

Unpacking Students' Perspectives on Social Networking Sites

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Email: papiyaupadhyay@wbnsou.ac.in**Abstract**

Presently, social networking sites (SNSs) as a creation of Web-based technology play a crucial role in the daily life activities of students. The present study explores undergraduate students' behavior patterns and attitudes towards SNSs for education purposes. 230 undergraduate students were selected using a purposive sampling method. A self-constructed tool was developed for collecting responses. Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), graphical representation, t-test, etc. conjointly paved to analyze the responses. MS Excel & Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used for further data analysis. The study indicated that most students used YouTube and WhatsApp for general purposes. The study also explored that the maximum number of students spent 3 hours in SNSs for general purposes in a day average and 1 hour in SNSs for academic purposes. The study revealed that YouTube and WhatsApp were used by the maximum number of students for their academic purposes and also highlighted some of the reasons for using SNSs like getting learning content, getting updated information and news, communicating with peers and teachers, chatting, downloading music or videos, getting job information and posting photos. The study revealed that the students had a positive attitude towards using SNSs for education. Nonetheless, the attitudes of students towards SNSs dedicated to education differ significantly based on their gender and locality of their institutions but did not differ significantly based on their stream. With this tune, the study interprets that connectivity, affordability, social status, etc. prominently affect the attitude of the students towards the use of SNSs for education. The study recommends that a positive attitude must be developed among students towards the application of Web 2.0 for education purposes leading to enhanced academic experience and improved performance.

Keywords: Attitudes, Behavior, Gender, Locality, Social Networking Sites, Students

Introduction

The continuous development of Information and Communication technology has brought changes in the way that students interact & socialize. In the 21st century, social networking sites (SNSs) play an important role in the daily life activities of students. The term "Social networking" refers to a range of web-enabled software programs that allow users to interact and work collaboratively with other users and facilitate the ability to browse, search, invite friends to connect & interact, share reviews, comments, blog entries, favorites, discussions, events, classified information and many more (Sharma, 2014). Social media has become an integral part of people's daily lives (Bayd & Ellison, 2007; Hakoyama & Hakoyama, 2011). Several studies indicated that people use social networking sites for different reasons to discuss class materials and to share academic issues (Salas & Alexander, 2008), make new friends, follow famous people, sharing personal information (Raacke & Raacke- Bonds, 2008), to express their feelings & thoughts (Bryant et al. 2006). According to Tilfarlioglu (2011), the educational system has also seen the need to integrate social networking to enhance academic performance. Many researchers believe that social networking sites best serve educational objectives and goals by linking students through their collaborative sense-making (Madge et al. 2009; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009).

However, several studies also reported that social networking sites has a negative impact on students like anxiety, behavioral changes, mental health problems, psychological disorders, stress, a sense of guilt and crime, etc. (Duncon et al. 2012; Ophir, Nass & Wagner, 2009). Social networking sites also distract students' attention and promote inappropriate behaviors in the form of useless charting & time-wasting (Kuppuswamy & Narayan, 2010). Now a day the usage of social networking among students is increasing and it has a significant impact on society ingeneral. Many studies revealed that the majority of university students agreed that social networking

sites have a positive impact on their academic performance & provide opportunities for communication between students and teachers (Helou, 2014; Salih & Elsaid, 2018). Studies have identified some of the reasons for developing negative attitudes toward social networking sites for academic purposes among students like, poor internet connection, lack of time, lack of privacy, lack of technical knowledge, etc. (Parua, 2018; Ali, 2018; Verma & Lalnunpuii, 2016). The attitude of university students in West Bengal towards the use of social networking for academic purposes was high (Mondal, 2019). Several studies also reported that the attitude toward using social media depends on gender, residence, level of study, and the locality where the students reside (Mondal, 2019; Das & Shikder, 2018; Samsujjaman & Halder 2019; Ramesh, 2021).

The field of education has undergone rapid changes to a new dimension of digital technology. So, it is important to explore the behavior patterns of students and assess the attitudes of students toward the use of social networking sites for educational purposes.

Review of Related Literature

Several studies have been carried out to explore the behavior pattern and to assess the attitude towards SNSs for education:

- **Behavior pattern:**

A study by Akyildiz & Argan (2011), found that almost all students have a Facebook account and they use it for social and daily activities rather than educational purposes. Haneefa and Sumitha (2011) conducted a study on the students of Calicut University and revealed that the majority of the students were aware of SNSs, Orkut was found to be more popular than Facebook and students visit SNSs twice a week. Singh & Gill (2015) studied the role and users' approach to SNSs of the University of North India and found that Facebook is the most popular SNS and is used mostly for entertainment & communication purposes. Brahma & Verma (2018) explored students' attitudes towards SNSs at Central Institute of Technology, Assam, and found that the majority of the students used Facebook, majority of the students were spending 3-6 hours a day on SNSs mainly for entertainment purposes. Eke, Omekwu & Odon (2014), found that students of the University of Nigeria were using SNSs for online study, discussing national issues & watching movies. Verma & Devi (2016) reported that most of the students of Mizoram University were aware of SNSs & are using more than one SNSs which Facebook and YouTube are common SNSs. Verma & Lalnunpuii (2017) indicated that teachers and students of the National Institute of Technology, Mizoram were spending 1-4 hours every day on SNSs, & they used SNSs for academic purposes and as a bridge in scholarly communication.

- **Attitude:**

A study by Mondal (2019), to measure the attitude of higher education students towards social media, found that there was no significant difference in attitude between rural and urban boys, rural and urban girls, rural boys and rural girls, rural boys and urban girls, rural and urban students, but there was a significant difference between boys (rural + urban) & girls (rural+ urban), urban boys and urban girls, urban boys, and rural girls. Bullu et al. (2016) studied the attitudes of middle school students toward social media, and found that the general attitude scores of the participant students were high. There were not any significant differences based on gender, school, class, mother's education, father's education, income level, location, and social media use length. Salih & Elsaid (2018) explored students' attitudes towards the use of social media for learning purposes, and revealed a positive attitude towards social networking in their learning. It was also found that students were using social media not only to socialize but also to meet their educational needs. Moulisree et al. (2020) also reported a positive attitude toward social networks among different age groups of students in Chennai. Parua (2018) conducted a study on the attitude of undergraduate students towards SNSs for their academic achievement, and found that high percentage of respondents have a stronger attitude towards SNSs for fun, pleasure, and chatting with friends and a low percentage of respondents have a stronger attitude towards SNSs for academic purposes. It was also found that there were no significant differences between streams, gender, or types of courses students used SNSs. However, another study by Ramesh (2021) reflected that there was a significant difference in attitude towards SNSs based on type of courses & type of college. Potharkar et al. (2022) explored the perception and attitude of undergraduate students on social media in Maharashtra; and found that most of the students depicted a positive opinion towards the efficacy & utility of social media tool and their use in education. Chatterjee, Mondal & Saha (2016), conducted a study on students' attitudes towards using social media for educational purposes in the Purulia district of West Bengal and reported that there were no significant differences in attitude towards social media with regards to sex, residence & level of study, however, significance relationships exist between the attitude of using social media and time spent for use of social media. Samsujjaman & Halder (2019) explored student attitudes towards social media in relation to their academic achievement and found that there were significant differences existed between male and female students regarding their attitude towards social media. Female students' attitudes are better than

those of male students and significant differences exist between urban and rural students. Urban students' attitudes are higher than rural students regarding their attitudes toward social media.

Need of the Study

The social networking sites play an influential role to adolescents. Learners also can develop holistic learning by sharing their knowledge through social networking sites which their academic performance. Many studies have been conducted in the area of social networking sites & their effect on children & adolescents. However, there are very few studies that have been conducted related to behavioral patterns & attitudes towards social networking sites for their academic purposes in West Bengal. Therefore, it is significant to analyze the behavioral patterns and positive/ negative attitudes toward the use of social networking sites for academic purposes. This study will provide information about the pattern of behavior & types of attitudes towards the use of social networking sites for educational purposes among the graduate students of West Bengal.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives were laid down for exploring the behavior patterns and attitudes towards SNSs for education purposes:

1. To find out which Social Networking Sites students generally use/prefer.
2. To find out how much time students spend on social networking sites on average in a day.
3. To find out which Social Networking Sites students use/prefer for academic purposes.
4. To find out how much time students spend on social networking sites for academic purposes in a day.
5. To find out for which purpose students use SNSs primarily.
6. To find out what kind of community students subscribe to on social networking sites.
7. To explore the attitude of the students towards SNSs for education purposes.
8. To find out the differences between the attitudes of male and female students towards SNSs for education purposes.
9. To find out the differences between the attitudes of students from rural and urban institutions towards SNSs for education purposes.
10. To find out the differences between the attitudes of students from arts and science streams towards SNSs for education purposes.

Given above: To fulfill the objectives 1 to 7, no hypotheses were framed and the data collected through an online survey have been analyzed by calculating the percentages of the respondents.

Hypotheses

For the last three objectives (i.e., 8, 9, 10) the following three hypotheses were framed:

- **H₀₁** – There are no significant differences between the attitudes of male and female students towards SNSs for education.
- **H₀₂** – There are no significant differences between the attitudes of students from rural and urban institutions towards SNSs for education.
- **H₀₃** – There are no significant differences between the attitudes of students from arts and science streams towards SNSs for education.

Methodology

- **Study type:** The method used for the study is descriptive survey method.
- **Duration of Survey:** The survey was conducted during 2023-2024
- **Population:** All the undergraduate students of HEIs in West Bengal.
- **Sample:** 230 undergraduate students were selected by purposive sampling method.
- **Variables**
 - **Dependent Variable:** Behaviour pattern & attitudes towards SNSs for education.
 - **Independent Variable:** Gender, location of institution, and stream of undergraduate students of Higher Educational Institutions.
- **Tool**

A self-constructed tool was developed for collecting information. Before constructing the tool, a thorough review of related studies was carried out to select possible items which would reflect the objectives of the study. The tool had three sections-

 - **Part A** seeks general information about the respondents.
 - **Part B** covers 06 items related to SNSs using behavior patterns.
 - **Part C** includes 16 items with a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree) on attitude towards Social Networking Sites (SNSs) for education.

Content validity was done through expert judgment. For content validity researcher requested four experts to review the scale and assess each item based on 4 criteria including relevancy, clarity, simplicity, and necessity.

- **Collection of Data**

Data were collected through Google Forms. E-mail & social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook were used to disseminate the questionnaire.

- **Statistics Used for Data Analysis**

Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), graphical representation, t-test, etc. have been applied to analyze the data. MS Excel & Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used for data analysis.

Analysis and interpretation

As per the objectives of the study, in case of objectives 1 to 7, percentages of the respondents have been calculated and for objectives 8 to 10, t-tests have been calculated.

The study explored the behavior patterns of the students with respect to the SNSs that were used by them for general purposes. It has been found that most students used YouTube (84.35%) and WhatsApp (82.17%) for general purposes. Around half (46.52%) of students used Facebook, 39.13% of students used Instagram, 33.48% of students used LinkedIn and 27.39% of students used Telegram. Few students used Pinterest (16.52%), Quora (15.65%), Twitter (13.91%), Facebook Messenger (11.30%), Snapchat (11.30%) and others (2.61%) for general purposes. Only 1.74% of students stated that they didn't use any SNSs (Figure 1).

The study also depicted time-spending trends in SNSs for general purposes. It has been found that a maximum (22.61%) of students spent 3 hours in SNSs for general purposes in a day on average. Spending time in general purpose for most of the students (87.83%) ranged from 1 hour to 7 hours. The rest of the students spent either less than 1 hour or more than 7 hours (Figure 2).

For academic purposes, YouTube (78.26%) and WhatsApp (51.74%) were used by the students. Few students used LinkedIn (23.91%), Telegram (23.04%), Quora (18.26%), Instagram (16.52%), Facebook (15.65%), Twitter (3.48%), Pinterest (2.61%), Snapchat (2.61%), Facebook messenger (0.87%) for academic interest (Figure 3).

The research also highlighted that the maximum student (21.74%) spent 1 hour in SNSs for academic purposes. Where spending time of most of the students (91.30%) on SNSs ranged from 1 hour to 5 hours for academic purposes. Only a few students used SNSs for more than 5 hours (Figure 4).

It has been found that students used SNSs for getting learning content (68.70%), getting updated information and news (66.96%), communicating with class fellows (64.35%), communicating with teachers (62.61%), chatting (62.17%), downloading music or videos (61.74%), getting job information (51.74%) and posting photos (48.26). Only a few students used SNSs for submitting articles (16.52%), uploading music or videos (14.78%), creating polls, quizzes, and surveys (6.09%), and blogging (4.35%). 84.78% of the user students subscribed to educational communities on SNSs, whereas 79.13 subscribed to entertainment communities and 68.70% subscribed to informational communities (Figures 5 and 6).

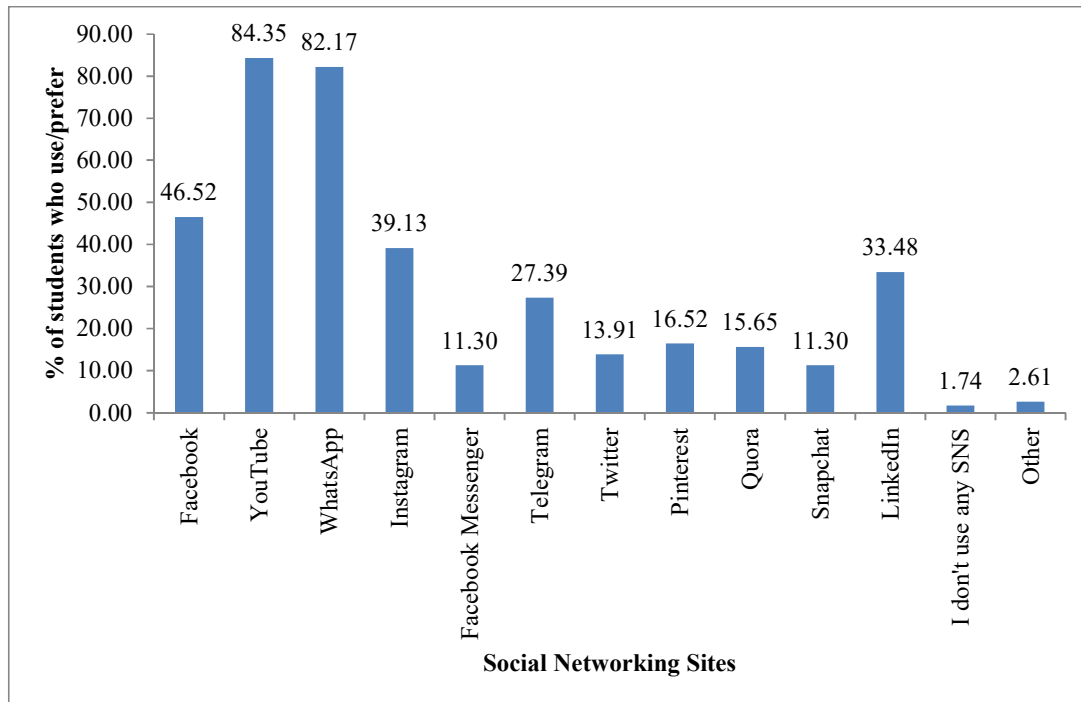


Figure 1: Social Networking Sites that students generally use/prefer

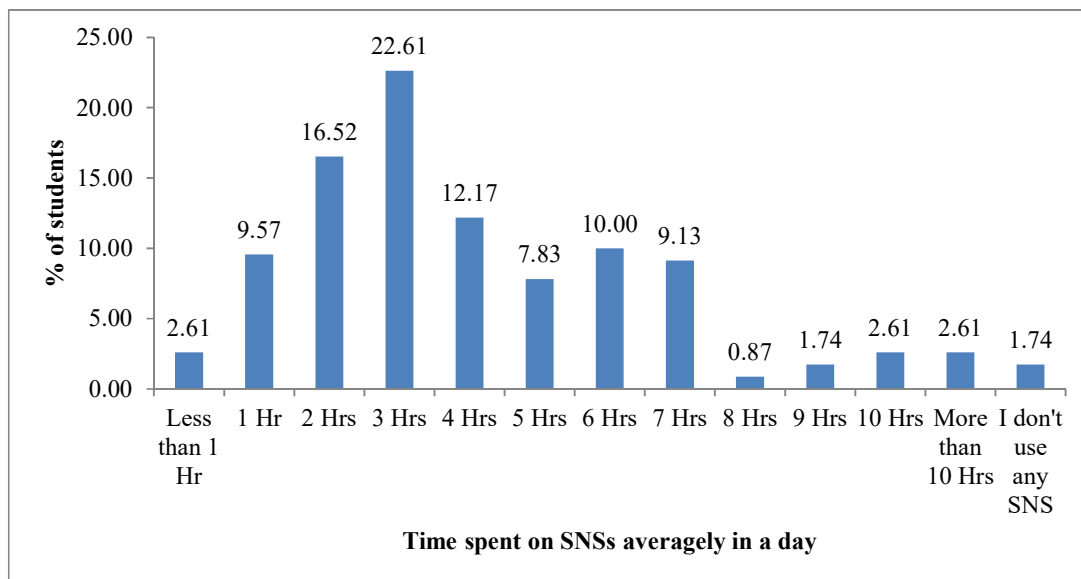


Figure 2: Time spent by the students on social networking sites average in a day

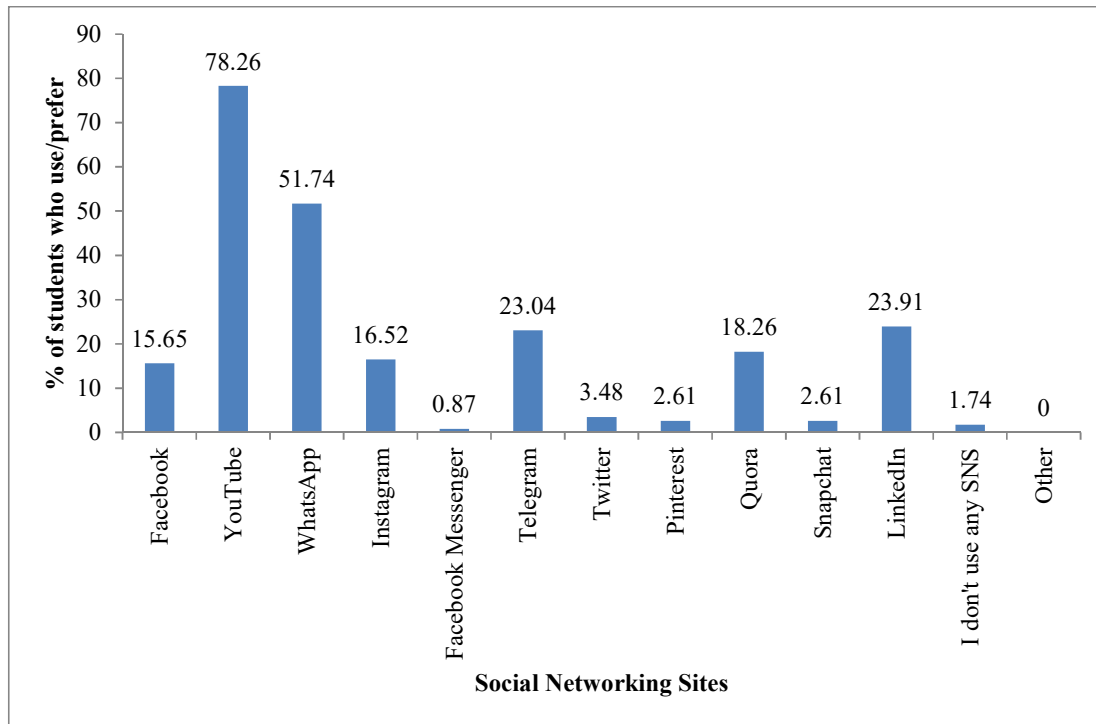


Figure 3: Social Networking Sites that students use/prefer for academic purposes

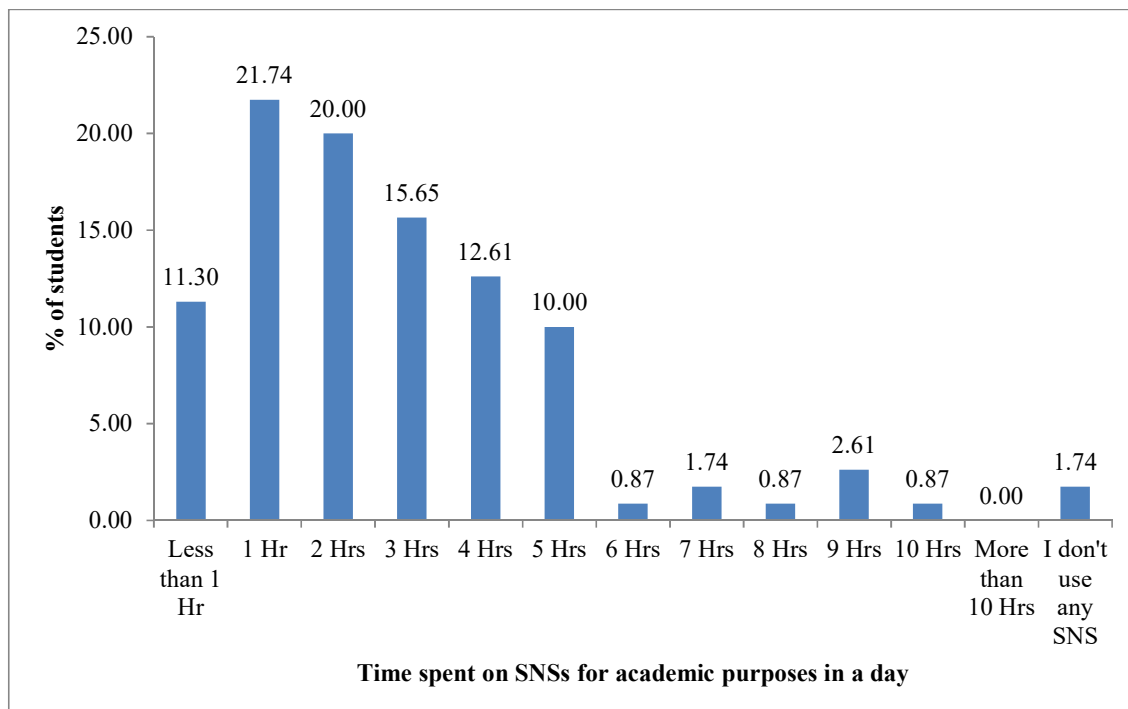


Figure 4: Time spent by the students on SNSs for academic purposes in a day

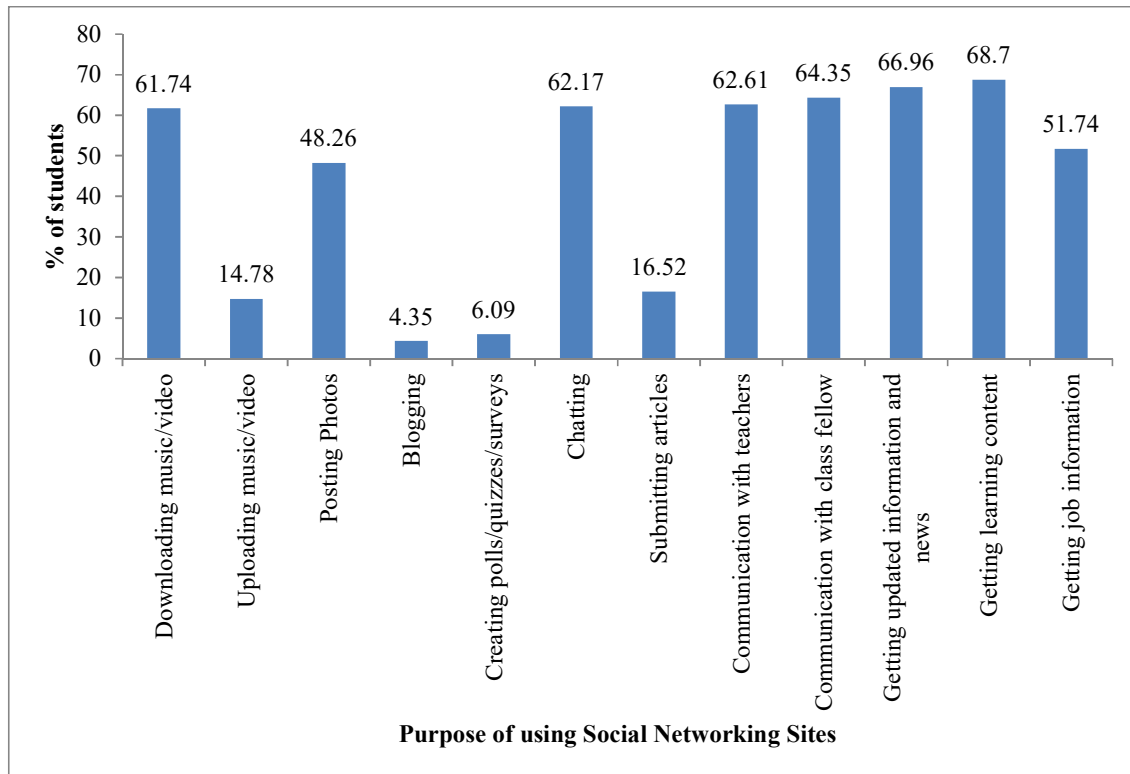


Figure 5: Purpose of using SNSs primarily by the students

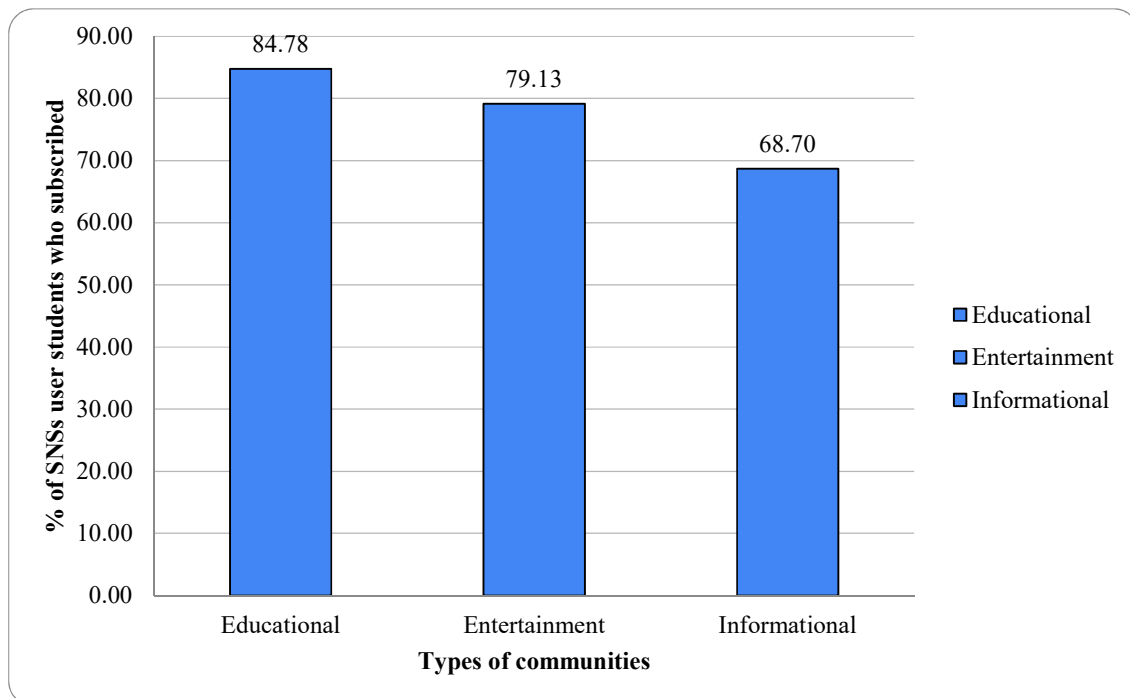


Figure 6: Types of communities that students subscribe on social networking sites

To assess the attitudes of the students toward SSNs for education, 16 items were used. The responses to positive statements were scored as 1 for 'strongly disagree', 2 for 'disagree', 3 for 'neutral', 4 for 'agree', and 5 for 'strongly agree'. A reverse scoring pattern was used for negative statements. Item-wise mean scores as well as

the mean score of overall attitudes (3.51) indicated that the students had a positive attitude toward using SNSs for education (Table 1)

An independent sample t-test was performed to compare attitudes toward SNSs for education between male and female students. There was a significant difference in the scores for male students ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.34$) and female students ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.42$); $t(228) = -2.092$, $p = 0.038$ at the 0.05 significance level. This result indicated that the attitudes of students towards SNSs for education differ significantly based on their gender (Tables 2 and 3).

For the location of the institutions, it has been found that there was a significant difference in the scores of students from rural institutions ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.37$) and urban institutions ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.37$); $t(228) = -4.174$, $p = .000$ at the 0.05 significance level. This result also indicated that the attitudes of students towards SNSs for education differ significantly based on the locality of their institutions (Tables 2 and 3).

However, for the stream of students, it has been observed that there was no significant difference in the scores of students of Arts ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.38$) and Science ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.39$); $t(228) = -0.130$, $p = .896$ at the 0.05 significance level. This result also indicated that the attitudes of students towards SNSs for education purposes did not differ significantly based on their stream (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 1: Item-wise descriptive statistics

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 1 - Social Networking Sites (SNSs) influence my academic performance negatively	3.00	1.000
Item 2 - Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are helpful in creating awareness among youth	3.98	.733
Item 3 - SNSs (Social Networking Sites) are helpful to get information regarding my courses of study	4.11	.882
Item 4 - SNSs (Social Networking Sites) are harmful to social relationships as they increase distance from my classmates	3.26	.963
Item 5 - SNSs are useful for effective communication with our institution	3.61	.767
Item 6 - I can discuss my assignments with friends through SNSs	4.19	.781
Item 7 - Social Networking Sites are effective tools for e-learning	3.97	.939
Item 8 - We should maintain distance with our teachers in Social Networking Sites	3.14	1.033
Item 9 - I feel free to communicate with my teacher in Social Networking Sites than in the real classroom	2.90	.988
Item 10 - Social Networking Sites (SNSs) badly affect the language that we use for academic purposes	3.23	.936
Item 11 - Social Networking Sites (SNSs) badly affect our study habits	2.69	1.128
Item 12 - Social Networking Sites (SNSs) change/affect our usual study timings	2.50	1.014
Item 13 - Social Networking Sites (SNSs) create awareness among youth for new trends and develop a global culture	3.93	.708
Item 14 - I get information regarding my career and academic interests on Social Networking Sites	4.21	.811
Item 15 - I prefer to express my ideas and feelings on Social Networking Sites	3.33	1.158
Item 16 - It is easy to use Social Networking Sites for academic purposes	4.06	.821
Overall attitudes	3.51	.382

Table 2: Group statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gender wise attitude Male	121	3.457645	.3447160	.0313378
Female	109	3.562500	.4150141	.0397511
Institutional location wise attitude Rural	104	3.395433	.3653120	.0358218
Urban	126	3.599702	.3727582	.0332079
Stream wise attitude Arts	128	3.504395	.3782002	.0334285
Science	102	3.511029	.3895101	.0385672

Table 3: Independent samples t-test result

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Gender wise Equal attitude variances assumed	1.501	.222	-2.092	228	.038	-.1048554	.0501339	-.2036403	-.0060704	
Institutional location wise Equal attitude variances assumed	.759	.385	-4.174	228	.000	-.2042697	.0489411	-.3007044	-.1078349	
Stream wise Equal attitude variances assumed	1.406	.237	-.130	228	.896	-.0066349	.0508678	-.1068659	.0935961	

Discussion

The present explorative study focused on behavior patterns and attitudes towards SNSs for education of the undergraduate students. YouTube and WhatsApp were the two most popular SSNs the students for general as well as academic purposes which were not in line with the findings of Akyildiz & Argan (2011), Singh & Gill (2015), Brahma & Verma (2018) as their findings indicated Facebook as the most popular SNS for the students. However, around half of the students used Facebook for general purposes. However, Verma & Devi (2016) acknowledged the role of YouTube as a common SNS for students. Moreover, the users of SNSs for academic purposes was less than for general purposes. Other common SNSs were LinkedIn, Telegram, Instagram, etc. A maximum number of students who used SNSs 3 hours for general purposes and 1 hour for academic purposes. Most of the students spent 1 to 7 hours for general purposes and below 1 to 5 hours for academic purposes which was quite similar to the findings of Brahma & Verma (2018), Verma & Lalnunpuui (2017). The research also highlighted that the students used SNSs for learning content, updating news and information, and communicating with peers and teachers. Students subscribed to different educational, entertainment, and informational communities on SNSs. The research highlighted that female students had more positive attitudes than males toward SNSs for education which indicated that some psychological factors may control the involvement and interest of the students toward SNSs. The location of the institute also affects the attitude of the students toward SNSs for education. Students from urban institutions had more positive attitudes towards SNSs for education than students from rural institutions. Connectivity, affordability, social status, etc. may affect the attitude of the students in this context. The stream of the students had no significant effect on their attitudes towards SNSs for education. However, the SNSs can play a major role in integrating technology into education for undergraduate students of different higher education institutions and building a sense of community.

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