

# Assessing Social Media Usage among Adolescents: A Sociological Study

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

### Article History

Published Online: 20 January 2019

### Keywords

Social media, adolescents

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Scan and Access article online



## ABSTRACT

This paper emphasizes on the use of social media platform by school-aged teenagers aged 12 to 17 years. Because of technological advancements, the use of social platform has grown around the world. The prime goal of the study was to examine adolescents' social network media usage and collect data on their opinions on various interactive websites. Adolescence represents crossroads in the development of life. Adolescents are the development point of a society and are future leaders. Therefore, we need to know their problems in order to guide them in the right way at the right time and channelize their energies in the right direction. While social platform has many benefits, it also has drawbacks that affect people negatively. Social media platform can be good, but it should be used in moderation to avoid being addicted.

## Introduction

With the aid of digital technologies like tablets, smartphones, notebooks, computers, and the internet, social media has become widely used and the course of development has been radically altered by the rise of technology (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social networking websites become an essential component of most people's everyday lives (Hakoyama & Hakoyama, 2011). The phrase "social media" denotes to websites and a range of apps that are all about cooperation, sharing of material, engagement, and communication. The foundation of social platform is the notion of how people connect and communicate with one another. People are given the chance to share, which makes the world more inclusive and interconnected. Social networks play a significant role in our lives since they help us progress in all spheres of life.

A social network is an online community where users may connect with others, make new acquaintances, establish rapport, and share and trade information (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008; Wang, Chen & Liang, 2011). Rafferty (2009) stated that people have social network accounts for a variety of reasons like making new friends, following celebrities, sharing personal information, to add their comments to stories, video uploading, chatting etc. A social network is an online community of internet users. Blogs, twitter, facebook, instagram, linkedin, whatsapp, youtube and many other social networks are different platforms used by students. Pew Research Center, 2013 reported continuous increase in percentage share of internet users from 2005 – 2013 as follows:

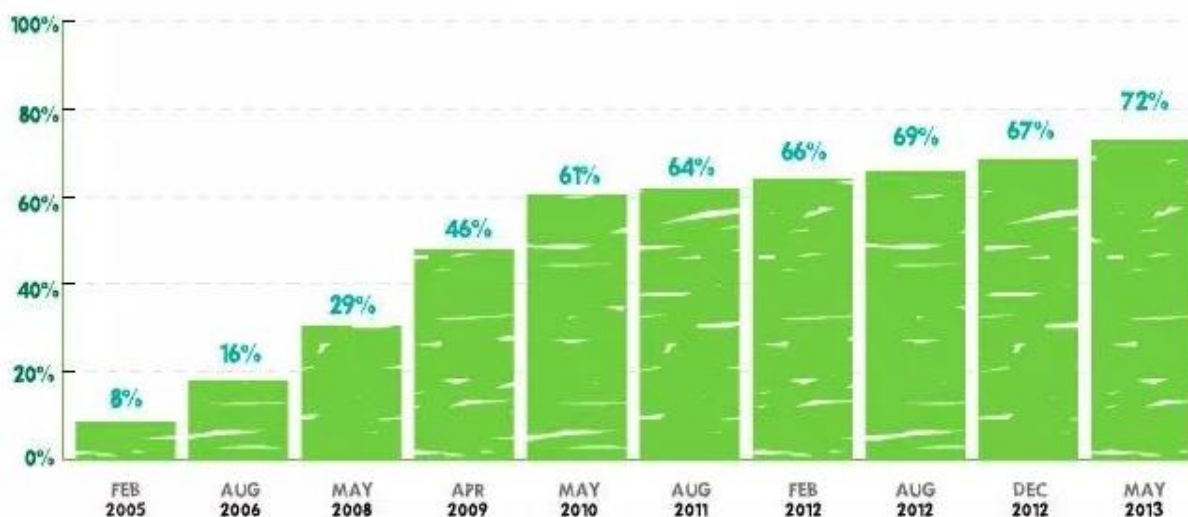


Figure 1. showing timeline of continuous increase in percentage share of internet users from 2005 – 2013 (Pew Research Center, 2013)

In another study, Pew Research Center (2014) surveyed Social media site users 2012- 14. Facebook site is the most popular social network among internet users,

according to the survey. Other social media sites like Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Pinterest have significantly increased the proportion of online users that utilise websites.

**Social media site users 2012- 2014**

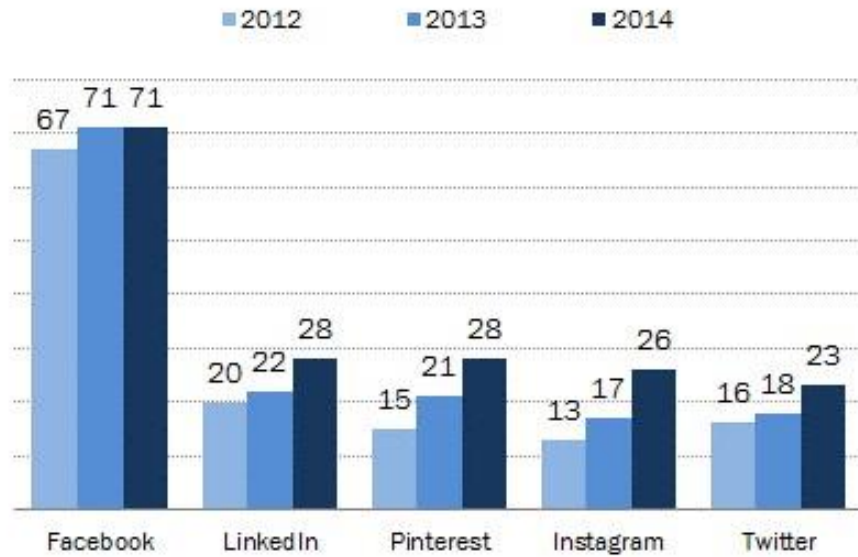


Figure 2. showing rise in percentage of online adults using social media site (2012 - 2014)

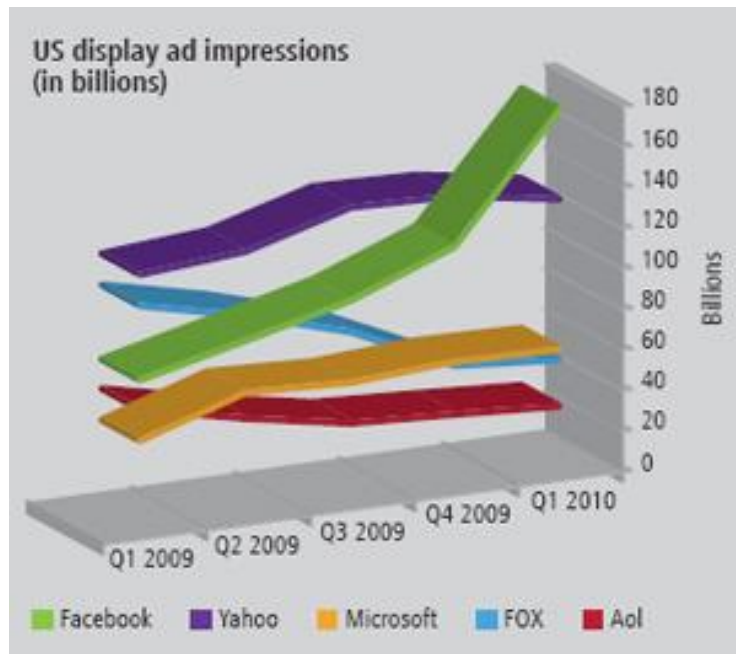


Figure 3. displays rising of display advertisement 2009 (Q<sub>1</sub> – Q<sub>4</sub>) – 2010 (Q<sub>1</sub>)

Statista (2015) researched popular networks globally and concluded Facebook being the global leader.

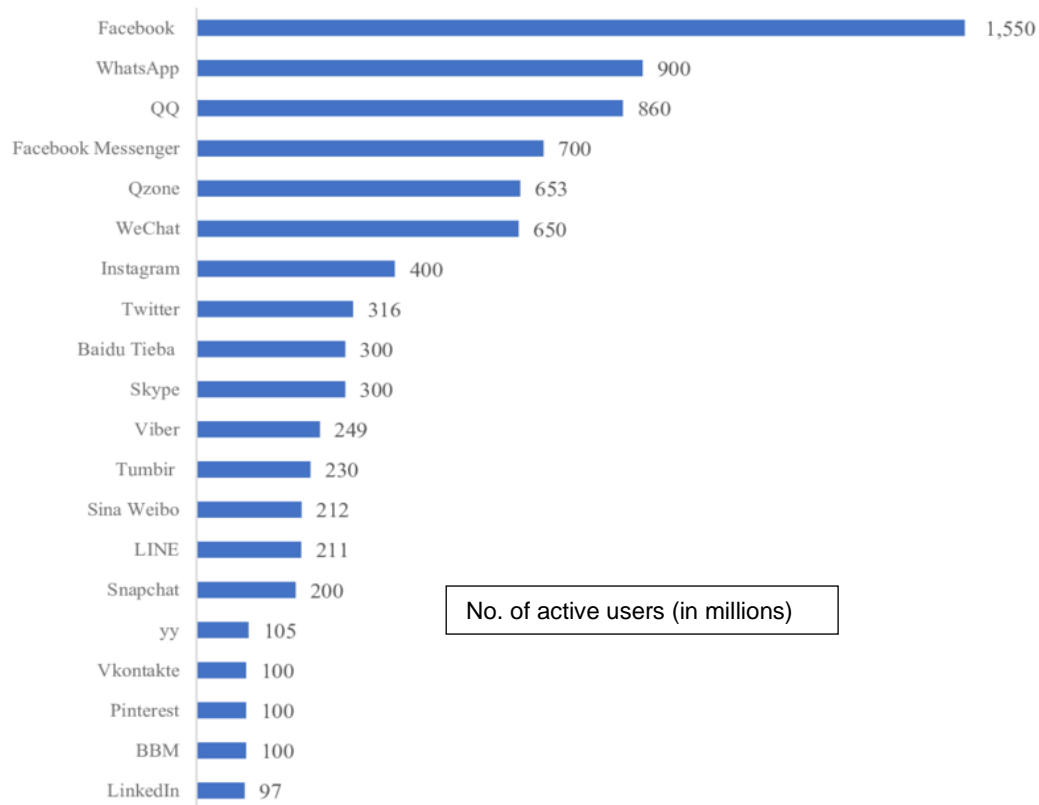


Figure 4. Popular social media sites  
Source: www.statista.com

Based on global Facebook user sharing, India is ranked first. There are around 294 million active Facebook users, according to statistics (Statista, 2018; Oltulu, Mannan & Gardner, 2018.).

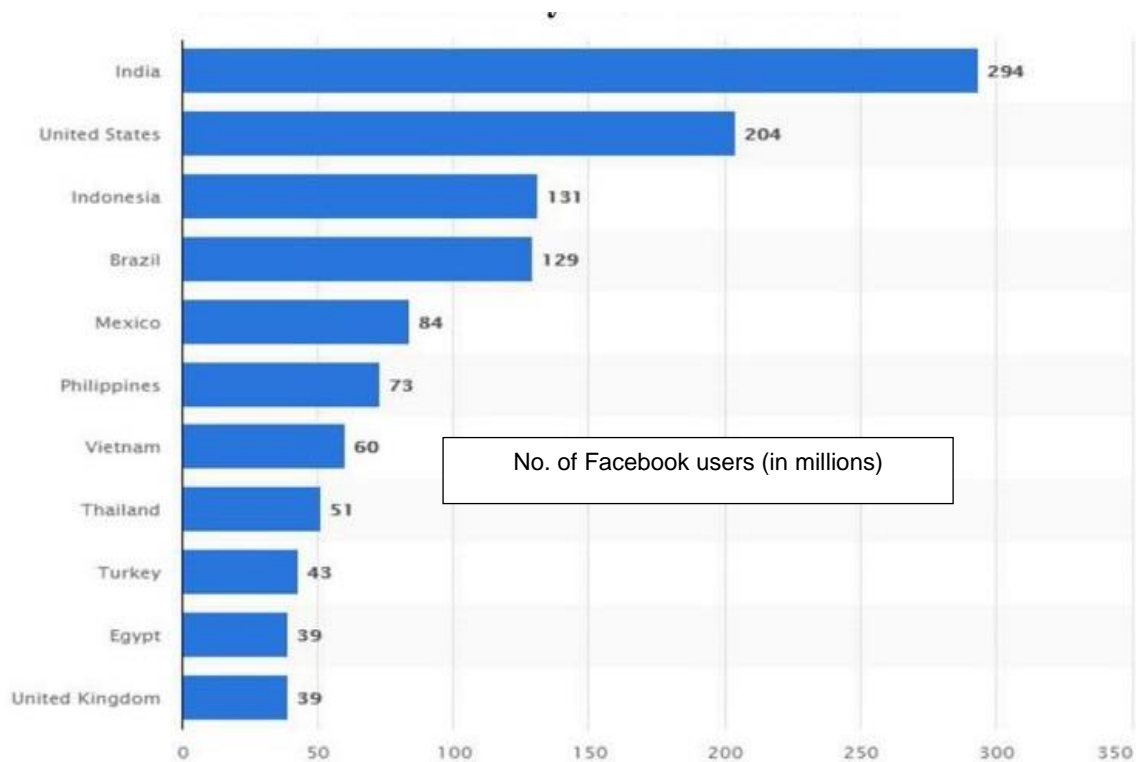


Figure 5. compared monthly share of active Facebook users globally  
Source: www.statista.com

As per Statista (2018), with 294 billion active Facebook users ranked India to first position worldwide.

**Review of Related Literature**

VandenBoogart (2006) evaluated the impact of Facebook on campus life by analysing the replies of 3,134 students in a survey performed at four colleges. He discovered a substantial relationship between time consumed on Facebook and a variety of demographic characteristics. Women spend more time than men on Facebook. Students with lower GPAs (Grade Point Averages) spent more time on Facebook than students with better GPAs (Grade Point Average).

Shambare, Rugimbana, and Sithole (2012) polled students on their social networking behaviours. According to their findings, these methods are most widely utilised by young people, and Facebook is used by a vast number of communities and has a wide range of effects on student life. It finds that high-speed Internet access and the advancement of smartphone technology are key factors in the adoption and connection to social networking sites, and that these social networking sites boost their knowledge level.

Khan (2012) investigates how social networking sites (SNS) affect pupils. A study questionnaire includes variables such as age, gender, social impact, education, and school success. The study suggests that respondents of ages 15 to 25 seems more prone to use social networking websites for leisure and entertainment purposes; nevertheless, a gender breakdown of the data reveals that men are more likely to use social networking sites.

A Tata Consultancy Services GenY study (2014-15) conducted a study on a sample of 12, 365 school students in fourteen Indian cities and found that school students swiftly embracing and adjusting to their digital lives. They are the active internet users (about 75% of students expend an hour online each day), social media savvy and fond of gadgets. 36% of this post- millennial population favoured to communicate face-to-face with friends, while 46% of respondents prefer to stay connected digitally through video chat. These children are very social by nature, with 58% favoured WhatsApp (favourite platform for instant messaging), followed by SMS (20%), and using home desktop /PCs and laptops for accessing the internet (55%), followed by smart phones (30%).

Researchers Tamayo and Dela Cruz looked into the link between how well students did in school and how much they used social networking sites in 2014. Research shows that students' use of social media makes it harder for them to learn and has a direct effect on how often they go to school. Academic performance and social media influence each other, when students get overly engrossed in social media use, it means that their success in the classroom and overall academic achievement are compromised.

In their study, Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) said that social media platform use affect the learning outcomes (academic performance) of the people who took part. The researchers also confirm that there is a strong positive link between how much students use social media and how well they do in school. Most of the people who answered their survey said they use social networking sites to chat rather than to learn.

Jain (2016) stated India, US, Brazil, UK and Germany are top five countries with the highest Facebook usage. India, with 195 million users, is the top access to Facebook, displacing the United States with 4 million subscribers. 76 percent males and 24% females in India use Facebook. These facts described that females are facing restrictions and barriers in using technology. YouTube in India has grown 90% and the watch time rises by 80% compared to 2015. It is estimated that 70% of Indian YouTube viewers are under the age of 35.

**Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media**

A number of studies (Carroll & Kirkpatrick, 2011; Barnes & Laird, 2012; Kalia, 2013; Nehls & Smith, 2014; Raut & Patil, 2016) have been carried out in order to ascertain the positive and negative consequences of social networking platforms. It has brought many benefits, but strengths and weaknesses goes side by side, so social media has both positive and negative impacts on students' daily lives, ultimately showing consequences for school outcomes. A brief pros and cons of social media are as below:

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
• Helpful in making assignments	• Causes distraction
• Easy thought expression	• Privacy issues/ Invading personal privacy
• Career option	• False information
• Sharing of useful information	• Increases chances of indulgence in wrong activities
• Stay connected	• Internet addiction
• All time support	• Cyber-crime, kidnapping, robbery
• Right advice and information	• Influences behaviour (causes violence)
• Collaboration	• Wastage of time on chatting
• No geographical boundaries	• Health problems
• Save time and money	• Diverts concentration and focus
• Useful information	• Decline in academic performance
• Discussion forum	• Family split
• Online presence	• Online bullying
• Positive self- image	• Spreading negative sentiments

**Adolescents**

According to the Hindustan Times (2011), India has the world's largest adolescent population, with over 243 million people and it accounts for about 20 percent of the world 1.2 billion adolescents. Thus, 9 out of 10 among 1.2 billion adolescents live in the developing world.

Adolescence is derived from the Latin term *adolescere*, which meaning "to mature." Adolescence comes after childhood, and before adulthood. Hall (1904) stated that adolescence is a time of great stress, strain, storms and conflicts. Biggie and Hunt (1968) stated that the word that best describes adolescence is 'change'. Changes are physiological, sociological, and psychological. These changes occur in adolescents' duties, privileges, social and economic roles, responsibilities, and their relationships with others.

Mohan (2000) viewed adolescence as a time period of transitional turmoil and tension, its energy and impact on the rest of life was unparalleled. Goosens (2006) viewed adolescence is considered as an inevitably disruptive process with negative moods, problematic relationships with parents, and risky behaviors, including delinquency. This involves an individual's response as to conflict with new societal demands and expectations. Events during this period have a strong impact on the entire personality of the individual.

Schill (2011) described social networking sites has adverse effects on adolescents, including nervousness, emotional effects, physical changes, behavioural changes, stress, loss of personal efficiency and feelings of guilt and danger.

A number of researches (Wang, Chen & Liang, 2011; Kalpidou, Costin & Morris, 2011; Duncan, Hoekstra & Wilcox, 2012) found that a student's results adversely influenced by usage of social media. According to Bryant, Sanders- Jackson, and Smallwood (2006), many adolescents choose to communicate their feelings and opinions through social media communication.

Salas and Alexander (2008) demonstrated that social media allowed pupils to discuss course material and exchange academic themes. According to Wang, Chen, and Liang (2011), children devote more time on social media than of doing schoolwork, studying, or preparing for exams.

**Emergence of the Study**

Adolescence is a very active, dynamic and vibrant phase of physical, psychological and social change in life.

There are different aspects that affect every child's life like school performance, adaptation, home environment, school environment and one such aspect in today's era is social media usage. The adolescent period is full of major biological, physical intellectual and emotional changes. As computer technology and electronics progress remarkably in the 21st century, our lifestyles are constantly changing. Social media has its own pros and cons that affect every aspect of an adolescent, including academic, physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual. It is very necessary to understand their point of view and assess their social media usage as adolescents are precious assets and growth leaders of the country.

**Statement of the Problem**

"Assessing Social Media Usage among Adolescents: A Sociological Study"

**Operational Definition**

**Adolescents:** For the purpose of this study, the adolescents that were targeted between the ages of 12 to 17 years.

**Social Media:** Means use of various interacting sites.

**Delimitations of the Study**

- the present study was restricted to schools of Ludhiana district only.
- the study was restricted to the adolescents of age group 12-17 years.

**Methodology**

In the present investigation, 200 school going adolescents (N= 100 male and N= 100 females) of age group 12-17 years were randomly selected from two senior secondary schools of Ludhiana district. Then, the tool developed by the researcher for this study was administered on the selected sample and then the collected data were analysed and interpretations were made.

**Results and Discussion**

Table 1: Distribution of school going Adolescents (Gender- wise)

Gender	N	Percentage (%)
Males	100	50
Females	100	50
Total	200	100

Table 1 represents the division of school going adolescents according to their gender. The school going adolescents were equally divided into 100 male (50%) and 100 female (50%) students.

Table 2: Locale wise distribution of adolescents

Gender	Male	Female	Total	
Locale	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rural	37	29	66	33
Urban	63	71	134	67
Total	100	100	200	100

Table 2 represents the sample divided on locale basis of adolescents into rural and urban distribution. The data depicts 33% adolescents belong to rural areas and 67%

adolescents were from urban locale in total. Out of 100 male students, 37% were rural and 63% were urban while out of 100 females, 29% were rural and 71% were urban adolescents.

Table 3: Spend time on Social platform

Gender → Spend time ↓	Male	Female	Total	
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	07	11	18	9
1 – 2 hours	16	08	24	12
2 – 3 hours	64	59	123	61.5
3 – 4 hours	03	14	17	8.5
4 – 5 hours	06	07	13	6.5
More than 5 hours	04	01	05	2.5
Total	100	100	200	100

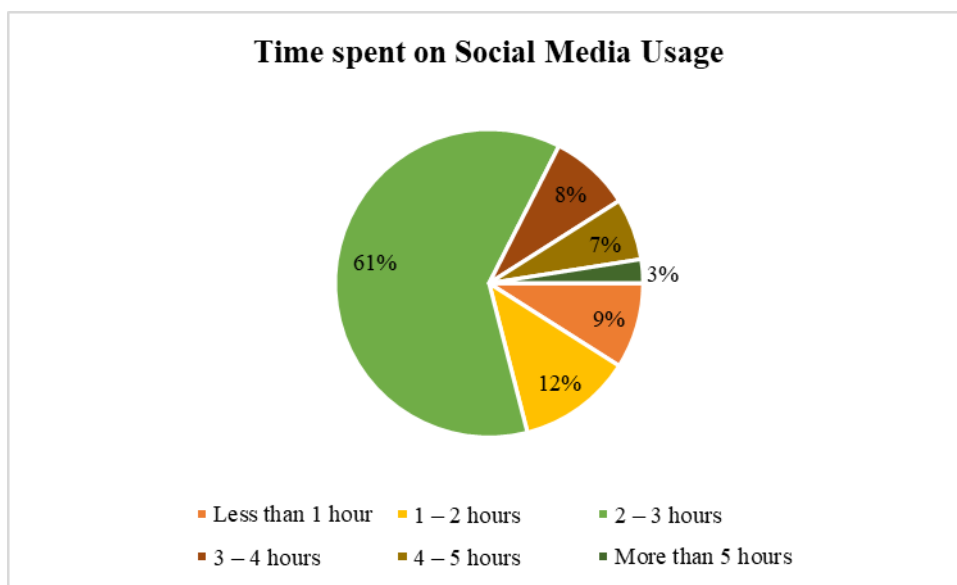


Figure 6. showing overall percentage of time spent on social media usage

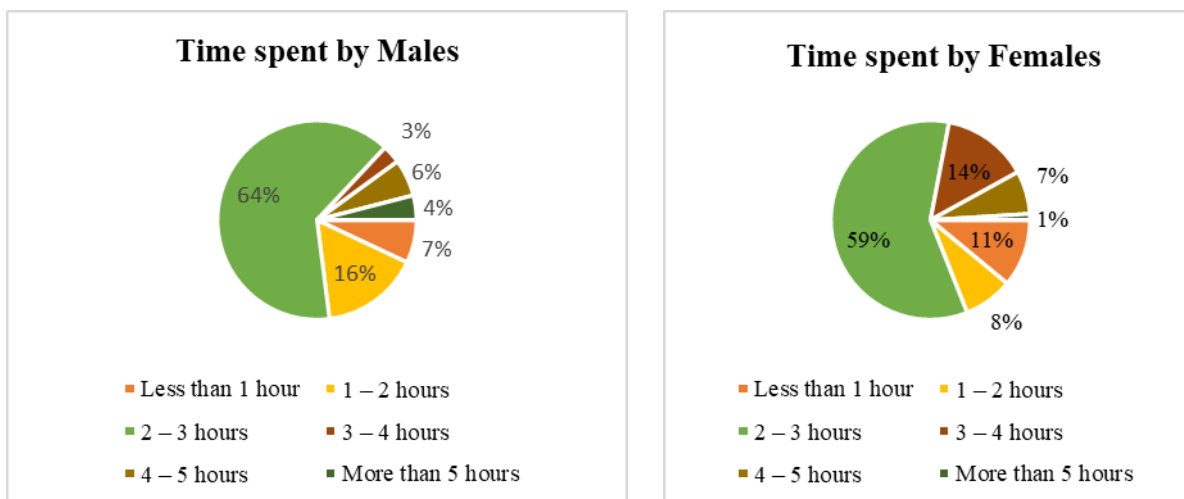


Figure 7 depicts the percentage of time spent by males and females.

When adolescents were asked about the time duration they consumed on social media usage, 18 adolescents (7 male and 11 female) representing 9% of total, specified time spent less than 1 hour, 24 adolescents (16 male and 8 female) representing 12% of total, specified time spent 1-2 hours, 123 adolescents (64 male and 59 female) representing 61.5% of total, specified time spent 2-3 hours, 17 adolescents (3 male and 14 female) representing 8.5% of total

specified time spent 3-4 hours, 13 adolescents (6 male and 7 female) representing 6.5% of total specified time spent 4-5 hours and 5 adolescents (4 male and 1 female) representing 2.5% of total specified time spent more than 5 hours. The inference drawn from above is that maximum percentage of school going adolescents spent 2-3 hours per day on social media.

Table 4: Maximum time spent at which social media

Gender	Male	Female	Total	
Preference	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	82	89	171	85.5
Whhtsapp	84	76	158	79
Instagram	35	19	54	27
Twitter	08	05	13	6.5
Snapchat	49	29	78	39
Youtube	75	83	158	79
Others	08	02	10	5

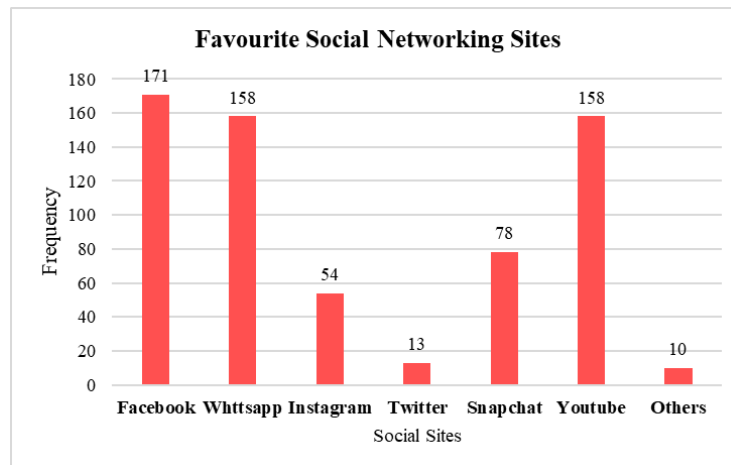


Figure 8. showing popular Social Media sites among Adolescents

Table 4 represents the multiple responses given by school going adolescents on asking about favourite social site. The results showed Facebook at the top with 85.5% (171 students) usage, followed by Whatsapp used by 160 respondents (80%), followed by Youtube (79% usage). Other social sites represents 39% (Snapchat), 27% (Instagram),

6.5% (Twitter) and 5% others interacting sites. It can be inferred that adolescents want to become more socialise and get connected with family and friends. Facebook features are easier to understand and social networking in less time possible and hence, used maximum.

Table 5: Purpose of using social media

Gender	Male	Female	Total	
Purpose	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Surfing	23	46	69	34.5
Chatting	94	59	153	76.5
Gaming	68	23	91	45.5
Downloading	54	21	75	37.5
Entertainment	15	48	63	31.5
For making new friends	89	72	161	80.5
Academic work	24	31	55	27.5
Others	12	16	28	14

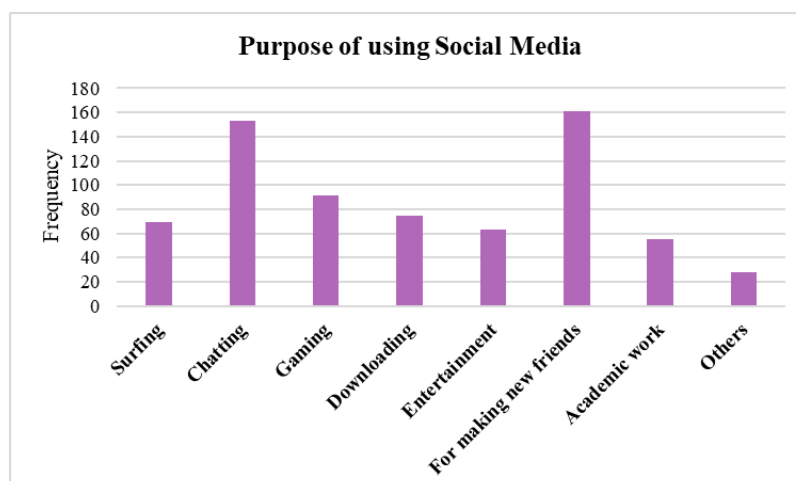


Figure 9 depicts the reason of Adolescents' use of Social Media Sites.

Table 5 represents multiple responses given by school going adolescents on asking the purpose of using social media. 69 students representing 34.5% responded to surfing or browsing interacting sites, 153 students signifying 76.5 % said they regularly use the social media to chat online, 91 students (45.5%) adolescents are addicted to online games. Male students are more prone to gaming mode. 54 representing 37.5 % use it to download music and videos. 63 adolescents (31.5%) of sample watch T.V., web series and movies. Females are more prone to watching serials and web series. 161 students representing 80.5% are interested in making new

friends and become more socialising. Hence, a majority of adolescents, both males and females use social media for increasing their social sphere by adding new friends. And only 55 respondents representing 27.5 % use social networking sites for academic work and 14% used it for other than above mentioned purposes. The inference that came into light is that adolescent age is of transition turbulence phase and very fascinating and youth gets easily attracted and addicted to various chatting sites and making new networks. Therefore, parents should be concerned and keep check on their teenagers and gave them quality time.

Table 6: Degree of Trustworthiness of the people on Social Media

Gender	Male	Female	Total	
Response	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Trustworthy	26	19	45	22.5
Moderately Trustworthy	51	48	99	49.5
Not at all Trustworthy	23	33	56	28
Total	100	100	200	100

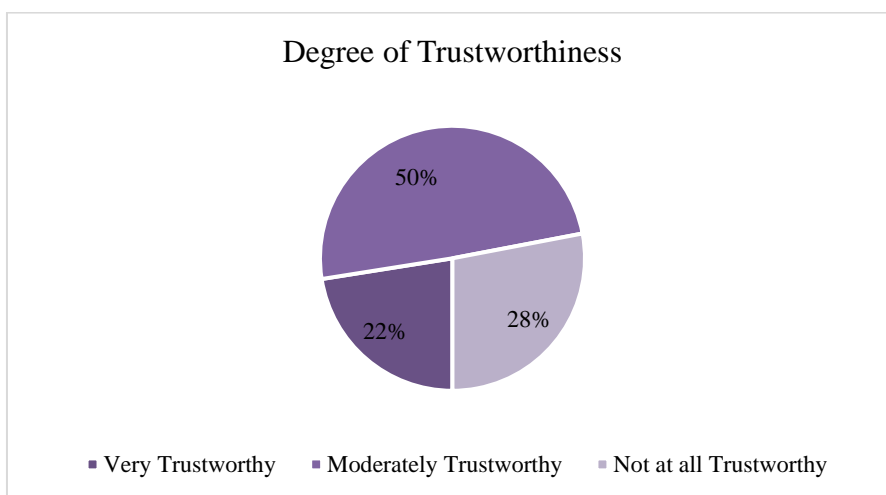


Figure 10. showing overall percentage of Degree of Trustworthiness of people on Social Media

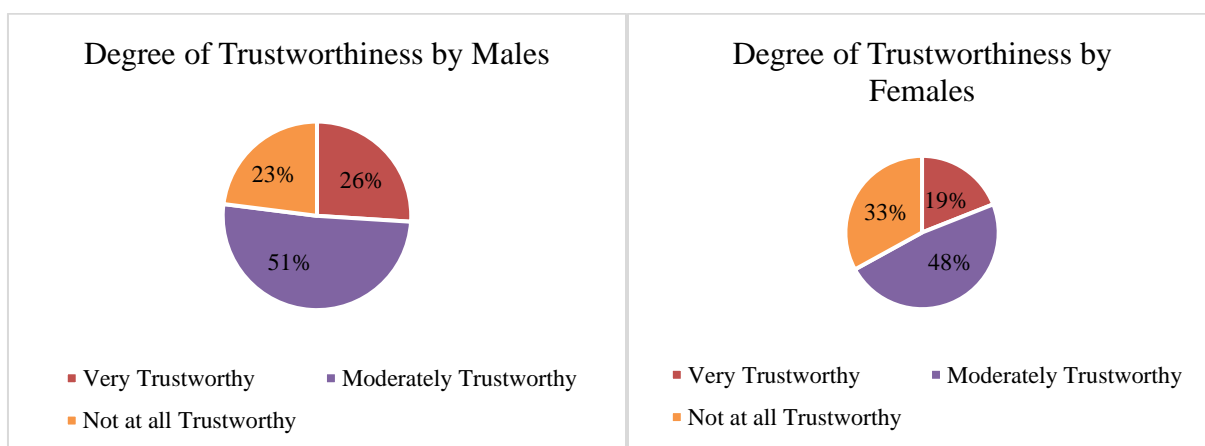


Figure 11. showing comparative percentage of Degree of Trustworthiness of males and females

Only 28% adolescents considered social networking sites are not trustworthy, while 22.5% respondents strongly believe in the people they meet online, hence finds these sites very trustworthy. 49.5% adolescents believe trustworthiness moderate. Hence, it is advisable to parents and educators to

orient their children properly about the pros and cons of social media so that they can't become the victims of cyber- crime or online bullying etc as the facts represents degree of trustworthiness to the people, adolescents meet online is quite high.

Table 7: Social media usage affects Academic Performance

Gender →	Male	Female	Total	
Response ↓	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	61	73	134	67
No	26	22	48	24
Undecided	13	05	18	09
Total	100	100	200	100

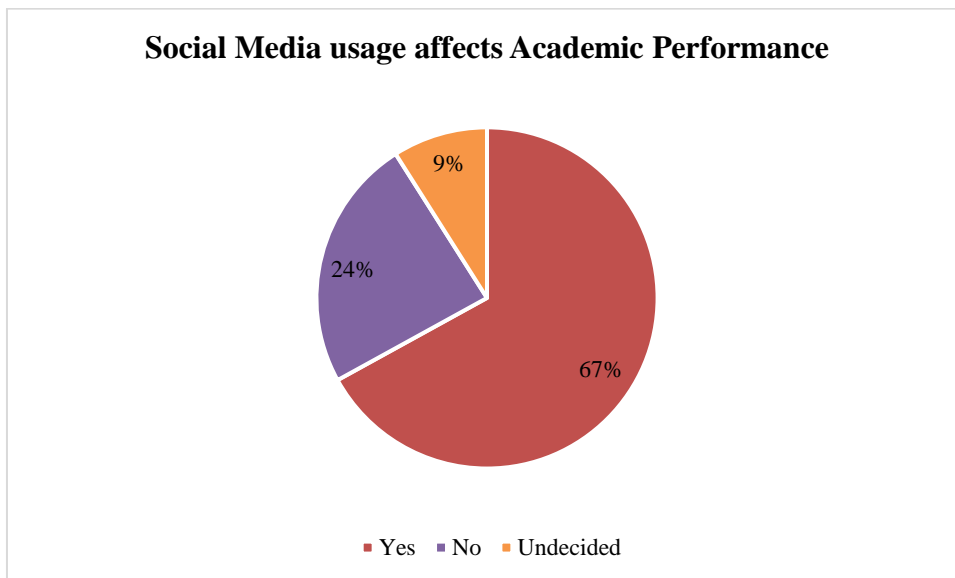


Figure 12. showing percentage of responses on asking whether Social Media affects Academic Performance

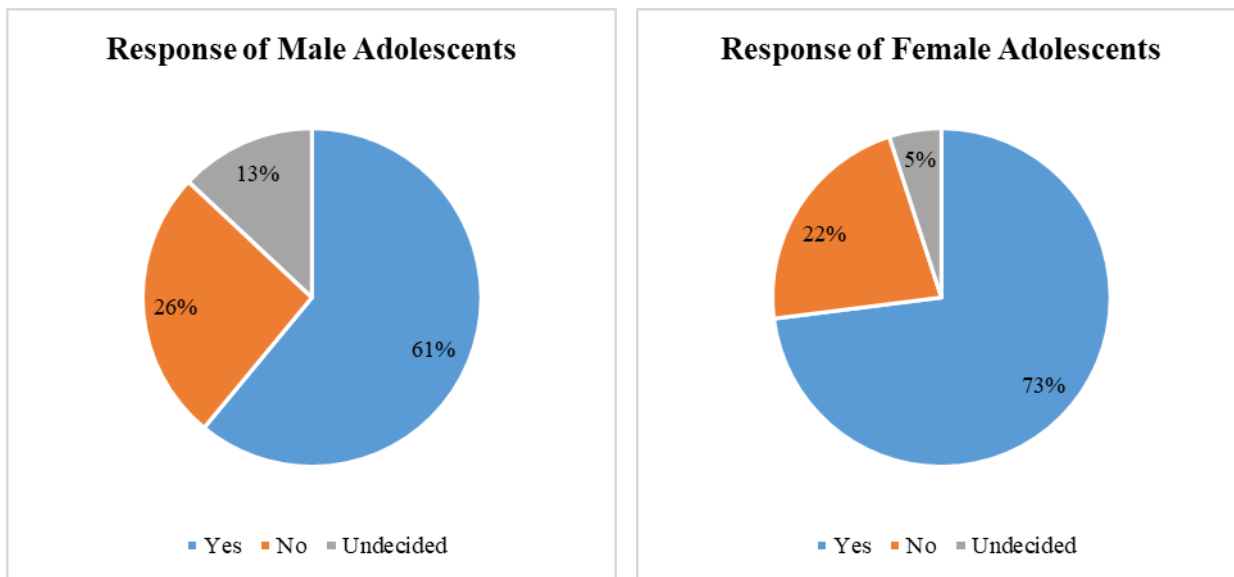


Figure 13. showing comparative percentage of Adolescents on Social Media affects Academic Performance

Table 7 displays the respondents' reaction when they were asked whether they realize social media affects their academic achievement. 134 adolescents (67%) responded positively; 24% i.e. 24 students are of the view that social

media has no effect on their scholastic achievement and 9% adolescents are undecided about the question asked. According to the data, the majority of adolescents are aware that social media has an impact on academic achievement.

Table 8: Social media usage improves Academic Performance

Gender →	Male	Female	Total	
Response ↓	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	32	48	24
No	65	56	121	60.5
Undecided	19	12	31	15.5
Total	100	100	200	100

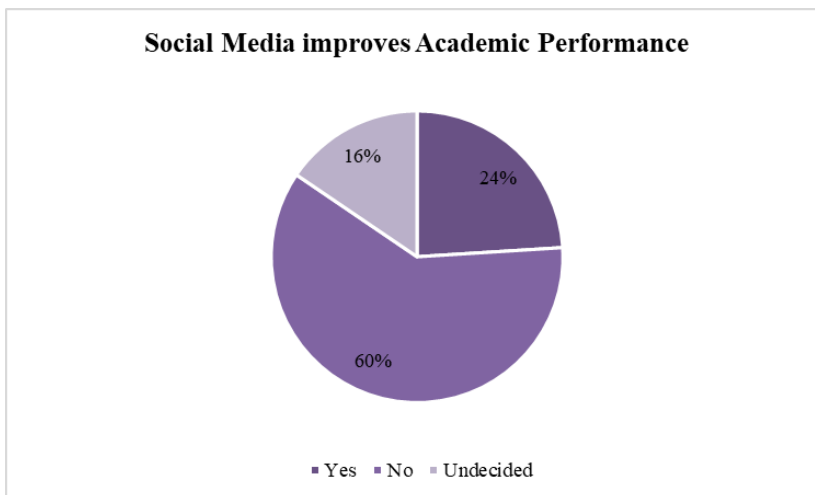


Figure 14. showing percentage of Social-Media improves Academic Performance

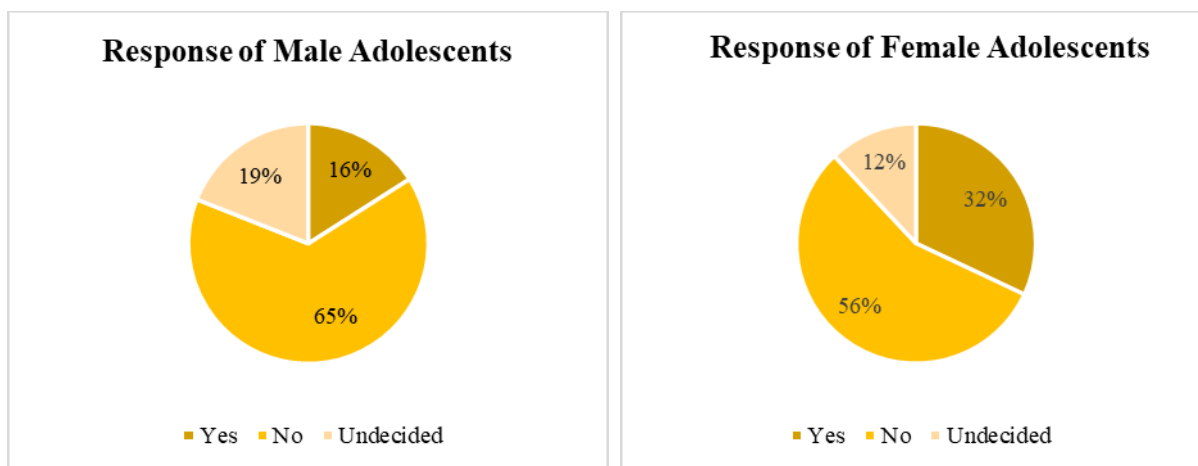


Figure 15. showing comparative percentage of response of Adolescents on Social Media improves Academic Performance

From Table 8, out of the total 200 adolescents, 121 representing 60.5% responded in the negative when asked social media usage improved their academic performance, 48 representing 24% answered in the affirmative, whilst 31 i.e. 5.7% were undecided. As in table 7, it is depicted that maximum number of respondents are familiar with the fact that social media affects their academic work. But in table 8, 60.5% adolescents responded negative that it did not improve their academic performance. It means that they are aware that unnecessary use of social sites is causing harm to their academic results, as very low percentage of adolescents are consulting it for academic purpose, rest all are using for making connections and chatting etc. So, they need to understand the use of balanced approach between use of social networking media and academics and other works.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Social media platform controls the whole system but to reduce its negative impacts and protection of our

adolescents of becoming networking sites savvy, parents and educators has to lend their ear and try to find better ways for reducing these problems. Social networking sites are attractive and these allure adolescents very easily, provide another world to adolescents to connect with people, make new friends and a good way to get freedom from burden and stress. Students spent a lot of time engaging in social media, affecting their academic results. In fact, even after having realization of its negative impacts, they become so addicted that they didn't make balance between the two. This significantly reduces their efficiency, causing serious mental and health problems. Hence, it is recommended teachers, parents and others concerned should promote social media as an educational tool rather than only entertaining and communicating, make them to understand the potential harm caused by it and encourage them to adopt balanced and controlled approach. It is advised to parents to pay attention to their wards and encourage them to supplement their time effectively in academics.

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