

Impact of Social Media on the Mental Health of University Students: Selected Cases from West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an integral part of daily life, especially among university students. While it provides opportunities for communication, information sharing, and educational engagement, extensive use may also influence student's mental health and well-being. The present study examines the impact of social media usage on the mental health of university students in the selected areas of West Bengal. The research is based on primary data collected from universities students through questionnaires and interviews. The study explores the patterns of social media usages, preferred platforms, time spent online and psychological effects associated with prolonged exposure. Findings reveal that most students frequently use social media platforms such as face book, Instagram, and you tubes mainly through mobile phones for communication, entertainment, and educational purposes. However, prolonged use of social media for more than three to four hours daily tends to increases the risk of addiction, distraction from academic activities and mental stress among students. At the same time, moderate use of social media also provides positive outcomes such as information access, connectivity and motivation. The study highlights that there is a significant relationship between the duration of social media is essential to minimize negative psychological impacts and promote the well- being of university students.

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Mental Health, Psychological Impact, Social Networking, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the internet has experienced significant expansion, and simultaneously, social media platforms have emerged as leaders in widespread communication. Social media are a form of electronic communication through which user can interact with an individual or a group of people to share or create information, knowledge, ideas, and views on different subjects as well as different types of contents (like audio, video etc). Some examples of social media are Face book, Twitter, Instagram, MySpace, Snap chat, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+, Tumbler, Vine, and Reedit etc. Currently, social media platforms are regarded as essential for enhancing one's educational and professional skills, as they eliminate restrictions imposed by time and distance, and enable individuals to connect with a diverse community to exchange information and share common interests. These websites and social

forums are way of communicating directly with other people socially. Hence, Social media has the potentials of influencing decision-making in a very short time regardless of the distance. As social beings, humans need the company of others to advance in life. Establishing social connections can alleviate stress, anxiety, and depression, increase self-esteem, offer happiness and feelings of isolation. From past two decades social media has experienced a significant growth in terms of quantity, quality, and usefulness. In exploring timeline of social media growth today's world, technology has made it easier to access various forms of information, creating a forum for dialogue between social media and mental health in the present era. Since the advent of the internet and social networking sites, people in the modern era have become more socially active virtually but less so in real life. The digital world is

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causing people in the present day to become disconnected from others, leading to adverse impacts on their mental and physical well-being, as well as overall equilibrium. The rising use of social media among adults in the current era is causing anxiety for parents, society, and researchers alike, as every innovation has both beneficial and detrimental aspects. The youth of today are highly engaged with social media and this has a direct correlation with mental health issues. Numerous research studies have demonstrated a connection between excessive social media use and negative emotional well-being. It has been observed that the impact of social media on individuals can vary widely.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The main purpose of this research is to expand on previous research, explore the relationship between the effects of social networking and students study efficiency and to determine if social media interfering with students' academic lives. Social media offers young people several benefits and opportunities, including access to information, extended social networks, social skill practice, identity expression, informal learning opportunities, interest based groups, development and maintenance of friendships, and fun but the problem is the youth today are addicted to social networking sites they are wasting a lot of time in front of these sites and moreover, they are not able to handle their sites properly. Therefore, the objective is to examine how social networking platforms affect young people and identify the social media platforms that are most popular and have impact among them.

RATIONALY OF THE STUDY:

Because of the issues, social media has been one of the hot topics for the last few years. No matter from which profession a person belongs everyone is trapped in social media. Not even concerning how this media is affecting their health physically or mentally. That's why this study is helpful for everyone to understand this phenomenon and everyone can get awareness from this study. Though this study is focused on the micro-level, the findings may be helpful to social service providers in upgrading service availability and laws surrounding social network outlets.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the main purpose of usage of social media among the youth.
- To examine the factors of social media addiction among young people.
- To compare the status of mental health of students (University based).

- To analyze the amount of time students spend on social media daily.
- To identify the most commonly used social media platforms among universities students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What are the purposes for which they use social media?
- What are the threats that come with use of social media among the youths in these two universities in West Bengal?
- To find out how much time do youth spend on the social networking?
- What is the impact of internet and social networking on the adolescent's physical and mental health?
- What are the negative effects due to over utilization of social media on the physical and mental health of selected youth?

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

Case 1 Ho: Daily usage of social media and student mental health issues are not interrelated.

H1: Daily usage of social media and student mental health issues is interrelated

Case 2 Ho: The amount of time spent on social media has no significant effect on mental health of university student.

H1: The amount of time spent on social media has a significant effect on mental health of university students.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES:

Valkenburg (2021), have discussed on the state of the literature on the consequences of online communication technologies for adolescents' social connectedness. Authors have observed that, adolescents were giving more time on their social media than adults. Through this author have first explain the reasons of diverge of recent studies from past studies.

Wanajak (2011) has differentiated between normal daily social media Internet use behaviors and addictive behaviors. Author has also highlighted the impact of that behavior that may signify maladaptive use. The main aim of this study was to generate a consensus definitions and diagnostic criteria of Internet addiction from literature. The author has identified the prevalence of internet addiction among secondary school students aged from 11 to 19 years old. Author has also highlighted the potential intervention strategies which help to minimize harm of internet addiction. It was also observed that,

internet addiction was directly correlated with the amount of time spent on social media and Internet per week.

Ahn (2011), in his “The Effect of Social Network sites on Adolescents” Social and Academic Development- He outlined the theoretical frameworks researcher have used to understand adolescents. This research spoke to high profile concerns range from youth privacy, safety, social development and academic performance.

Arora (2014) presented the paper ‘social networking- A study of Indian youth’ to study the impact of social networking on the future of our country and percentage analysis was applied to analyze data. The study concludes that students have access social networking sites all the time through smart phones and tablets. The realization by the young people of it being addictive, harmful to physical and mental health can be considered as positive sign.

Bashir (2015) found both positive and negative effect of social media on mental health of adolescents, in which positive aspects were social support, social connectedness, general awareness. While negative effect includes depression, stress, fatigue, online harassment, cyber bullying etc.

Roy (2015), ‘Impact of Social Media Social Networks on Education and life of Undergraduate level students of Karim Ganj town- A survey’ discussed the positive and Negative impact of social networks on Education of undergraduate level students as well as on their life, depending on one’s interest to use it in a positive manner for his/her education and vice-versa.

STUDY AREA:

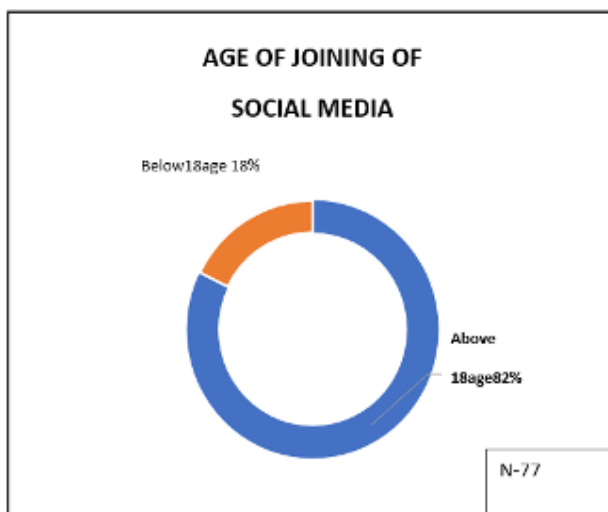
The study area has been kept within two university situated in two districts of west Bengal, Diamond Harbour women’s university and Bankura university which is situated in the Diamond harbour block no II, district of South 24 pargana and Bankura block no II, district of Bankura respectively.

METHODOLOGY:

Initially a detailed review of literature has been done and develops negative correlates and relationship between academic performance and usage of social networking sites. The primary data has been collected through an exploratory research questionnaire with user of Social Networking Sites which was distributed among Undergraduate student and postgraduate student of Diamond harbor women’s university, South 24 pargana and Bankura University, Bankura in west Bengal. The research has been made use of survey method. If the population size is small or the size of the individual samples and their number are relatively small, random sampling provides the best results since all candidates have an equal chance of being chosen. The total number of respondents are 77 from two university namely Diamond Harbour Women’s University South 24 pargana and Bankura university Bankura District, West Bengal. From each University respectively, Diamond Harbour Women’s university sample size is 56 and Bankura University sample size is 21. The research has made use of survey method. Survey was conducted among randomly selected social networking sites users in students between age group of 20 to 25 years who were university students. The age group 20-25 years was chosen since they are the heavy users of social networking sites and also early adopters of advanced technological applications.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

1. JOINING OF SOCIAL MEDIA: According to the findings, the graph illustrates that the majority (82%) of students join in above 18 age and rest (18%) join less than 18 age.



(Source: Primary Survey, 2025)

2. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM PREFERENCE :

Table1.2: Purpose of social media usage by the respondents

Social networking sites use	Response(Frequency)	Percentage
Face book	29	36.71
WhatsApp	15	18.99
Instagram	12	15.19
YouTube	7	8.86
Twitter	7	8.86
Other	9	11.39
Total	79	100

(Source: Primary Survey, 2025)

JOINING OF SOCIAL MEDIA: The doughnut diagram provided (Figure 1.2) depicts information about since when they join in social media of respondent of 77 individuals. According to the findings, the graph illustrates that the majority (82%) of students join in above 18 age and rest (18%) join less than 18 ages.

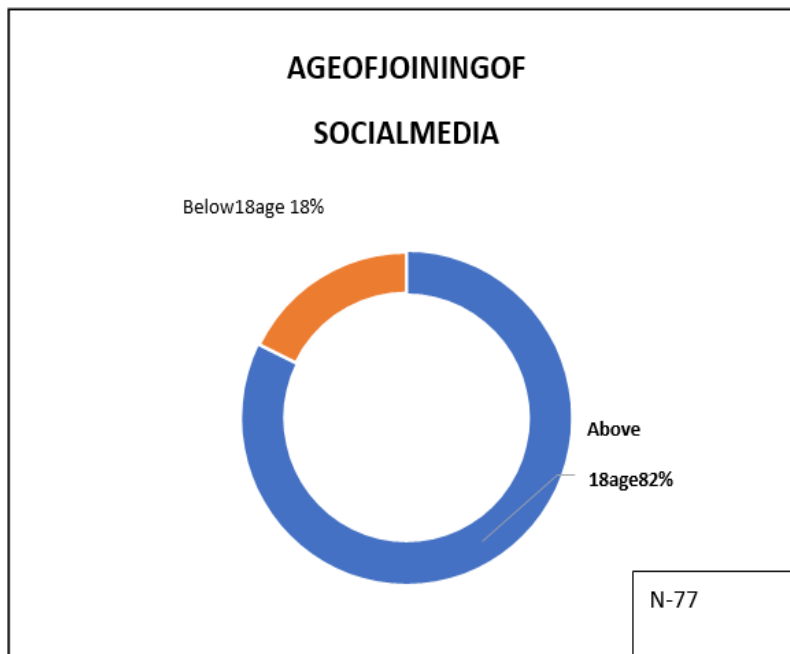


Figure:1. 2. Showing the age of social media joining of the respondents (Source: Primary Survey, 2025)

3. DOMINANT PLACE OF INTERNET USAGE: It is clear from above table that most frequencies are educational institute and home with 26.58% and 25.31% last two response are more or less same 24.05%.

Table1.3: Place of usage of internet by the respondents

Where do you use most	Response(frequency)	Percentage
Home	20	25.32
Educational institute	21	26.58
Café	19	24.05
During commutation	19	24.05
Total	79	100

(Source: primary survey, 2025)

4. REGULARITY IN POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Table 1.4: Posting made on social media by the respondents

Do you regularly post on social media	Response(frequency)	Percentage
No	54	68.35
Yes	25	31.65
Total	79	100

(Source: Primary survey, 2025)

5. BALACING FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES WITH SOCIAL MEDIA INVOLVEMENT:

Table 1.5: Ignoring a responsibilities like homework or chores because of social networking sites by the respondents

Have you ever ignored family responsibility because of social networking sites	Response (frequency)	Percentage
No	40	50.64
Yes	39	49.36
Total	79	100

(Source - Primary survey, 2025)

6. ONLINE ACTIVITIES:

Table 1.6: Preferred online activities of the respondents

What do you like doing the most online	Response(frequency)	Percentage
Social networking	16	20.51
Shopping/Banking	21	26.92
Web browsing	18	23.08
Education	14	17.95
Watch YouTube shorts	9	11.54
Total	78	100

(Source- Primary survey, 2025)

7. REASON BEHIND SPENDING TIME ON SOCIAL NETWORK:

Table 1.7.: Causes behind spending time on social network by the respondents

Reason why you spend time on social network	Response(frequency)	Percentage
Share your experience	15	18.99
Entertain yourself	13	16.46
Find some information	38	48.10
Stay up-to-date with friend's life	13	16.46
Total	79	100

(Source- Primary survey, 2025)

8. DISRUPTION OF DAILY ROUTINE DUE TO SOCIAL NETWORKING ADDICTION:

Table 1.8: Admitted addiction to social networking sites by the residents

Do you ever stay up late or get up early to spend more time on social networking sites	Response(frequency)	Percentage
Yes	33	41.77
No	46	58.23
Total	79	100

(Source- Primary survey, 2025)

9. DAILY USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

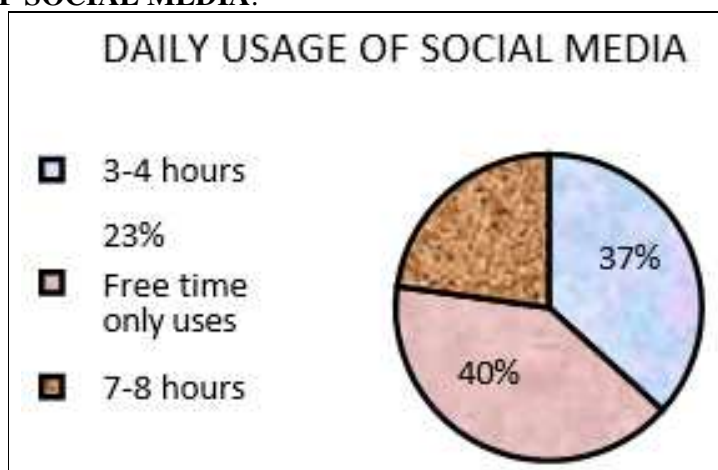


Figure 1.9 Showing the percentage of daily usage of social media by the respondents indirectly (Source: Primary Survey, 2025)

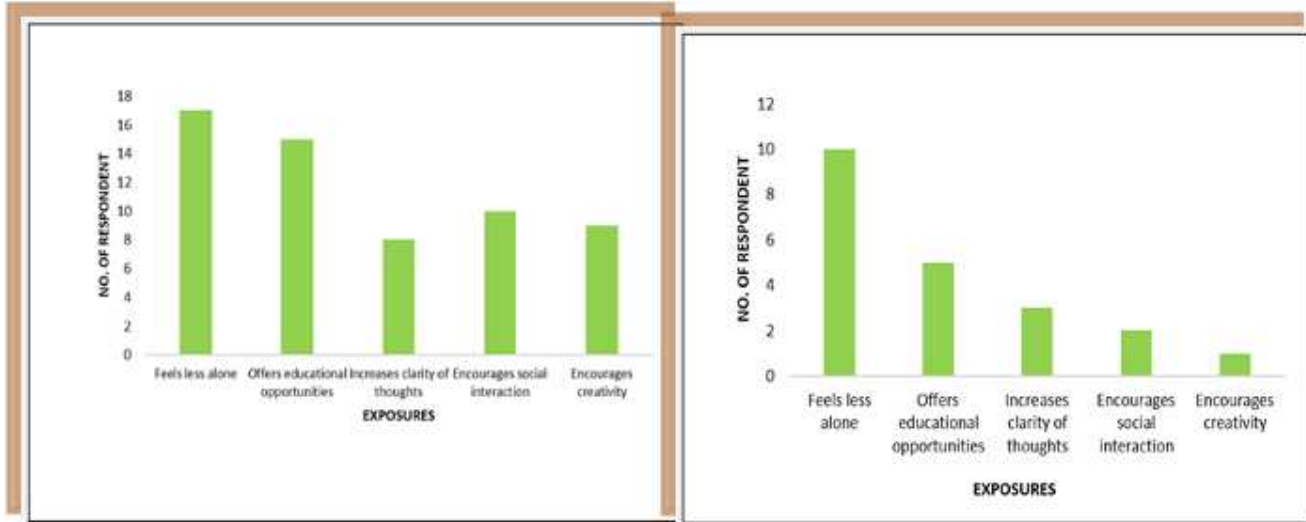
10. MAIN POSITIVES OF SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSURE:**DIAMOND HARBOUR WOMENS UNIVERSITY BANKURA UNIVERSITY**

Figure 1.10 (a) and (b) Showing the comparison between two universities regarding main positives of social media exposure (Source: Primary Survey, 2025)

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- All of the respondents mentioned Face book as their preferred social media platform, while Instagram and YouTube were also favorite equally among students and very few respondents mentioned that they use Twitter.
- Most of the respondents mentioned that they use mobile phones for accessing to social media while only a few students use Laptop and a minority of student uses Desktop.
- Most of the youth gave their view that they use social media for Communication and Educational Purposes while only a few students mentioned that they use it for Entertainment and Marketing purpose
- Majority of the students mentioned that they used social media for 3-4 hours and as a result it leads to tendency of higher addiction among them, while only a few mentioned that they used it for more than 4+ hours and the rest of the students mentioned they used it for 1-2 hours or less than that and doesn't face any addiction.
- Here, majority of the students mentioned that they view social media as a healthy inspiration which includes all the usefulness and positive factors of it whereas the rest of the students mentioned it as health hazard as prolonged exposure to social media have caused addiction among them and might have caused some physical or mental health problems.
- Most of the students also mentioned that social media causes problems in their life or with their loved ones and once one gets into some kind of problem it becomes difficult for them to come out of those whereas many other also mentioned that they use social media in a way to avoid their daily activities such as homework or household chores or any other activities.
- Half of the students gave their view by agreeing in favors that there is a correlation between social media t1se and mental health by saying that as a stt1dent remains more active or uses more hours on social media it ultimately leads to more addiction among them and causes several problems related to physical and mental health. Thus, increase hours of usage on social media is directly correlated with mental health.
- A few students mentioned that they faced problems on social media which includes various kinds of bullying and the impacts of bullying which they experienced include: Affects mental health, difficult in study, embalTassed and depressed.
- Majority of the students mentioned the negative effects of social media exposure as: Lack of sleep, lack of concentration, decreasing face-to-face communication, lack of emotional connect, reduces family closeness, may jeopardize safety etc. While the positive effects of social media were: encourages social interaction, feels less alone, increases clarity of thoughts, offers educational opportunities, encourages creativity etc.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The observation of the study makes it considered and convenient to propose some suggestions and policies.

- There should be regulation on the use of social media by students.
- Parents of the students should have a check on their children's activities on their mobile phones and they should make sure that they are using it for useful purpose.
- There should be an awareness program for the students related to social media usage in educational institutions.
- There should be laws restricting what content they should access through social media for the better development of students.
- The students should be mindful of their emotional and mental state when using social media, and take breaks when needed.
- There are plenty of ways to build meaningful connections without relying on social media.
- Avoid falling into the Negativity trap a related tendency that youth and students are especially susceptible to involves falling into a cycle of negativity that continually reinforces itself. Those with low self-esteem may find themselves posting only negative material, which often puts them in a negative feedback loop.
- Disable social media notifications in your phones setting to reduce constant reminders and check the apps less frequently.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

- The study is limited only college students in two districts of West Bengal-South 24 parganas and Bankura.
- The study is conducted only in Diamond Harbour women's university and Bankura University. So, this study can't suitable to other paces.
- The perspectives and opinions of the participant may be relevant now, but they could potentially change in the future.

- The study is limited to time constraints.
- Insufficient expertise to enhance the quality & quantity of the survey tasks.

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