comparison and reduced family or face-to-face interaction. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the impact of social networking sites is multidimensional, involving both positive and negative effects. The study therefore highlights the importance of balanced, responsible and purposeful use of social networking sites to support students' academic development, healthy relationships, emotional well-being and balanced daily routines.

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