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A study on the impact of social media on the academic, social, and psychological development of students

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Abstract

In the digital era, social media has become an integral part of students' daily lives, influencing not only their academic performance but also their social and psychological development. Students increasingly rely on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp for communication, learning support, and entertainment. While social media provides opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and self-expression, excessive use can lead to distraction from studies, reduced concentration, and poor academic outcomes.

Socially and psychologically, social media plays a dual role in shaping students' personalities and behavior. It helps students stay connected, build confidence, and develop communication skills. However, overuse may result in anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, sleep disturbance, and social comparison. This study aims to examine both the positive and negative impacts of social media on students, highlighting the need for balanced and mindful usage to ensure healthy academic, social, and psychological growth.

Keywords: Social Media, Academic Performance, Psychological Development, Student Behavior, Digital Communication.

Introduction

In today's digital age, social media has become an important part of students' daily lives. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp are widely used for communication, entertainment, and even learning. Because of this, social media now plays a significant role in influencing students' academic performance as well as their social and psychological development. Social media provides educational benefits, including easy access to information, online discussions, and opportunities for collaborative learning. However, excessive use can distract students from their studies and reduce concentration. It also affects social and psychological well-being by shaping communication patterns, self-esteem, and emotional health. Therefore, it is important to study both the positive and negative impacts of social media on students to promote balanced and healthy usage.

Social media also has a strong influence on students' social development. It helps them stay connected with friends and family, build new relationships, and improve communication skills. Online platforms provide opportunities for self-expression and participation in social discussions. At the same time, overdependence on virtual communication may reduce face-to-face interaction skills and lead to social isolation in real life. Psychologically, social media affects students in many ways. Positive feedback, appreciation, and online support can boost confidence and self-esteem. On the other hand, constant comparison with others, cyberbullying, and the pressure to maintain an online image can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and low self-worth. Sleep disturbance and reduced physical activity are also common issues linked with excessive social media usage. Therefore, it is important to study the overall impact of social media on students in a balanced manner. Understanding both the positive and negative effects will help educators, parents, and students themselves to develop healthy digital habits. This study aims to explore how social media influences students' academic performance, social behavior, and psychological well-being, and to suggest ways for its responsible and mindful use.

Statement of the Problem

In the present digital era, social media has become deeply integrated into students' daily routines, influencing how they learn, communicate, and spend their free time.

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Students are increasingly dependent on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook for academic information, social interaction, and entertainment. Although social media provides opportunities for knowledge sharing, peer learning, and staying socially connected, its excessive and uncontrolled use has created growing concerns regarding students' academic focus, social behavior, and psychological well-being. Many students experience reduced concentration, poor time management, and declining academic performance due to prolonged time spent online.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the impact of social media on students' academic performance.
2. To examine how social media influences students' social behavior and communication skills.
3. To analyse the psychological effects of social media usage on students, such as stress, anxiety, and self-esteem.
4. To identify both the positive and negative aspects of social media in students' lives.
5. To suggest measures for balanced and responsible use of social media among students.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because social media has become a major part of students' everyday lives and is strongly influencing their academic, social, and psychological development. Understanding its impact will help students become aware of how their online habits affect their studies, behavior, and mental health. It will also guide them in developing balanced and responsible social media usage.

The study is equally useful for parents and teachers, as it highlights both the positive and negative effects of social media on students. By understanding these effects, they can better support students in using social media for learning while avoiding its harmful consequences. Furthermore, the findings of this study can help educational institutions and policymakers create awareness programs and guidelines to promote healthy digital behavior among students.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on understanding the impact of social media on the academic, social, and psychological development of students. It mainly examines how students use social media platforms for learning, communication, and entertainment, and how this usage influences their study habits, social interactions, and emotional well-being. The study considers both the positive and negative effects of social media to present a balanced view.

The scope of this research is limited to students and their social media usage patterns. It does not cover the impact of other forms of digital media, such as television or offline gaming. The study aims to provide general insights that can help students, parents, and educators promote healthy and responsible use of social media.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited only to students aged 18 to 21 years and does not include students from other age groups.
2. The data is mainly based on students' self-responses, which may not always be fully accurate.
3. The research focuses only on selected social media platforms, not all digital media sources.
4. Time and resource limitations may restrict detailed investigation.
5. The findings may not be applicable to all regions or student populations.

Review of Literature

Impact of Social Media on Students

The impact of social media on students has been widely examined by researchers across the world, particularly in relation to academic performance, social development, and psychological well-being.

Academic Impact of Social Media

Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) found that students who spent more time on social networking sites showed lower academic performance and spent less time studying compared to students who did not use social media. Their study highlighted how excessive social media use can interfere with academic responsibilities.

Junco (2012) reported that excessive use of Facebook was negatively related to students' grades. The study explained that distractions caused by social media and poor time management were the main reasons for reduced academic performance.

Tess (2013) stated that social networking platforms can be beneficial for education when used for academic purposes. According to the study, social media supports collaborative learning, improves communication, and increases student engagement.

Greenhow and Lewin (2016) observed that digital social tools help students share knowledge, participate in academic discussions, and build learning communities. Their findings suggest that structured use of social media can enhance academic development.

Social Development and Social Media

Valkenburg and Peter (2009) found that online communication can strengthen friendships and improve social connectedness among adolescents. The study also noted that social media provides opportunities for self-expression and identity formation.

Subrahmanyam and Šmahel (2011) warned that excessive online interaction may reduce face-to-face social skills. Their research suggested that overdependence on online communication can lead to social withdrawal.

Psychological Effects of Social Media

Kross et al. (2013) found that increased Facebook use was associated with declines in well-being and life satisfaction. The study indicated that frequent social media use may negatively affect users' emotional health.

Research Methodology

This study is based on a descriptive research design to examine the impact of social media on students' academic, social, and psychological

development. Both primary and secondary data are used, where primary data is collected from students through a questionnaire and secondary data is gathered from books, journals, and online sources. A sample survey method is adopted, and the collected data is analyzed using simple statistical tools like percentages and tables to identify patterns and draw conclusions.

- **Sources of Data**

The study uses both primary and secondary sources of data, where primary data is collected directly from students through structured questionnaires and surveys about their social media usage, academic performance, social interactions, and psychological well-being, while secondary data is gathered from books, journals,

research articles, and reliable online sources related to social media and its impact on students.

- **Sample Size**

The sample size of this study consists of 100 students selected from different schools and colleges. This number is considered sufficient to represent the student population and to analyze the impact of social media on their academic, social, and psychological development.

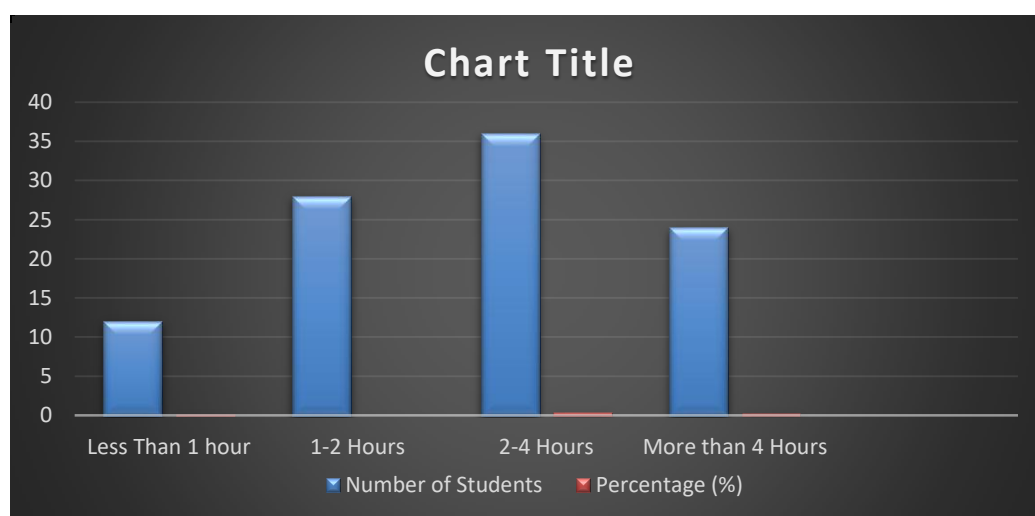
- **Sampling Design**

The study uses simple random sampling, where every student in the selected schools and colleges has an equal chance of being included in the survey. This method ensures that the sample represents the population fairly and provides unbiased data for analyzing the impact of social media on students.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table .1 Daily Time Spent on Social Media

Time Spent Daily	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Less Than 1 hour	12	12%
1-2 Hours	28	28%
2-4 Hours	36	36%
More than 4 Hours	24	24%
Total	100	100%

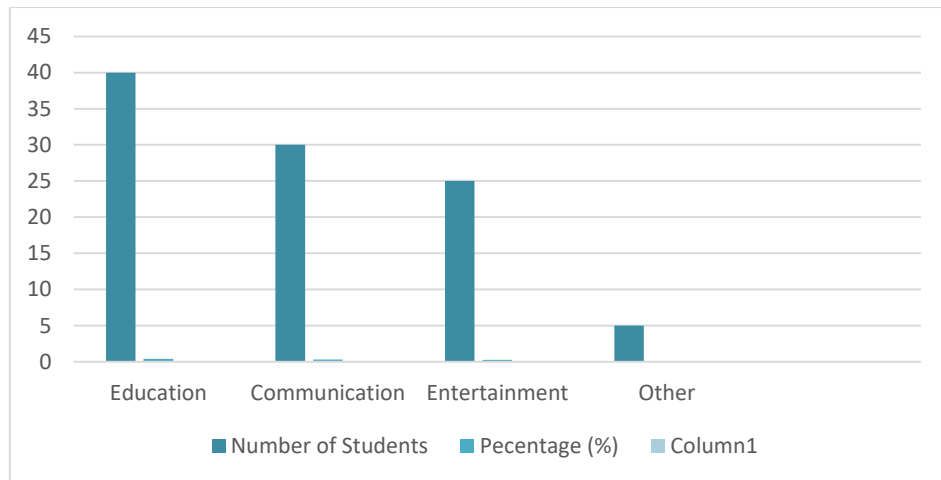


Most students spend significant time on social media, with 36% using it for 2–4 hours daily. About 28% spend 1–2 hours, showing moderate usage, while 24% spend more than 4 hours, which may impact academic performance. Only 12% of students spend less than 1 hour per day, indicating

limited usage among a small group. suggesting that a small group uses social media in moderation. This data highlights the need for students to regulate their social media usage to maintain a balance between academic, social, and personal life.

Table .2 Purpose of Using Social Media

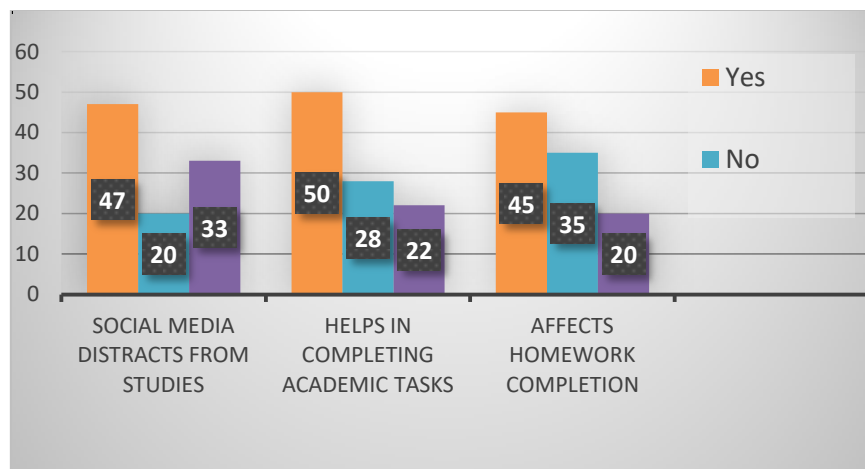
Purpose	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Education	40	40%
Communication	30	30%
Entertainment	25	25%
Other	5	5%
Total	100	100%



40% of students use social media for educational purposes such as discussing academic topics, sharing notes, and clarifying doubts. This indicates that social media can be a positive tool for learning when used purposefully. 30% use it primarily for communication, reflecting its role in maintaining social connections. 25% use it mainly for entertainment, which may consume time without contributing to personal or academic growth. A small percentage (5%) use it for other purposes, showing diverse but limited uses.

Table .3 Academic Impact of Social Media

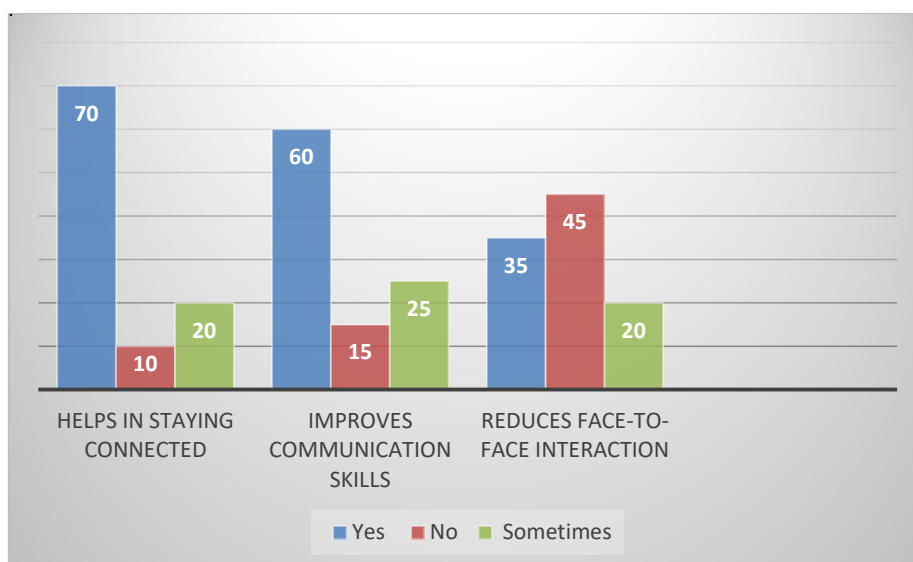
Statement	Yes	No	Sometimes
Social Media distracts from studies	47	20	33
Helps in completing academic tasks	50	28	22
Affects homework completion	45	35	20



The study reveals a mixed impact of social media on students' academics. While 50% of students use it to support learning and complete academic tasks, 47% report it distracts them from studies, and 45% feel it negatively affects homework completion. Additionally, 33% sometimes get distracted, and 22% sometimes find it helpful for tasks. These findings indicate that social media can be both a useful learning tool and a source of distraction, highlighting the need for guided and purposeful use to maximize academic benefits.

Table.4 Social Impact

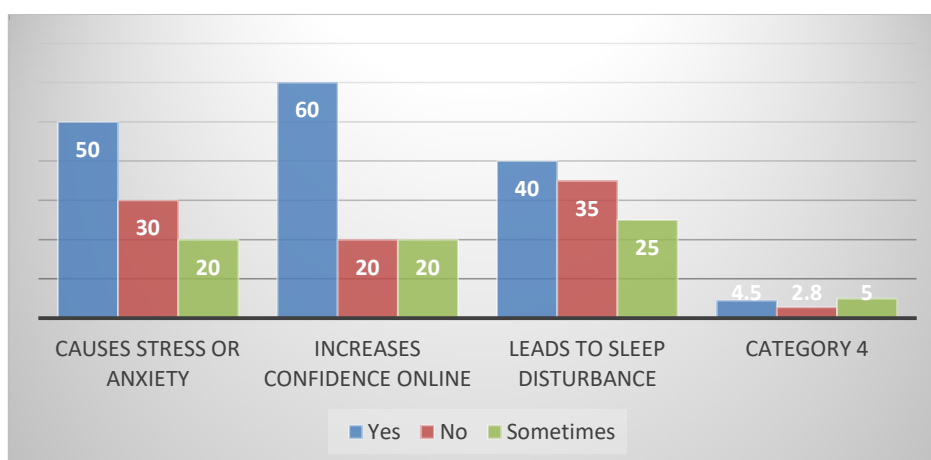
Statement	Yes	No	Sometimes
Helps in staying connected	70	10	20
Improves Communication Skills	60	15	25
Reduces face-to-face interaction	35	45	20



Social media has a significant social impact on students. A large majority (70%) feel it helps them stay connected with friends and family, highlighting its role in fostering social networks. 60% believe it improves communication skills, showing its positive influence on interaction abilities. However, 35% report a reduction in face-to-face interaction, indicating that excessive reliance on online communication may weaken real-world social skills. This dual effect emphasizes the need for balance between online and offline social engagement.

Table 5 Psychological Impact

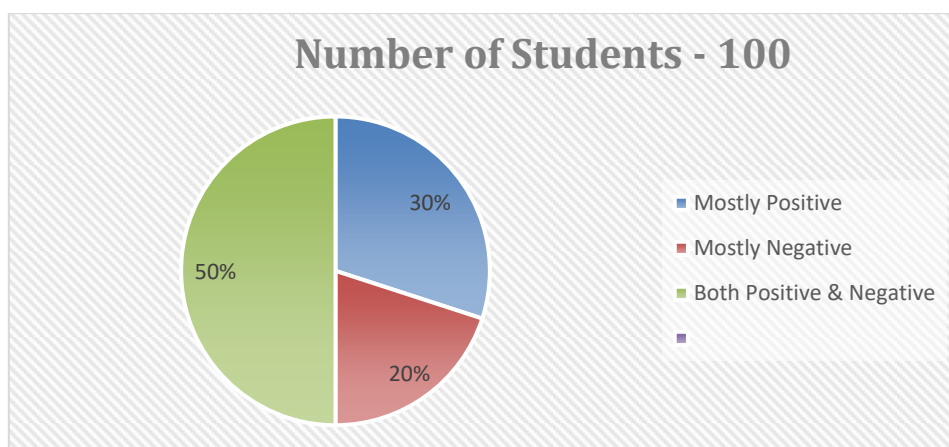
Statement	Yes	No	Sometimes
Causes stress or anxiety	50	30	20
Increases confidence online	60	20	20
Leads to sleep disturbance	40	35	25



The psychological effects of social media are complex. 50% of students report stress or anxiety linked to social media, indicating potential mental health challenges. On the other hand, 60% feel more confident online, suggesting that positive engagement and peer support can enhance self-esteem. Additionally, 40% report sleep disturbances due to prolonged usage, which can affect academic performance and physical health. These results highlight that while social media can provide emotional support and confidence, unregulated use may lead to psychological strain.

Table 6: Overall Opinion on Social Media Impact

Opinion	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Mostly Positive	30	30%
Mostly Negative	20	20%
Both Positive & Negative	50	50%
Total	100	100%



Half of the students (50%) believe social media has both positive and negative effects, reflecting that its impact depends largely on usage patterns. 30% perceive it as mostly positive, likely due to educational support and social connectivity, while 20% see it as mostly negative, probably due to distraction, stress, and reduced real-life interaction. This overall opinion reinforces the need for mindful and balanced use to maximize benefits while minimizing harm.

Findings

- Usage:** 35% of students use social media 2–4 hours daily, 25% exceed 4 hours, showing that it plays a major role in daily routines.
- Purpose:** 40% use it for education, 30% for communication, and 25% for entertainment; purposeful use supports learning, while excessive entertainment can distract.
- Academic Impact:** 50% use social media to aid learning, 45% feel distracted, and 40% report that it affects homework completion.
- Social Development:** 70% maintain social connections, 60% improve communication skills, but 35% feel it reduces face-to-face interaction.
- Psychological Impact:** 60% feel more confident online, while 50% experience stress/anxiety, and 40% report sleep disturbances.
- Overall Opinion:** 50% perceive both positive and negative effects, 30% mostly positive, and 20% mostly negative.

Suggestions

- Balanced Usage:** Students should limit their daily time on social media to prevent distraction and maintain focus on studies. Scheduling specific time slots for social media can help balance academic and personal life.
- Purposeful Engagement:** Social media should be used primarily for educational and constructive purposes, such as accessing study materials, online discussions, and collaborative learning, rather than only for entertainment.
- Parental and Teacher Guidance:** Parents and teachers should guide students in using social media responsibly. Awareness sessions can help students understand their positive and negative impacts.
- Promote Offline Interaction:** Students should be encouraged to participate in face-to-face social

activities, sports, and group studies to maintain healthy social skills alongside online interactions.

5. Stress Management and Mental Health: Students should be educated about the psychological effects of excessive social media use. Activities like mindfulness, meditation, and time management can reduce stress, anxiety, and sleep disturbances.

6. Digital Literacy Programs: Schools and colleges can introduce digital literacy programs to teach students safe, responsible, and productive social media usage habits.

Conclusion

Social media has become an important part of students' daily life, affecting their academic performance, social interactions, and psychological well-being. The study shows that while it provides educational support, helps in communication, and boosts confidence, excessive use can lead to distraction, stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and reduced face-to-face interaction. The impact of social media is therefore dual in nature, offering both benefits and challenges. Responsible and balanced usage, guided by parents, teachers, and digital literacy programs, can help students maximize the positive effects while minimizing the negatives. Overall, mindful use of social media can contribute positively to students' overall development, but awareness, self-discipline, and time management are essential to ensure its healthy and productive use.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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