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A study on the perceived effect of social media among the students of Assam Agricultural University

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Abstract

The purpose of the study, "A Study on the perceived effect of Social Media among the Students of Assam Agricultural University," was to analyze the profile traits of the students, evaluate how they use social media, and outline the issues they encounter when using it. 120 respondents were chosen from among the second, third, and fourth-year undergraduate students at the College of Agriculture, AAU, using a multi-stage random sampling technique and a descriptive research design. Personal interviews were used to gather data utilizing a semi-structured study plan that had been pretested.

This study investigates the usage patterns, preferences, and perceptions of students toward various social media platforms, with a particular focus on WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and DIKSHA. Data revealed that WhatsApp is the most frequently used app, followed by Instagram and YouTube, largely for communication and entertainment. In contrast, the educational platform DIKSHA saw minimal engagement, primarily due to lack of interest or awareness. Students acknowledged both the positive and negative impacts of social media, citing improved communication and social connections, alongside concerns like eye strain and reduced face-to-face interaction. Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between social media knowledge and specific behavioural patterns, especially in terms of timing and place of access. The study highlights the need for better promotion of educational platforms and suggests integrating academic content into more widely used apps to encourage balanced usage among students who used WhatsApp four times a day (86.67%) are followed by those who use Instagram and YouTube (70.83%) and 60.83%, respectively. Facebook and DIKSHA were found to be used by only a small percentage of students (21.67% and 3.34%, respectively).

The majority of students opted to access DIKSHA in the morning (38.33%). However, DIKSHA was less prevalent throughout the other times of the day, such as 28.33% and 19.17%. 14.17% in the afternoon, evening, and night, respectively.

From a non-academic standpoint, students saw social media's advantages and disadvantages. The statement "I find that social media helps me make new friends" (Rank II) and "Excessive use of social media could decrease the frequency and quality of face-to-face interactions" (Rank III) took precedence over the first one, "social media can bring anxiety and depression," which had a WMS of 4.10.

The study also showed that social media use caused health problems for all students, with eye strain being the most prevalent issue (84.17%). Furthermore, issues like phony accounts were also common.

Keywords: Social media, students, perceived effect, Assam Agricultural University

Introduction

In the digital age, social media platforms have become an integral part of students' daily lives, influencing both their academic and personal spheres. With easy access to smartphones and the internet, platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook serve not only as communication tools but also as sources of entertainment, information, and educational content. This study explores students' usage patterns, preferences, and perceptions regarding various social media platforms, including DIKSHA, which is designed specifically for academic enhancement.

Approximately 63% of the world's population uses social

media, with viewers above the age of 18. Around the world, people use social media for two hours and twenty minutes per day on average. From 970 million users in 2010 to over 5.17 billion users now, social media platforms have nearly tripled their user population in the past ten years (Backlinko, 2024) ^[1]. According to Pillai (2017) ^[4], 70% of Indians use their phones to access social media, with each user spending an average of three hours each day on the platform.

The analysis reveals a clear preference for communication and entertainment-based platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube, with WhatsApp being the most frequently accessed throughout the day. In contrast, educational platforms like DIKSHA were accessed far less

frequently, indicating a possible lack of awareness or interest among students. Patterns of usage also varied across different times of the day and were influenced by factors such as purpose of use, user engagement, and perceived benefits.

Social media has evolved into a highly influential tool. In today's world, social media networks play a crucial role in various aspects of life, especially in education. Since their emergence, social networking sites (SNSs) have gained significant popularity among teenagers and university students (Salaway *et al.*, 2008) ^[6]. It is therefore unsurprising that social networking sites (SNSs) have entered educational settings, with many asserting that these platforms hold even greater potential to enhance learning and information sharing between students and educators (Simoes *et al.*, 2008) ^[7]. The main components of social media are user-created content.

Beyond usage trends, this study also examines students' perspectives on the social and psychological impacts of social media. While many acknowledged its role in enhancing communication and social networking, concerns about its effect on health and face-to-face interactions were also noted. Correlational analyses further highlight significant relationships between students' knowledge of social media and their behavioral patterns, especially in relation to YouTube access and engagement. Liccardi *et al.* (2007) ^[3] stated that students were socially engaged with one another to share their daily learning experiences and discuss various topics.

This study aims to shed light on the dual-edged nature of social media in students' lives and underlines the importance of encouraging the responsible use of academic platforms like DIKSHA, to better support students' learning and development.

The use of social media has been rapidly increasing in recent years. It is not only utilized by working individuals but there has also been a significant rise in student engagement with social media. The use of social media has had a beneficial impact on society. With the help of the Internet, all social platforms and various applications are readily accessible, allowing users to communicate and interact with one another, as well as to create, edit, and share new types of textual, visual, and audio content. It plays an essential role in our lives as it greatly aids in various areas, including politics, economics, and education. Greenhow *et al.* (2019) ^[2] state that social media serves as a link between formal and informal education, offering valuable opportunities for active learning, collaboration, and stronger community connections. In the modern era, social media has established a digital environment that supports and encapsulates the intricacies of multimodal or digital learning. In their study, Price *et al.* (2018) ^[5] concluded that social media frequently aids students in enhancing their academic, emotional, and social abilities.

The beginning of social media is established within the advancement of web advances, online communities, and the increasing desire for individuals to associate and share their lives in computerized spaces. From early online gatherings to the complex, multimedia-rich stages of nowadays has experienced a change that proceeds to shape how people connected with each other and the world.

The emergence of social media platforms has transformed

the ways in which students connect, communicate, and exchange information. These platforms provide students with opportunities to engage with their peers, showcase their creativity, and tap into a vast array of knowledge and resources. Nonetheless, in addition to the many advantages, the widespread use of social media among students also brings up issues related to privacy, mental health, academic achievement, and responsible digital behaviour. Recognizing the reasons behind students' involvement with social media is essential for understanding how it impacts their lives.

Research Methodology

The Assam Agricultural University students participated in the research study. One college, the College of Agriculture, Jorhat, was chosen for the study out of nine. There were 120 undergraduate students in total, with an equal number of male and female students. Only three batches of undergraduate students—second, third, and fourth years—were considered in the study, and forty (40) students—equal numbers of boys and girls—were selected from each batch. A research schedule with pertinent variables was created based on the study's goals. Two descriptive variables were included in the study: first, the students' social media usage patterns and the issues they encountered when using social media, and second, an independent variable that focused on the students' profile characteristics.

After the schedule was prepared on September 9, 2024, the data collection process began and lasted until September 25, 2024. A method of in-person interviews was used. With the aid of a planned schedule, the interview was conducted using the personal interview method. The appropriate statistical tools and techniques were used to code, analyze, and interpret the collected data. The study's data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0.0.0 edition 64-bit.

Finding

Students who used WhatsApp four times a day (86.67%) are followed by those who use Instagram and YouTube (70.83%) and 60.83%, respectively. Facebook and DIKSHA were found to be used by only a small percentage of students (21.67% and 3.34%, respectively). With 83.33 percent of all students using DIKSHA only once, it has the greatest one-time user usage rate among students. Its use, however, declines dramatically in the other categories.

A considerable number of pupils used Facebook at least once. Its frequency of usage is quite evenly distributed among users who use it once (46.66%), twice (21.67%), and four times (21.67%).

The most active social networking and communication apps were Instagram and WhatsApp.

With notable engagement in the higher-frequency categories (three and four times), YouTube was also being used extensively, especially by students.

Due to its comparatively modest frequency of use, DIKSHA may be more closely linked to educational objectives. Because social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp meet students' everyday communication and entertainment needs—two things that are essential to their social lives—they have far higher levels of involvement.

WhatsApp is essential and frequently used throughout the

day, especially for contact with friends and family.

Students find fun and instructional information on Instagram and YouTube, where visual and video-based content encourages daily or even hourly participation.

Due to its more intellectual nature, DIKSHA is used less frequently because students probably only utilize it when it's essential for learning.

The majority of students opted to access DIKSHA in the morning (38.33%). However, DIKSHA was less prevalent throughout the other times of the day, such as 28.33% and 19.17%.14.17% in the afternoon, evening, and night, respectively. However, none of them spent the entire day using DIKSHA.

Students preferred to browse Facebook at night (33.33%), followed by in the afternoon (21.67%), evening (15.00%), and morning (11.67%). Additionally, 18.33% of them use Facebook all day long.

Regarding YouTube, it was observed that 31.67% of students preferred to access the site in the evening, with 30.00 percent of students using it at night. Additionally, a total of 20.83 percent of the pupils used it constantly, with 910,33 percent of them accessing it in the morning. Just 6.67 percent of those surveyed said they would rather access in the afternoon.

Thirty-six percent of students used WhatsApp constantly. The next most popular times to use WhatsApp were at night (23.33%), in the morning (16.67%), in the evening (15.00%), and in the afternoon (8.33%).

Students viewed Instagram primarily after night (32.50%).Of them, a sizable percentage (26.66%) enjoyed using constantly. Following this were those who preferred to use (19.17%), (12.50%), and (9.17%).

From the above table it can be summarized that WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook were mostly preferred by the students all the time . The possible reason might be to serve dual purpose like gathering information related to academics as well as relaxation and entertainment. Though students could collect abundant information related to their study through the platform DIKSHA but they were not using all the time which might be due to the fact that they were not being aware or still not getting interest in it. Therefore, it is essential to influence the students to use such kind of social media platform where they can utilize to groom for their future.

From a non-academic standpoint, students saw social media's advantages and disadvantages. The statement "I find that social media helps me make new friends" (Rank II) and "Excessive use of social media could decrease the frequency and quality of face-to-face interactions" (Rank III) took precedence over the first one, "social media can bring anxiety and depression," which had a WMS of 4.10. This demonstrates that students think social media facilitates the growth of their social network. The comments "I find that social media has increased my ability to communicate with others" and "Social media affects sleeping" both received WMS 4.06, placing them in Rank IV.

The study also showed that social media use caused health problems for all students, with eye strain being the most prevalent issue (84.17%). Furthermore, issues like phony accounts were also common.

YouTube: Number of Times Checked per Day: Very

weak correlation ($r = 0.000$, $p = 0.329$) no significant relationship.

- **Preferred Timing for Accessing:** Strong positive correlation ($r = 0.722$, $p = 0.033$) indicating that more social media knowledge is associated with specific timing preferences for accessing YouTube.
- **Place to Access:** Strong positive correlation ($r = 0.682$, $p = -0.038$) indicating that more social media knowledge is related to accessing YouTube from specific places (statistically significant).
- **Frequency of Postings:** Strong positive correlation ($r = 0.872$, $p = -0.015$) indicating a significant relationship between knowledge and frequency of posting on YouTube.
- **Amount of Time Spent:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.064$, $p = 0.171$) no significant relationship.
- **Writing Status Updates:** Weak positive correlation ($r = 0.231$, $p = -0.110$) no significant relationship

Facebook

- **Number of Times Checked per Day:** Very weak correlation ($r = 0.001$, $p = 0.329$)—no significant relationship between social media knowledge and frequency of checking Facebook.
- **Preferred Timing for Accessing:** Weak positive correlation ($r = 0.126$, $p = 0.152$)—no significant relationship between knowledge and preferred timing.
- **Place to Access:** Strong positive correlation ($r = 0.691$, $p = 0.039$)—suggests that students with better knowledge of social media are more likely to access Facebook from certain locations (statistically significant).
- **Frequency of Postings:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.056$, $p = -0.175$)—no significant relationship.
- **Amount of Time Spent:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.087$, $p = 0.164$)—no significant relationship.
- **Writing Status Updates:** Weak positive correlation ($r = 0.329$, $p = -0.090$)—no significant relationship.

WhatsApp

- **Number of Times Checked per Day:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.068$, $p = 0.167$)—no significant relationship between knowledge and frequency of checking WhatsApp.
- **Preferred Timing for Accessing:** Weak positive correlation ($r = 0.191$, $p = 0.120$) no significant relationship.
- **Place to Access:** Extremely strong positive correlation ($r = 0.988$, $p = -0.001$) indicating a very strong and statistically significant relationship, meaning that more social media knowledge is associated with specific places of access for WhatsApp.
- **Frequency of Postings:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.002$, $p = -0.274$) no significant relationship.
- **Amount of Time Spent:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.062$, $p = 0.171$) no significant relationship.
- **Writing Status Updates:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.076$, $p = -0.163$) no significant

relationship.

DIKSHA

- **Number of Times Checked per Day:** Very weak correlation ($r = 0.000$, $p = 0.590$) no significant relationship.
- **Preferred Timing for Accessing:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.062$, $p = 0.205$)—no significant relationship.
- **Place to Access:** Weak positive correlation ($r = 0.166$, $p = -0.143$) no significant relationship.
- **Frequency of Postings:** Very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.059$, $p = -0.173$)—no significant relationship.
- **Amount of Time Spent:** Very weak correlation ($r = 0.001$, $p = 0.312$) no significant relationship.
- **Writing Status Updates:** Very weak correlation ($r = 0.000$, $p = -0.340$) no significant relationship.

Instagram

- **Number of Times Checked per Day:** Very weak correlation ($r = 0.000$, $p = 0.384$) no significant relationship.
- **Preferred Timing for Accessing:** Very weak correlation ($r = 0.001$, $p = 0.322$) no significant relationship.
- **Place to Access:** Weak positive correlation ($r = 0.216$, $p = 0.117$)—no significant relationship.
- **Frequency of Postings:** Weak positive correlation ($r = 0.270$, $p = -0.102$) no significant relationship.
- **Amount of Time Spent:** Very weak correlation ($r = 0.000$, $p = 0.470$) no significant relationship.
- **Writing Status Updates:** Very weak correlation ($r = 0.000$, $p = -0.329$) no significant relationship.

Rational of the Problem

The internet has become a necessary component of daily life, especially for younger generations who are very tech-savvy. Students' lives are significantly impacted by social media, which has become incredibly popular over the past 20 years. Social media has clear advantages for education, information sharing, and social interaction, but its effects on students are complex. Social media has both beneficial and detrimental effects on students' interpersonal relationships, mental health, and academic achievement.

Concerns have been raised about social media's impact on students' social and academic lives as its usage among them keeps growing. The question is whether social media use is influencing education or if students are using these platforms for educational purposes.

Assam Agricultural University (AAU), in contrast to other educational institutions worldwide, offers internet access to students, promoting the use of social media for both academic and extracurricular purposes. Although students at AAU frequently use social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, and DIKSHA, no study has been done to examine how they use these sites for socializing or for educational purposes. It's crucial to comprehend how students use social media, what platforms they favour, and how this affects their academic achievement, social behaviours, and general productivity. How students manage their time and whether social media is

causing distractions in their academic lives are two important issues that need further research. Given how important social media is to students' social lives, it is critical to determine whether their use of these platforms is helping or hurting their academic performance. Do students spend too much time on non-academic pursuits, which causes distractions, or are they participating in fruitful academic activities, like taking online courses, using educational resources, or working with peers?

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