

Virtual Connections, Real Impacts: A Sociological Study of Social Media Use Among Rural Youth in North Jaipur

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Abstract: *Social media has transformed communication, but its rise hinges on the internet. Without it, social media's vast influence, especially on youth, would be unimaginable. Young people are deeply engaged in platforms like Whatsapp, Youtube, Instagram and Facebook, shaping their thoughts and behaviors. The internet acts as the lifeline of social media, driving its growth and accessibility. However, excessive social media use impacts mental health, fostering addiction, anxiety, and self-esteem issues. While it offers information and opportunities, a balanced approach is crucial to prevent its negative effects and ensure it remains a tool for empowerment.*

Keywords: social media addiction, internet dependency, youth behavior, mental health, digital empowerment

1. Introduction

In today's digital era, social media has become a dominant tool for raising connections and communication. It allows people to interact with individuals across the globe effortlessly; breaking geographical barriers and making the world feel more interconnected. However, while it strengthens distant relationships, it often weakens personal bonds with those physically present. Many individuals find themselves engrossed in online conversations while neglecting meaningful face-to-face interactions with family and friends. Beyond altering social behavior, excessive social media use has also impacted cognitive abilities, with the youth being the most affected. The constant exposure to digital content, endless scrolling, and rapid information consumption have led to reduced attention spans and decreased critical thinking skills. Young minds, in particular, are vulnerable to the psychological effects of social media, as they are frequently subjected to unrealistic portrayals of life, virtual validation, and social comparison.

Moreover, the overuse of social media has contributed to increased anxiety, stress, and a dependency on online interactions for self-worth. Many young people experience pressure to maintain an idealized online presence, leading to feelings of inadequacy and mental exhaustion. The addictive nature of social media further intensifies these effects, making it difficult for users to disconnect and engage in real-world experiences. While social media offers numerous benefits, including easy access to information and global connectivity, its psychological impact on youth cannot be ignored. A conscious and balanced approach to social media usage is necessary to ensure it serves as a tool for growth rather than a source of mental strain.

A report published by *Yonster & Young* states that Indians collectively spent 1.1 lakh crore hours on smartphones in the year 2024. As a result, entertainment and gaming companies earned significant profits. According to the report, on average, every Indian spends about 5 hours per day on mobile screens. Of this time, 70% is spent on social media, gaming, and watching videos. In comparison, the

average screen time in the United States is 4.49 hours per day, while in Britain, it is 4.20 hours. The report also highlights that the valuation of the Indian media and entertainment industry stands at ₹2.5 lakh crore, with a projected increase to ₹3.1 lakh crore by 2027. Furthermore, the report states that India ranks third in smartphone usage worldwide, following Indonesia and Brazil.

(Article published in Dainik Bhaskar, Jaipur Edition, 30.03.2024)

According to the latest report, the internet is becoming a crime scene where a child is affected every 10 seconds. The report states that the internet is no longer just a source of information and entertainment—it has also become a hub for criminal activities. One of the most concerning aspects is that children are increasingly falling victim to these crimes. Last year, approximately 1 in every 12 children worldwide fell prey to online sexual harassment. The report highlights various forms of online exploitation, including:

- **12.7%** involving the sharing of photographs without consent, taking unauthorized photographs, and displaying them.
- **3.5%** involving sexual extortion.
- **12.5%** involving online sexual seduction.
- **4.7%** involving online extortion.

This disturbing trend is a global phenomenon. (Article Published on Rajasthan Patrika, Jaipur Edition 2024)

According to a 2021 report by Jagmeet Singh, "The fake WhatsApp version for iPhone could be used by hackers to gain details of individuals through a specially crafted configuration file." A fake version of WhatsApp allowed hackers to gather information about targeted users by tricking them into installing certain configuration files on their iPhones. After the installation of the fake application, the hackers could easily obtain users' information, including—but not limited to—the Unique Device Identifier (UDID) and the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI). WhatsApp was exploited by spyware developed by

Israel's NSO Group, which enabled entities to target journalists and human rights activists in various global regions, including India.

A website with the domain config5-dati[.]com was discovered, which was tricking visitors into installing a fake app that was, in reality, a specially crafted configuration file for the iPhone, Motherboard reported. The fake app appeared to be designed to collect information about the victims and transmit it back to the hackers.

In his 2023 study titled "Psychological Impact of Social Media on Rural Youth: A Study," Dr. Krishan Kumar concluded that the increasing use of social media among today's youth is leading to various psychological effects.

The study found that young people are predominantly engaged with social media applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter, which often results in social isolation, sleep deprivation, depression, irritability, anxiety, worry, behavioral changes, and a heightened focus on likes and comments. These psychological effects significantly impact their daily lives.

2. Research Objectives

1) Hypothesis

- Social media usage does not significantly impact the mental well-being of rural youth of North Jaipur.
- Social media has become an essential part of daily life for rural youth of North Jaipur.

2) Research Field:

a) Tehsil viratnagar(gaon)

Villages: Luhakana khurd, Luhakana kalan, Bhabru, Jawanpura, Dholi kothi, Beelwari, Navrangpura, Chhintoli, Surajpura, Bahadurpura, Antela, Bagawas, Jaisinghpura, Maid, Bagawas Ahiran, Gaskaan, Sitapur, Chatarpura, Kishanpura, Tanda, Barodiya, Paaladi, Khatolai, Papra, Sewra, Kukdela

b) Shahpura tehsil

Villages: Chhapuda khurd, Chhapuda kalan, Khori, Devan, Kant, Khora, Saatwas, Chimanpura, Sahiwad, Jaje kala, Jaje khurd, Manoharpur, Gadwari, Nithara, Rajpura, Triveni, Devipura

c) PAOTA tehsil

Villages: Panditpura, Bhonawas, Tulsipura, Bhankari, Manda, Rampura, Bawdi, Lada ka bas, Kiradod, Badnagar, Torda

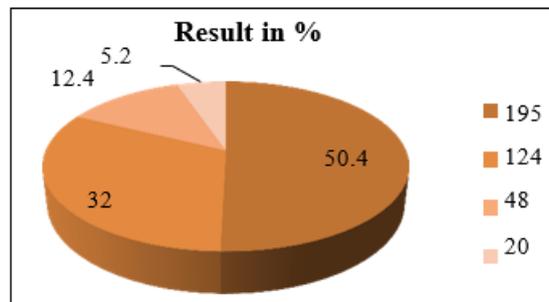
d) Kotputli tehsil

Villages: Kalyanpura, Maanjukot, Pathredi, Sundarpura, Saangteda, Kuhada, Lalaana, Rajnota, Amarpura

Looking to the increasing habit in almost every age group, there is no restriction of age group while making the survey

Q.1 How has social media usage influenced your daily life in the rural community?

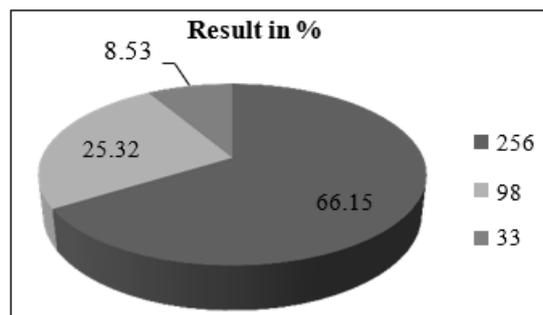
| Option | No. | % |
|---------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Awareness contribution | 195 | 50.4 |
| Education and opportunity enhancement | 124 | 32 |
| Affected productive time | 48 | 12.4 |
| Feeling unwell | 20 | 5.2 |



Conclusion: "Based on the analysis of the obtained data regarding the use of social media in daily life by the rural population, 50.4% of participants believe that their level of awareness has increased, while 32% of participants believe that it has helped them in education and opportunity enhancement. However, 12.4% of participants think that the use of social media has affected their productive time, and 5.2% of participants feel unwell due to the routine use of social media. Therefore, it is concluded that the benefits of social media in daily life cannot be neglected."

Q.2 Do you feel that social media has played a role in shaping your personal identity and self-expression in the rural context?

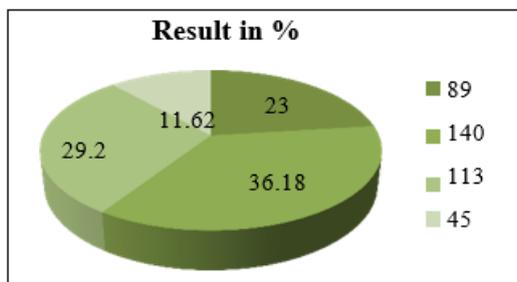
| Option | No. | % |
|-----------|-----|-------|
| Yes | 256 | 66.15 |
| No | 98 | 25.32 |
| Any other | 33 | 8.53 |



Conclusion: The data revealed that 66.15% of participants agreed that social media played a key role in shaping their personal identity and self-expression, while 25.32% did not agree with this view. Additionally, 8.53% of participants did not respond to the question. Based on the data, it is concluded that the majority of the rural population believes that social media plays a key role in developing personal identity within society.

Q.3 How frequently do you use social media platforms?

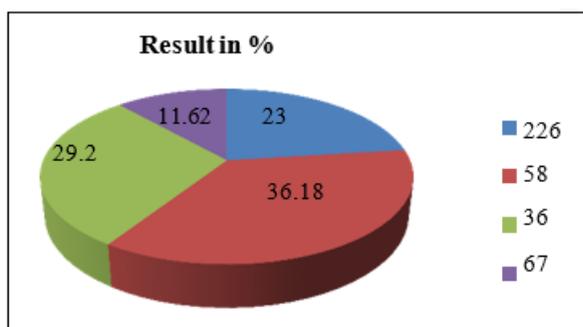
| Option | No. | % |
|---------------------|-----|-------|
| > 4 times in a hour | 89 | 23.00 |
| Hourly | 140 | 36.18 |
| Six hourly | 113 | 29.20 |
| Twelve hourly | 45 | 11.62 |



Conclusion: The obtained data indicates that 23% of participants, on average, engaged with social media four times per hour as part of their daily routine. Additionally, 36.18% of participants reported using social media applications once per hour. Meanwhile, 29.2% and 11.6% of participants stated that they used social media every six hours and twelve hours, respectively. Based on the data, it can be concluded that almost everyone is engaged with social media in some form. However, the findings also reveal that the majority of the rural population actively participates in social media activities, which, in turn, has an undeniable impact on their productivity to varying degrees.

Q.4 Which social media platform do you use the most?

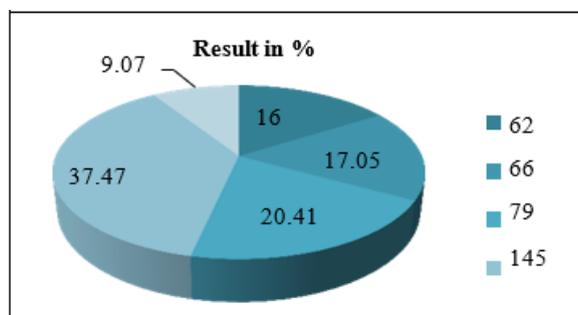
| Option | No. | % |
|-----------|-----|-------|
| You Tube | 226 | 58.39 |
| Whatsapp | 58 | 14.99 |
| Facebook | 36 | 9.30 |
| Instagram | 67 | 11.62 |



Conclusion: The obtained data indicates that 58.9%, 14.99%, 9.30%, and 11.62% of participants were primarily engaged with YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram applications, respectively, in rural areas. This suggests that most rural people are particularly interested in YouTube, possibly due to its content related to enhancing technical knowledge in agriculture, academic education, or entertainment. The data also reveals that the rural population is still not fully aware of the features offered by WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram applications.

Q.5 What is your primary reason for using Social Media?

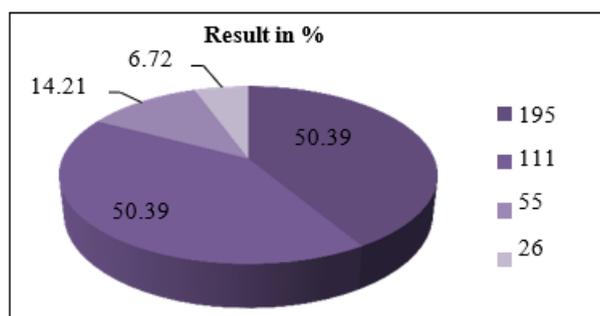
| Option | No. | % |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Connected with friends | 62 | 16 |
| Connected with family | 66 | 17.05 |
| Entertainment | 79 | 20.41 |
| News updates | 145 | 37.47 |
| Professional Network | 35 | 9.07 |



Conclusion: From the above data and graph we can say that 20.41% were using social media for the purpose of Entertainment and 37.47% participants were using social media for News updates. Also 9.07% participants were engaged themselves for their professional enhancements. However, the percentage of 16 and 17 are very less in which they used the social media for stay connected with either their friends circle or family circle.

Q.6 How many hours per day do you spend on social media on average?

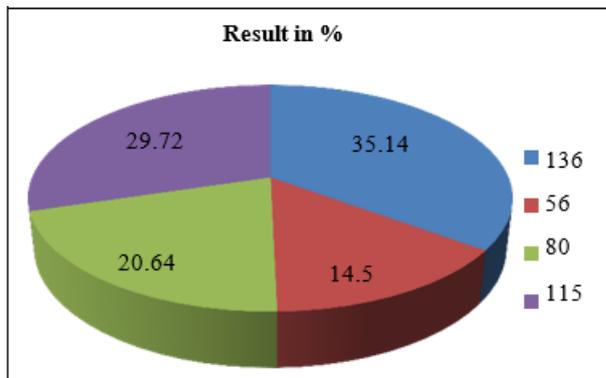
| Option | No. | % |
|------------|-----|--------|
| < 2 hours | 195 | 50.39% |
| < 4 hours | 111 | 28.68% |
| < 6 hours | 55 | 14.21% |
| < 10 hours | 26 | 6.72% |



Conclusion: From the above data and graph we can state that 50.39% participants between 2-4 hours busy on Social Media, 28.68% participants used up to 4-6 hours Social Media in a day, while 14.21% and 6.72% participants used 6-10 hours and more than 10 hours respectively busy on social media in a single day. Based on the data it is concluded that rural youths are almost engaged in social media irrespective of hours.

Q.7 Have you ever experienced negative emotions i.e.

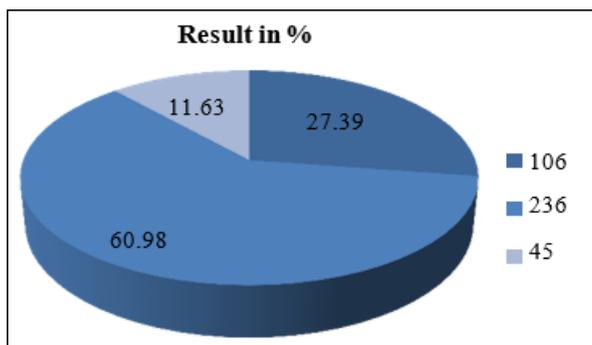
| Option | No. | % |
|--------------|-----|--------|
| Anxiety | 136 | 35.14% |
| Jealousy | 56 | 14.50% |
| Loneliness | 80 | 20.64% |
| All of these | 115 | 29.72% |



Conclusion: According to the available data almost all the participants suffering from negative impact or side effects of social media irrespective of its percentage. The Percentage of Anxiety was 35.14% is higher amongst all the other reasons. Meanwhile, 14.5% of participants exhibited feelings of jealousy, and 20.64% of participants experienced loneliness. Further, 29.72% the second highest result of the questions clearly speaks those continuous uses of social media facing all the negative emotions in their routine life.

Q.8 How often do you post content on social media?

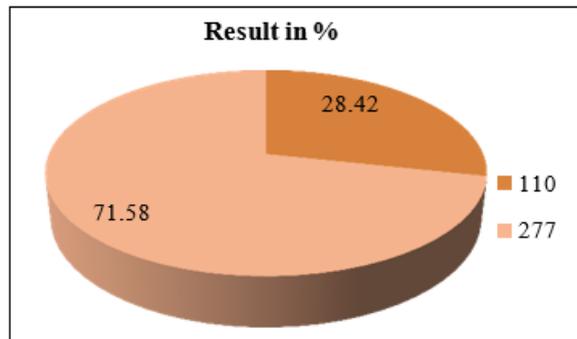
| Option | No. | % |
|----------------|-----|-------|
| Photos | 106 | 27.39 |
| Status Updates | 236 | 60.98 |
| Videos | 45 | 11.63 |



Conclusion: As per the available data and graph we can say that 60.98 percentage participants are interested on Updates their Status. While 27.39 percentage participants are showing their interest on updates photos and 11.63% participants were upload videos on Social Media Platforms.

Q.9 Have you ever felt pressured to present a certain image of yourself on social media?

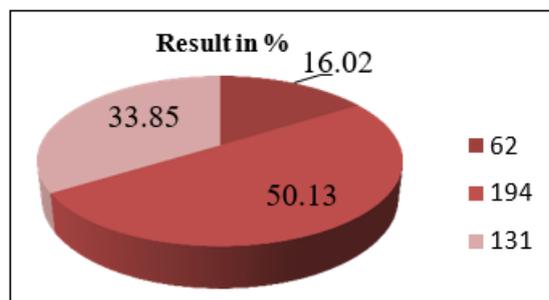
| Option | No. | % |
|--------|-----|-------|
| Yes | 110 | 28.42 |
| No | 277 | 71.58 |



Conclusion: The outcomes of the survey clearly indicate that 71.58% of participants do not feel pressured to develop a particular personality or status on social media. However, 28.42% of participants actively seek to build their personality using social media. The results came from rural area might be different if the survey done in the urban area. The same has been viewed in the various articles published on daily newspaper time to time, and it was published many negative impact of users.

Q.10 How do you feel about the privacy of your personal information on social media platforms?

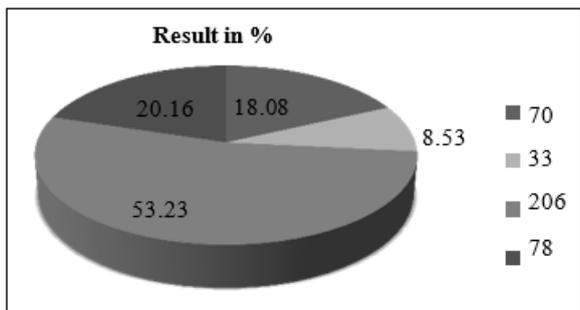
| Option | No. | % |
|-------------|-----|-------|
| 100% Secure | 62 | 16.02 |
| 50% Secure | 194 | 50.13 |
| Not Secure | 131 | 33.85 |



Conclusion: Based on the available data it is clearly states that sharing of personal information in Social Media is Not Secure. 50.13% believed that the information uploaded into social media is 50% secure and 33.85% participants believed that information is not secured on social media. While 16.02% participants still believed that the information shared on Social Media by them has secured. It might be one of the reasons behind it that their privacy system may be more protective.

Q.11 Have you ever taken a break from social media? States the reason?

| Option | No. | % |
|-------------------|-----|-------|
| Irritation | 70 | 18.08 |
| Jealousy | 33 | 8.53 |
| Shortness of Time | 206 | 53.23 |
| All of them | 78 | 20.16 |

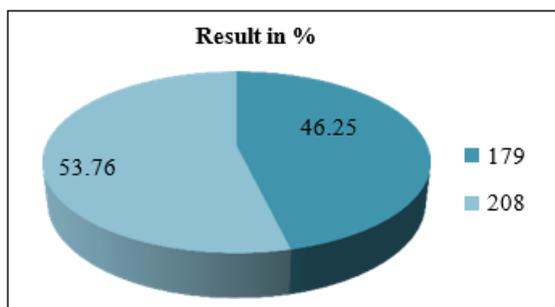


Conclusion: Based on the available data, it is quite clear that the participants no longer wished to continue engaging in the same activities and needed a break in some form. It is human nature to not remain engaged in the same activity for too long and to need a break at some point. The results clearly indicate that participants took a break from social media for various reasons, including irritation (18.08%), jealousy (8.53%), and lack of time (53.23%).

Among these factors, the highest percentage (53.23%) indicated that participants were willing to give up social media activities when they had important tasks to handle. Additionally, 20.16% of participants reported experiencing all three negative factors and subsequently reduced their involvement with social media.

Q.12 Do you trust the information you see on social media?

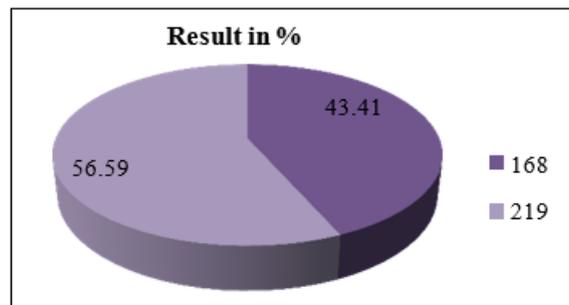
| Option | No. | % |
|--------|-----|-------|
| Yes | 179 | 46.25 |
| No | 208 | 53.76 |



Conclusion: Based on the obtained data, it is evident that 53.76% of participants believed that the information shared on social media is not trustworthy, while 46.25% of participants thought that the information available on social media is accurate. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the obtained results, as they reflect a mixed outcome, both positive and negative.

Q.13 Have you ever encountered cyber bullying or harassment on social media?

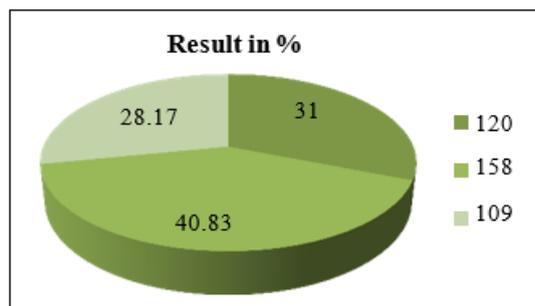
| Option | No. | % |
|--------|-----|-------|
| Yes | 168 | 43.41 |
| No | 219 | 56.59 |



Conclusion: With the increasing use of social media, threats and cyberbullying have become significant challenges faced by users in the current scenario. The results also revealed that 43.41% of participants had encountered cyberbullying or harassment on social media. However, 56.59% of participants, who were either consistently alert or fully aware of the technical aspects and challenges of social media, reported not experiencing any negative impacts from its use.

Q.14 Overall, do you consider social media to have a positive or negative influence on the lives of rural youth?

| Option | No. | % |
|----------|-----|-------|
| Positive | 120 | 31 |
| Negative | 158 | 40.83 |
| Neutral | 109 | 28.17 |

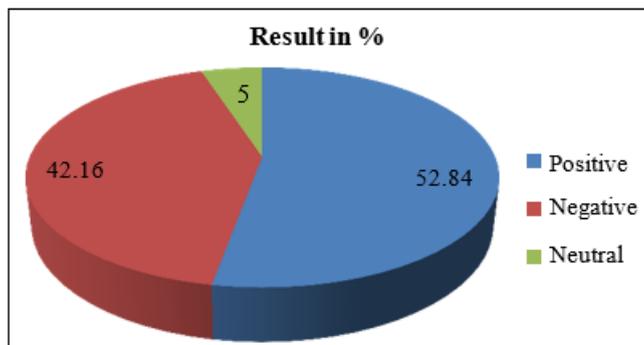


Conclusion: Finally, the overall survey conducted to examine the impact of social media on the lives of rural youth revealed the following findings: 31% of participants believed that social media has a positive impact on the routine lives of rural youth, while 40.83% of participants believed that social media has a negative impact on their natural lives. Additionally, 28.17% of participants acknowledged both positive and negative effects, indicating a mixed impact on their daily lives from the use of social media.

Final Conclusion:

Based on all the available results, the aggregated findings indicate that the impact of social media is positive at a level of 54.84%, negative at 42.16%, and neutral at 5%.

| Result | Participants | % |
|----------|--------------|-------|
| Positive | 2863 | 52.84 |
| Negative | 2284 | 42.16 |
| Neutral | 271 | 5 |



Declaration

Financial Support

No, financial support has been received.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest to the best of our knowledge

Ethical Approval

No, the article does not require ethical approval

Consent to Participate

Yes, it has been taken

Availability of Data and Material

Not relevant

Authors Contributions

Dr. Lopamudra Das, Guide

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