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Social media influence on rural and urban youth: A sociological analysis

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of social media has significantly transformed the social, economic, and psychological dimensions of youth life across both rural and urban settings. The present study, titled "*Social Media Influence on Rural and Urban Youth: A Sociological Analysis*," was conducted in Hisar district of Haryana during 2024–25 to examine awareness, usage patterns, socio-economic impacts, and constraints associated with social media use among youth. A total of 120 respondents, comprising 60 rural and 60 urban youth, were selected through random sampling. Data were collected using a well-structured interview schedule and analyzed using statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, and chi-square tests.

The findings revealed that a majority of respondents exhibited a high level of awareness regarding social media, with urban youth demonstrating significantly higher awareness compared to their rural counterparts. However, no significant difference was observed in usage patterns between the two groups. Social media usage was predominantly accessed through mobile devices, with platforms such as Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram being most popular. The study further identified significant associations between socio-economic variables—such as education, income, occupation, and mass media exposure—and both awareness and usage patterns.

In terms of impact, social media was found to play a crucial role in enhancing connectivity, facilitating knowledge acquisition, and promoting economic opportunities, while also contributing to challenges such as cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and digital addiction. Major constraints reported by youth included privacy risks, academic distraction, and excessive screen time. The study suggests the need for awareness programs on digital literacy, online safety, and responsible usage to maximize benefits and minimize adverse effects of social media among youth.

Keywords: Social media, rural youth, urban youth, sociological analysis, social media awareness

Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, social media has emerged as a powerful communication and interaction platform, reshaping the lifestyles, perceptions, and behaviors of individuals, particularly youth. With the increasing penetration of smartphones and internet connectivity, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat have become integral to daily life. These platforms not only facilitate communication but also serve as tools for information dissemination, education, entertainment, and economic engagement.

Youth, being the most active users of digital technologies, are highly influenced by social media in multiple dimensions. It plays a critical role in shaping their social relationships, academic pursuits, career aspirations, and psychological well-being. While social media offers opportunities for learning, networking, and self-expression, it also presents challenges such as cyberbullying, misinformation, privacy concerns, and addiction. Therefore, understanding its multifaceted impact is essential from a sociological perspective.

The influence of social media varies across rural and urban contexts due to differences in access, awareness, socio-

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economic conditions, and exposure to digital technologies. Rural youth may face limitations related to infrastructure and digital literacy, whereas urban youth often have greater access and exposure, leading to differences in usage patterns and impacts. Hence, a comparative analysis between rural and urban youth becomes crucial to understand these disparities.

Keeping this in view, the present study was undertaken in Hisar district of Haryana to assess the awareness and usage patterns of social media among rural and urban youth, analyze its socio-economic and psychological impacts, and identify the constraints faced by them. The study aims to provide insights that can guide policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in promoting safe, effective, and responsible use of social media among youth.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the awareness level of using social media among rural and urban youth
2. To analyse the usage pattern of social media by youth
3. To study the socio-economic impact of social media along with constraints

Review of literature

Marino *et al.* (2018) ^[6] conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to examine the association between problematic Facebook use and psychological distress among adolescents and young adults. The study found that problematic Facebook use was positively associated with depression, anxiety, stress, and lower psychological well-being. The authors concluded that excessive dependence on social networking platforms negatively affects mental health and recommended interventions to encourage healthy social media habits.

Orben and Przybylski (2019) ^[8] investigated the relationship between digital technology use and adolescent well-being using large-scale population datasets. The findings revealed that the association between digital technology use and psychological well-being was relatively small. The authors argued that moderate use of social media is not inherently harmful and emphasized the need for evidence-based policies rather than exaggerated claims about digital technology use. They suggested that future research should focus on the quality and context of social media use rather than simply measuring screen time.

Keles *et al.* (2020) ^[5] conducted a systematic review to assess the influence of social media on depression, anxiety, and psychological distress among adolescents. Based on the analysis of thirteen studies, they reported that greater social media use, addictive behaviour, and emotional investment in social networking sites were consistently associated with increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. The authors recommended more longitudinal studies to establish causal relationships and better understand the long-term impact of social media on adolescent mental health.

Dwivedi *et al.* 2021 ^[2] reviewed the future directions of digital and social media research by integrating perspectives from leading international scholars. The study highlighted that social media has revolutionized communication, education, marketing, business, and public engagement by creating new opportunities for interaction and knowledge sharing. However, it also identified challenges such as misinformation, privacy concerns, digital addiction, and ethical issues. The authors emphasized the importance of

digital literacy, responsible online behaviour, and interdisciplinary research to maximize the benefits of social media while reducing its adverse effects.

Gupta *et al.* (2022) ^[3] reviewed the impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents and young adults. The review concluded that although social media provides opportunities for communication, learning, and information sharing, excessive and uncontrolled use contributes to anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, body image concerns, loneliness, and addictive behaviours. The authors recommended promoting digital literacy, parental supervision, and mental health awareness programmes to encourage responsible and balanced use of social media.

Results

Awareness of using social media among youth

Table 1 revealed that respondents possessed a comparatively high level of awareness regarding the basic concepts and uses of social media. The highest mean score was recorded for awareness about social media (Mean = 2.83, Rank I), indicating that most respondents were fully aware of social media. This was followed by awareness about the use of social media for sharing ideas and opinions (Mean = 2.72, Rank II), the role of social media in creating social awareness (Mean = 2.68, Rank III), awareness about different social media platforms (Mean = 2.62, Rank IV), and the educational use of social media (Mean = 2.59, Rank V). These findings suggest that respondents were well acquainted with the general functions and applications of social media in communication, education, and information sharing.

Moderate levels of awareness were observed for the potential risks associated with social media (Mean = 2.40), its use in the business domain (Mean = 2.33), privacy control features (Mean = 2.33), creating and managing social media profiles (Mean = 2.31), online etiquette (netiquette) (Mean = 2.31), privacy issues (Mean = 2.25), and the necessity of social media for timely information (Mean = 2.20). These results indicate that although respondents were generally familiar with these aspects, there is still scope for improving their practical understanding of safe and effective social media use.

Table 1: Awareness in using social media among youth

Awareness Statement	FA	PA	NA	Mean Score	Rank
Awareness about social media	102	16	2	2.83	I
Awareness about social media's use for sharing ideas and opinions	98	10	12	2.72	II
Role of social media in creating social awareness	90	21	9	2.68	III
Awareness about use of social media for educational purposes	89	13	18	2.59	IV
Awareness about different social media platforms	87	20	13	2.62	V
Awareness about creating and managing a social media profile	65	27	28	2.31	VIII
Awareness regarding social media use in business domain	70	20	30	2.33	VII
Necessity of social media for timely information	60	24	36	2.20	XI
Awareness about the potential risks associated with using social media	67	34	19	2.40	VI
Awareness about privacy issues in social media platforms	67	16	37	2.25	X
Awareness about features that control who can see posts	60	40	20	2.33	VII
Difference between reliable and unreliable information	50	37	33	2.14	XII
Awareness about algorithms influencing content	45	35	40	2.04	XIII
Awareness about terms and conditions	34	47	39	1.96	XIV
Awareness about local laws related to social media	34	46	40	1.95	XV
Awareness about online etiquette (netiquette)	68	21	31	2.31	VIII

The comparatively lower mean scores were recorded for awareness about distinguishing reliable from unreliable information (Mean = 2.14), the influence of social media algorithms on content visibility (Mean = 2.04), terms and conditions of social media platforms (Mean = 1.96), and local laws related to social media use (Mean = 1.95). These findings indicate that respondents had relatively limited awareness of digital literacy, platform governance, and the legal dimensions of social media. Therefore, awareness programmes, digital literacy campaigns, and educational interventions should place greater emphasis on topics such as identifying misinformation, understanding recommendation algorithms, privacy protection, platform policies, and legal responsibilities associated with social media use.

Awareness level among rural and urban youth for using social media

The table 2 illustrates the data on the awareness level of youth

regarding social media usage and categorized it by area (rural and urban) and awareness level (low, medium, and high). In rural areas, more than one-third (35.00%) of the respondents had a medium level of awareness, followed by a low (26.67%) level of awareness about social media usage. In contrast, the urban area showed a high level of awareness (80.00%) among youth, followed by a medium level (33.33%) of awareness. In both areas half of the respondents had a high level of awareness of social media usage.

Table 2: Awareness level among rural and urban youth for using social media

Awareness level	Rural	Urban	Total
Low (16-21)	16 (26.67)	02 (03.33)	18 (15.00)
Medium (22-27)	21 (35.00)	20 (33.33)	41 (34.17)
High (28-32)	13 (21.67)	48 (80.00)	61 (50.83)

Figures in parentheses denote percentage

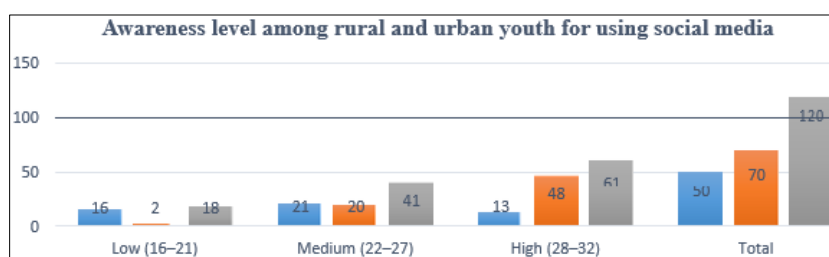


Fig 1: Awareness level among rural and urban youth for using social media Awareness level comparison between rural and urban youth

The table 3 shows a comparison between rural and urban areas; the mean value for the rural youth was 2.12 with a standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.80, while the urban youth had a higher mean of 2.60 with a lower standard deviation of 0.56. The Z-value from the statistical test is -3.823 and the corresponding p-value is 0.0002, which indicates a highly significant difference in awareness between the rural and urban youth ($p < 0.001$).

Table 3: Awareness level comparison between rural and urban youth

Area				Statistical values	
Rural n= 60		Urban n= 60		Z	P
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
2.12	0.80	2.60	0.56	-3.823	0.0002

Statistically significant difference between the two groups

Association between socio-personal variables and awareness level

Table 4 presents the association between the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their awareness level regarding social media. Chi-square analysis revealed that caste, marital status, educational qualification of mother, father and self, family occupation, landholding, family annual income, social participation, mass media exposure, and socio-economic status were significantly associated with respondents' awareness level. Respondents with higher educational attainment, higher family income, greater mass media exposure, and better socio-economic status generally exhibited a higher level of awareness. Conversely, age, gender, family type, and family size showed no significant association with awareness level. These findings indicate that educational, economic, and communication-related factors play a more important role in determining social media awareness than demographic characteristics.

Table 4: Association between socio-personal variables and awareness level

Socio-economic Variables	Level of awareness			
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Age (years)				
15-19	12 (25.53)	15 (31.90)	20 (42.55)	47 (39.16)
20-24	4 (10.80)	12 (32.43)	21 (56.75)	37 (30.84)
25-29	2 (905.50)	14 (38.88)	20 (55.55)	36 (30.00)
Total	18 (15.00)	41 (34.17)	61 (50.83)	120 (100.00)
$\chi^2 = 7.43$				
Gender				
Male	07 (10.45)	25 (37.31)	35 (52.24)	67 (55.83)
Female	11 (20.75)	16 (30.19)	26 (49.06)	53 (44.17)
$\chi^2 = 2.59$				
Caste				
General category	8 (10.000)	24 (30.00)	48 (60.00)	80 (66.67)
Backward class	6 (25.00)	10 (41.67)	8 (03.33)	24 (20.00)

Scheduled caste	4 (25.00)	7 (43.75)	5 (31.25)	16 (13.33)
$\chi^2 = 9.20$				
Marital status				
Married	1 (6.67)	10 (66.67)	4 (26.67)	15 (12.50)
Unmarried	17 (16.19)	31 (29.52)	57 (54.28)	105 (87.5)
$\chi^2 = 8.06^*$				
Family type				
Nuclear	11(12.5)	34(38.64)	43(48.86)	88(73.33)
Joint	7(21.88)	7(21.88)	18(56.25)	32(26.67)
$\chi^2 = 3.55$				
Family size				
Small (Up to 4 members)	9(14.06)	22(34.38)	33(51.56)	64(53.33)
Medium (Between 5-8 members)	89(16.67)	16(33.33)	24(50)	48(40)
Large (Above 8 members)	1(12.5)	3(37.5)	4(50)	8(6.67)
$\chi^2 = 0.21$				
Educational qualification of mother				
Illiterate	2(16.67)	8(66.67)	2(16.67)	12(10)
Up to Middle	4(16.67)	12(50)	8(33.33)	24(20)
Secondary & Senior secondary	9(17.65)	12(23.53)	30(58.82)	51(42.5)
Graduate & above	3(9.09)	9(27.27)	21(63.64)	33(27.5)
$\chi^2 = 14.59^*$				
Educational qualification of father				
Illiterate	3(42.86)	3(42.86)	1(14.20)	7(5.83)
up to Middle	2(11.11)	13(72.22)	3(16.67)	18(15)
Secondary & Senior secondary	6(915.38)	12(30.77)	21(53.85)	39(32.5)
Graduate & above	7(12.5)	13(23.21)	36(69.29)	56(46.67)
$\chi^2 = 21.95^{**}$				
Educational qualification of self				
Illiterate	2(66.67)	1(33.33)	0(0)	3(2.5)
Up to Middle	3(20)	10(66.67)	2(13.33)	15(4.17)
Secondary & Senior secondary	6(11.11)	16(29.63)	32(59.26)	54(45)
Graduate & above	7(14.58)	14(29.17)	27(56.25)	48(40)
$\chi^2 = 18.15^{**}$				
Occupation of the family				
Agriculture	08(19.04)	20(47.62)	14(33.34)	42(35.00)
Dairy	03(30.00)	03(30.00)	04(40.00)	10(8.34)
Service (Govt./Private)	06(11.54)	15(28.84)	31(59.62)	52(43.33)
Small scale enterprise	01(06.25)	03(18.75)	12(75.00)	16(13.33)
$\chi^2 = 12.39^*$				
Landholding				
Less than 2.5 acre	8(23.53)	11(32.35)	15(44.12)	34(28.33)
Between (2.5-5) acres	10(23.80)	16(38.10)	16(38.10)	42(35.00)
Between (5-10) acre	-	8(29.60)	19(70.40)	27(22.5)
Above 10 acres	-	6(35.30)	11(64.70)	17(14.17)
$\chi^2 = 15.12^{**}$				
Family annual income (Rs.)				
Up to 1,50,000	9(23.68)	12(31.58)	17(44.74)	38(31.67)
Between 1,50,000 – 3,00,000	4(8.70)	23(50)	19(41.30)	46(38.33)
Above 3,00,000	5(13.89)	6(16.67)	25(69.44)	36(36)
$\chi^2 = 13.38^{**}$				
Social participation				
Not a member of any organization	16(18.82)	22(25.88)	47(55.29)	85(70.83)
Member of one organization	1(04)	14(56)	10(40)	25(20.83)
Member of more than one organization	1(10)	5(50)	4(40)	10(8.33)
$\chi^2 = 10.08^*$				
Mass media exposure (7-28)				
Low (7-14)	11(26.19)	10(23.81)	21(50)	42(35)
Medium (15-22)	6(9.23)	29(44.63)	30(46.15)	65(54.17)
High (23-28)	1(07.69)	2(15.38)	10(76.92)	13(10.83)
$\chi^2 = 12.17^*$				
Socio-economic status (5-14)				
Low (5-7)	9(31.03)	11(37.73)	9(31.03)	29(24.17)
Medium (8-11)	8(13.74)	23(39.66)	27(46.55)	58(48.33)
High (12-14)	1(03.03)	7(21.21)	25(75.76)	33(27.5)
$\chi^2 = 16.91^{**}$				

Figures in parentheses denote percentages

**Highly significant at 1 per cent level of significance

*Significant at 5 per cent level of significance

Level of usage pattern of social media by youth

Table 5 indicates the level of usage pattern of social media by youth. In the level of usage pattern of social media by youth a total of (34.17%) exhibited a low level of social media usage, with a notable difference between rural and urban respondents. Specifically, (41.67%) of the rural youth and (26.67%) of the urban youth were under the category of low usage. Among (35.00%) of the total sample in medium usage category, 30 per cent from rural and 40 per cent from urban were using social media. A total (30.83%) of the youth demonstrated a high level of social media usage among which rural respondents were (25.00%) and (36.67%) of urban youth.

Table 5: Level of usage pattern of social media by youth

Usage pattern level (41-82)	Rural	Urban	Total
Low (41-54)	25 (41.67)	16 (26.67)	41 (34.17)
Medium (55-68)	18 (30.00)	24 (40.00)	42 (35.00)
High (69-82)	15 (25.00)	22 (36.67)	37 (30.83)

Figures in parentheses denote percentage

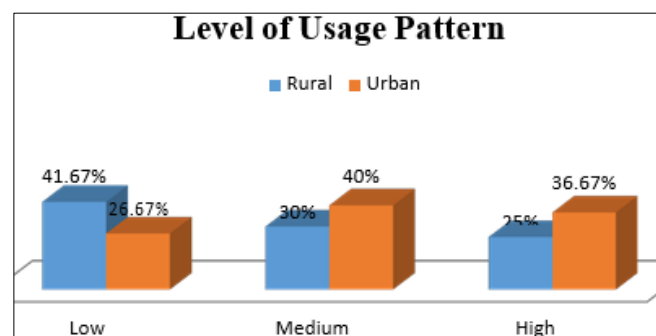


Fig 2: Level of usage pattern of social media Comparison in usage pattern level between rural and urban youth

Table 6 represents the statistical comparison between rural

and urban youth. The mean score for the rural youth was 1.67, while the urban youth had a slightly higher mean score of 1.83. A Z-test was conducted to assess the statistical significance of the difference between the two means, resulting in a Z-value of -1.13 and p-value of 0.26. Hence, the p-value was greater than 0.05; the difference between the rural and urban youth was not statistically significant with regard to usage pattern of social media.

Table 6: Comparison in usage pattern level between rural and urban youth

Area				Statistical values	
Rural n= 60		Urban n= 60		Z	P
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
1.67	0.76	1.83	0.79	-1.13	0.26

No statistically significant difference between the two groups

Association between socio-personal variables and level of usage pattern

Table 7 presents the association between respondents' socio-economic characteristics and their level of social media usage pattern. Chi-square analysis revealed that age, educational qualification of mother, father and self, family occupation, landholding, family annual income, social participation, mass media exposure, and socio-economic status were significantly associated with the level of social media usage. Respondents with higher educational attainment, higher family income, greater mass media exposure, and better socio-economic status generally exhibited a higher level of social media usage. In contrast, gender, marital status, family type, and family size showed no significant association with the usage pattern. These findings suggest that educational, economic, and communication-related factors play a more influential role in shaping respondents' social media usage than basic demographic characteristics.

Table 7: Association between socio-personal variables and level of usage pattern

Socio-economic Variables	Low	Medium	High	Total
Age (Years)				
15–19	23 (48.94)	14 (29.79)	10 (21.28)	47 (39.17)
20–24	9 (24.32)	18 (48.65)	10 (27.03)	37 (30.83)
25–29	9 (25.00)	10 (27.78)	17 (47.22)	36 (30.00)
Total	41 (34.17)	42 (35.00)	37 (30.83)	120 (100.00)
$\chi^2 = 12.50$				
Gender				
Male	23 (34.32)	22 (32.84)	22 (32.84)	67 (55.83)
Female	18 (33.96)	20 (37.74)	15 (28.30)	53 (44.17)
$\chi^2 = 0.40$ (NS)				
Caste				
General	29 (36.25)	21 (26.25)	30 (37.50)	80 (66.67)
Backward	6 (25.00)	14 (58.33)	4 (16.67)	24 (20.00)
Scheduled	6 (37.50)	7 (43.75)	3 (18.75)	16 (13.33)
$\chi^2 = 8.07$				
Marital Status				

Married	5 (33.33)	4 (26.67)	6 (40.00)	15 (12.50)
Unmarried	36	38	31	105 (87.50)
$\chi^2 = 0.81$ (NS)	(34.29)	(36.19)	(29.52)	
Family Type				
Nuclear	27	31	30	88 (73.33)
	(30.68)	(35.23)	(34.09)	
Joint	14	11	7 (21.88)	
	(43.75)	(34.38)		32 (26.67)
$\chi^2 = 2.31$ (NS)				
Family Size				
Small (Up to 4 members)	18	20	26	64 (53.33)
	(28.13)	(31.25)	(40.63)	
Medium (5–8 members)	19	20	9 (18.75)	
	(39.58)	(41.67)		48 (40.00)
Large (>8 members)	4 (50.00)	2 (25.00)	2 (25.00)	
$\chi^2 = 7.13$				
Educational Qualification of Mother				12 (10.00)
Illiterate	4 (33.33)	8 (66.67)	0 (0.00)	
Up to Middle	10 (41.67)	9 (37.50)	5 (20.83)	
Secondary & Senior Secondary	24	14	13	51 (42.50)
	(47.06)	(27.45)	(25.49)	
Graduate & Above	3 (9.09)	11	19	
		(33.33)	(57.58)	33 (27.50)
$\chi^2 = 25.89$ **				
Educational Qualification of Father				
Illiterate	4 (57.14)	2 (28.57)	1 (14.29)	7 (5.83)
Up to Middle	3 (16.67)	10 (55.56)	5 (27.78)	18 (15.00)
Secondary & Senior Secondary	22	11	6 (15.38)	39 (32.50)
	(56.41)	(28.21)		
Graduate & Above	12	19	25	
	(21.43)	(33.93)	(44.64)	56 (46.67)
$\chi^2 = 20.94$ **				
Educational Qualification of Self				
Illiterate	2 (66.67)	1 (33.33)	0 (0.00)	3 (2.50)
Up to Middle	5 (33.33)	9 (60.00)	1 (6.67)	15 (12.50)
Secondary & Senior Secondary	23 (42.59)	14 (25.93)	17 (31.48)	54 (45.00)
Graduate & Above	11 (22.92)	18 (37.50)	19 (39.58)	48 (40.00)
$\chi^2 = 12.83$				
Occupation of Family				
Agriculture	14	18	10	42 (35.00)
	(33.33)	(42.85)	(23.80)	
Dairy	0 (0.00)	3 (30.00)	7 (70.00)	
Service	20	13	19	52 (43.33)
	(38.46)	(25.00)	(36.54)	
Small Scale Enterprise	7 (43.75)	8 (50.00)	1 (6.25)	
$\chi^2 = 16.34$ *				16 (13.34)
Landholding				
Less than 2.5 acres	10	15	9 (26.47)	
	(29.41)	(44.12)		34 (28.33)
2.5–5 acres	8 (19.05)	13	21	
		(30.95)	(50.00)	
5–10 acres	15 (55.56)	6 (22.22)	6 (22.22)	27 (22.50)
Above 10 acres	8 (47.06)	8 (47.06)	1 (5.88)	17 (14.17)
$\chi^2 = 19.18$ **				
Family Annual Income				
Up to ₹1,50,000	17	16	5 (13.16)	38 (31.67)
	(44.74)	(42.11)		
₹1,50,000–₹3,00,000	16	19	11	
	(34.78)	(41.30)	(23.91)	46 (38.33)
Above ₹3,00,000	8 (22.22)	7 (19.44)	21 (58.33)	
$\chi^2 = 19.70$ **				
Social Participation				36 (30.00)
Not member	36	21	28	
	(42.35)	(24.71)	(32.94)	

Member of one organization	4 (16.00)	15 (60.00)	6 (24.00)	25 (20.83)
Member of more than one organization	1 (10.00)	6 (60.00)	3 (30.00)	10 (8.33)
$\chi^2 = 15.11^{**}$				
Mass Media Exposure				
Low	25 (59.52)	8 (19.05)	9 (21.43)	42 (35.00)
Medium	14 (21.54)	29 (44.62)	22 (33.84)	65 (54.17)
High	2 (15.38)	5 (38.46)	6 (46.16)	13 (10.83)
$\chi^2 = 19.48^{**}$				
Socio-economic Status				
Low	17 (58.62)	9 (31.03)	3 (10.35)	29 (24.17)
Medium	17 (29.31)	26 (44.83)	15 (25.86)	58 (48.33)
High	7 (21.21)	7 (21.21)	19 (57.58)	33 (27.50)
$\chi^2 = 18.93^{**}$				

Figures in parentheses denote percentages

*Significant at 5 per cent level of significance

**Highly significant at 1 per cent level of significance

Impact of using social media on youth

Table 8 highlights the impact of social media on youth. The most significant social impact of media on youth is the transformation of activism and social movements, ranked (I), instant interaction and global connectivity ranked (II) and the third rank was given to challenges to privacy and data security statements, with weighted mean scores of 2.68, 2.60 and 2.57, respectively. Whereas, initiated debates on digital citizenship, ethics, responsibilities and reformed relationships ranked VII and IX with a weighted mean score of 2.34 and 2.18. In case of economic impact, the data reveal that the most significant economic impact is the development of skills and knowledge through online courses and educational resources, ranked (I), increased chances of cyber theft, ranked (II) and the ability to generate income via sponsored posts, affiliate marketing and brand partnerships,

ranked (III), with weighted mean score of 2.71, 2.62 and 2.55, respectively. While least rank was given to insights into consumer behaviour and market trends, aiding business decision-making and stolen personal data from individuals sold to the companies with (VIII and IX) rank. Regarding the psychological impact, it was observed that the most significant issue is the prevalence of cyberbullying and online harassment, which ranked (I), followed by increased feelings of loneliness and social isolation despite constant connectivity, which ranked (II) and the impact of digital fatigue caused by information overload, which ranked (III), with weighted mean scores 2.61, 2.58 and 2.49, respectively. Last rank was assigned to fear of surveillance leading to self-censorship and effect on mental health of the pressure to maintain an online persona with a weighted mean score 2.30 and 2.28.

Table 8: Cumulative impact of using social media on youth

Social Impact	Increased	Decreased	No Change	TMS	WMS	Rank
Transformation of activism and social movements.	98(80.00)	10(8.33)	14(11.67)	322	2.68	I
Participation in global discussions, conferences and forums	83(69.17)	13(10.83)	24(20.00)	299	2.49	V
Instant interaction and global connectivity.	93(77.50)	07(05.83)	20(16.67)	313	2.60	II
Facilitation of rapid spread of news (accurate and misleading.)	78(65.00)	09(7.50)	33(27.50)	285	2.37	VII
Transformation of activism and social movements.	83(69.17)	13(10.83)	24(20.00)	299	2.49	V
Reformed relationships (deeper connections and superficial interactions.)	65(54.17)	12(10.00)	43(35.83)	262	2.18	IX
Challenges to privacy and data security	87(72.50)	17(14.17)	14(11.67)	309	2.57	III
Influence political discourse and elections.	82(68.33)	20(16.67)	18(15.00)	304	2.53	IV
Initiated debates on digital citizenship, ethics, and responsibilities.	75(62.50)	11(09.17)	34(28.33)	281	2.34	VIII
Significance in shaping public discourse and polarization.	78(65.00)	21(17.50)	21(17.50)	297	2.47	VI
Economic Impact						
Income via sponsored posts, affiliate marketing, and partnerships with brands on social media.	87(72.50)	13(10.83)	20(16.67)	307	2.55	III
Entrepreneurs start and promote businesses at lower costs, higher reach.	69(57.50)	20(16.67)	31(25.83)	278	2.31	VII
Expansion of gig economy in graphic design, photography, writing etc	78(65.00)	19(15.83)	23(19.17)	295	2.45	IV
Exposure to industrial trends, networking, and mentorship	74(61.67)	14(11.67)	32(26.67)	282	2.35	VI
Develop skills and knowledge via online courses and educational resources	98(81.67)	10(08.33)	12(10.00)	326	2.71	I
Insights into consumer behaviour and market trends, aiding business decision-making.	68(56.67)	20(16.67)	32(26.67)	276	2.30	VIII
Increased chances of cyber theft	87(72.50)	21(17.50)	12(10.00)	315	2.62	II
Fake accounts leading to cyber fraud	73(60.83)	28(23.33)	19(15.83)	294	2.45	V
Stolen personal data from the individuals sold to the companies	56(46.67)	23(19.17)	41(34.17)	255	2.12	IX
Psychological Impact						
Increased feelings of loneliness and social isolation despite connectivity.	85(70.83)	20(16.67)	15(12.50)	310	2.58	II
Comparison with idealized images and lifestyles on social media leading to negative self-esteem and body image issues.	70(58.33)	13(10.84)	37(30.83)	273	2.27	X

Notifications and likes trigger dopamine release, contributing to addictive behaviours and compulsive checking.	75(62.50)	11(09.17)	34(28.33)	281	2.34	VII
Cyberbullying and online harassment affect mental health and well-being.	92(76.67)	10(08.33)	18(15.00)	314	2.61	I
Disruption of sleep patterns, affecting overall health and cognitive function.	83(69.17)	11(09.17)	26(21.67)	297	2.47	IV
Effect on mental health of the pressure to maintain an online persona.	77(64.17)	20(16.67)	23(19.17)	274	2.28	IX
Distorted perceptions of reality and success.	68(56.67)	30(25.00)	22(18.33)	286	2.38	V
Altered social norms and etiquette affecting offline behaviour	67(55.83)	29(24.17)	24(20.00)	283	2.35	VI
Fear of surveillance leading to self-censorship.	68(56.67)	20(16.67)	32(26.67)	276	2.30	VIII
Digital fatigue from information overload.	80(66.67)	19(15.83)	21(17.50)	299	2.49	III

Figures in parentheses denote percentage

Major constraints faced by youth in using social media

Table 9 is representing the data collected from the field regarding constraints faced by youth in using social media and the most pressing constraint identified is privacy concerns, ranked first with the highest weighted mean score (2.75), followed by distraction from academic responsibilities rank second with a score of (2.71) and addiction and excessive screen time ranked third with a score of (2.65) respectively. Whereas, hindrance in the

development of interpersonal relationships ranked (IV), risk of online scams and financial exploitation ranked (V), exposure to inappropriate content ranked (VI), fear of cyber bullying and online harassment ranked (VII), pressure to conform to social norms and trends (VIII), legal implications of accessing copyrighted material ranked (IX) and negative impact on mental health ranked (X) with weighted mean score 2.47, 2.28, 2.23, 2.13, 2.10, 2.06 and 2.05.

Table 9: Major constraints faced by youth in using social media

Constraints	Very Serious	Serious	Not so Serious	WMS	Rank
Privacy concerns	99 (82.50)	12 (10.00)	9 (07.50)	2.75	I
Distraction from academic responsibilities.	98 (81.67)	10 (08.33)	12 (10.00)	2.71	II
Addiction and excessive screen time and related issues	89 (74.17)	20 (16.67)	11 (09.17)	2.65	III
Hurdle in development of interpersonal relationships.	60 (50.00)	46 (38.33)	24 (20.00)	2.47	IV
Online scams and fraud, posing financial risks and exploitation, especially among less experienced users.	60 (50.00)	34 (28.33)	26 (21.67)	2.28	V
Exposure to inappropriate content (violence, explicit material etc)	54 (45.00)	40 (33.33)	26 (21.67)	2.23	VI
Fear of cyberbullying and online harassment.	53 (44.19)	30 (25.00)	37 (30.83)	2.13	VII
Pressure to conform to social norms and trends promoted on social media platforms.	52 (43.33)	28 (23.33)	40 (33.33)	2.10	VIII
Legal implications of accessing copyrighted material, and related consequences.	44(36.67)	40 (33.33)	36 (30.00)	2.06	IX
Negative effects on mental health, exacerbated by comparisons with others.	50 (41.67)	26 (21.67)	44 (36.67)	2.05	X

Figures in parentheses denote percentage

Conclusion

The present study concludes that social media has become an integral part of the lives of both rural and urban youth, significantly influencing their awareness, communication, learning, and socio-economic development. Urban youth demonstrated significantly higher awareness of social media than rural youth, while no significant difference was observed in their usage patterns. Socio-economic factors such as education, occupation, income, mass media exposure, and socio-economic status were significantly associated with both awareness and usage levels.

Although social media provides opportunities for knowledge enhancement, connectivity, and skill development, it also poses challenges including cyberbullying, privacy concerns, academic distraction, and excessive screen time. Therefore, promoting digital literacy, responsible social media use, and online safety awareness is essential to maximize its benefits while minimizing its adverse effects.

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