

## USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the usage patterns of social networking sites (SNSs) among college students. With the increasing presence of social media in everyday life, it is essential to understand how students engage with these platforms and for what purposes. A survey of 200 college students was conducted, and the data were analysed to highlight usage frequency, preferred platforms, and primary reasons for using SNSs. The findings reveal significant engagement with social networking platforms, with entertainment being the leading purpose. The study also indicates that social media plays a role in academic activities, communication, and staying updated with current events. The results can help educators and administrators design interventions that promote responsible and purposeful use of social media among students.*

### **Keywords**

*Social media, social networking sites, usage patterns, academic performance, communication*

Reference to this paper should

be made as follows:

**Received: 22/09/25**

**Approved: 28/11/25**

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*USAGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING  
SITES AMONG COLLEGE  
STUDENTS*

*RJPSSs 2025, Vol. LI,*

*No. 2, pg. 423-430*

*Article No. 48*

Similarity Check: 05%

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*[https://anubooks.com/journal-  
volume/rjpss-vol-li-no2-dec-2025](https://anubooks.com/journal-volume/rjpss-vol-li-no2-dec-2025)*

**DOI:** *[https://doi.org/10.31995/  
rjpss.2025v51i02.48](https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpss.2025v51i02.48)*

## **1. Introduction**

The emergence of social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp has significantly transformed communication, entertainment, and learning among students. With the rapid growth of technology and smartphones, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, especially for college students. These platforms allow quick communication, make it easy to interact with others, provide fun and information, and also shape the way students study and share ideas. As a result, students increasingly rely on SNS for both educational and personal purposes. While SNS provides numerous benefits such as peer collaboration, academic support, and global connectivity, excessive use can lead to distractions, reduced productivity, and mental health concerns. Therefore, understanding how students engage with these platforms, the time they spend, and their purposes of use is essential. An article by Holton and Wynne (2024) emphasizes the potential of social networking sites (SNS) as effective platforms for research, particularly in healthcare. The article highlights that SNS can overcome traditional barriers to participation, enabling online discussion groups and co-design workshops for diverse or hard-to-reach populations. The authors note that platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook facilitate communication, file sharing, and engagement at convenient times and locations, making research more accessible and inclusive. Apart from education and personal use, social networking sites also affect the way people see brands and make buying choices. Khan et al. (2023) studied how features of social media build trust and brand image, which then influence people's decisions to shop online. Their study shows that social media has a wider impact, as it shapes how people think and make decisions in both learning and business.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

Wondwesen Tafesse (2022) studied how using social networking sites (SNS) affects college students' studies. Instead of just asking students, the study used a mobile app to track their actual use, which made the data more accurate. The results showed an inverted U-shaped pattern: using SNS in moderation helps students do better but using it too much harms their performance. This study gives a deeper understanding than earlier research, which mostly showed simple straight-line effects. Similarly, R. Subramani (2015) investigates the academic use of SNS by university students in Tamil Nadu, India. Through a survey of 482 students from various disciplines, the study offers insights into how social media influences students' communication, learning behaviours and acceptance. It contributes to understanding how evolving social media technologies impact students' academic experiences in the Indian Christine Grové (2019) studied how social networking sites (SNS) can

be used to involve young people who have a parent with mental illness or substance abuse problems. The study shows that SNS can reduce barriers like stigma, lack of trust, and poor access, making it easier for vulnerable groups to take part in research. Using case studies, Grové also looked at the ethics, benefits, and limits of social media in research, and suggested its careful use in public mental health. Here's the corrected version in proper APA style and smooth grammar:

The study by **Agarwal, R., and Agarwal, K. (2023)** highlights the strong influence of social media on university students' decision-making, with Instagram and LinkedIn emerging as key platforms for engagement. It provides valuable insights for marketers to design platform-specific campaigns and for educational institutions to enhance recruitment and outreach. The findings emphasize the growing significance of social media in shaping preferences and connections in today's digital landscape.

In another study, Katy Jordan and Martin Weller (2018) explored how academics use SNS. By analysing 480 responses, they found both advantages and challenges of online academic networking. Their work gives a clearer picture of digital scholarship, offering ways to support at-risk groups and also improve professional connections in education.

The reviewed studies collectively indicate that social networking sites (SNS) play a significant role in shaping academic, social, and research-related behaviors across different populations. Moderate use of SNS can support learning and academic performance, while excessive use may have negative effects (Tafesse, 2022). SNS also serve as valuable tools for engagement, communication, and recruitment in both educational and research contexts, overcoming traditional barriers such as accessibility and social barriers (Grové, 2019; Jordan & Weller, 2018). Overall, these studies highlight the importance of understanding usage patterns, benefits, and challenges of SNS to maximize positive outcomes and minimize potential drawbacks for students and researchers alike.

### **3. Rationale of the Study**

Social networking sites (SNSs) have become an integral part of college students' daily lives, influencing their communication, learning, and social interactions. With platforms like Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook widely used students spend a considerable amount of time online for both entertainment and academic purposes. While SNSs offer opportunities for collaboration, access to information, and academic engagement, excessive use can lead to distractions, reduced productivity and mental health concerns. Understanding students' usage patterns, preferred platforms and purposes of use is essential for educators, administrators, and policymakers to design strategies that harness the

benefits of social media while reducing its potential negative impacts. This study, therefore seeks to provide insights into how SNSs influence students' academic and personal lives and help them guide responsible and purposeful social media engagement.

#### **4. Objectives**

Based on the need to understand how social networking sites influence students' academic and personal lives, this study has been designed with the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the frequency of social networking site usage among college students.
2. To identify the most preferred social networking platforms.
3. To explore the purposes for which students use social networking sites.

#### **5. Research Methodology**

**Research Design:** The Descriptive Survey Method was adopted to collect and analyze data regarding the usage patterns of social networking sites among students. This method helps understand behaviours, preferences, and trends without manipulating any variables.

**Population and Sample:** The population for this study includes college students from various disciplines. A total of 200 students were approached by sending them an online questionnaire. Out of these, 175 students responded and completed the form, which constituted the final sample for data analysis.

**Data Collection Tool:** A structured questionnaire was developed to collect comprehensive information regarding students' social networking site (SNS) usage. The questionnaire consisted of multiple sections designed to capture various aspects of SNS engagement, including:

1. **Frequency of Usage:** Questions focused on how often and for how long students access different SNS platforms each day.
2. **Preferred Platforms:** Students were asked to indicate which SNS platforms they use most frequently, allowing for multiple selections to capture overlapping usage.
3. **Purpose of Usage:** Items were included to understand the reasons for using SNS, such as entertainment, academic study, news and updates, social interaction, and other purposes.
4. **Impact on Academic and Personal Habits:** Additional questions explored students' perceptions of how SNS usage affects their study time, attention, and focus.

The questionnaire used a combination of closed-ended questions with pre-defined response options and multiple-choice items for clarity and ease of analysis. A Likert scale was used for questions assessing the impact on academic habits. The tool was shared online using digital forms to ensure easy accessibility, convenience, and timely responses.

**1. Data Analysis:** The responses were compiled and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings are presented in percentage form to give a clear picture of usage patterns and trends among students.

**Table 1 – Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Demographic Variable | Category            | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Gender</b>        | Female              | 117       | 66.9%      |
|                      | Male                | 58        | 33.1%      |
| <b>Age (years)</b>   | 15–18               | 30        | 17.1%      |
|                      | 19–22               | 110       | 62.9%      |
|                      | 23–26               | 35        | 20.0%      |
| <b>Discipline</b>    | Science             | 60        | 34.3%      |
|                      | Arts/Humanities     | 50        | 28.6%      |
|                      | Commerce/Management | 40        | 22.9%      |
|                      | Other               | 25        | 14.2%      |
| <b>Total</b>         | –                   | 175       | 100%       |

**Table 2 – Frequency of Usage**

| Time Spent on SNS per Day | Percentage of Students |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Less than 1 hour          | 15%                    |
| 1–3 hours                 | 45%                    |
| 3–5 hours                 | 25%                    |
| More than 5 hours         | 15%                    |

**Table 3 – Preferred Social Networking Platforms**

| Platform  | Percentage of Students |
|-----------|------------------------|
| Instagram | 50%                    |
| YouTube   | 35%                    |
| WhatsApp  | 30%                    |
| Facebook  | 20%                    |
| Twitter   | 10%                    |

*Note: Students could choose more than one platform.*

**Table 4 – Purpose of Usage**

| Purpose            | Percentage of Students |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Entertainment      | 60%                    |
| Academic Study     | 20%                    |
| News & Updates     | 35%                    |
| Social Interaction | 50%                    |
| Other Uses         | 10%                    |

*Note: Students could choose more than one purpose of usage.*

### 7. Discussion and Interpretation

The data indicate that almost half of the students (45%) spend between 1–3 hours daily on social networking sites, suggesting that moderate use of SNS is a routine part of their daily lives. A smaller group (15%) spends more than 5 hours, which may point to potential overuse or heavy reliance on these platforms. Instagram emerges as the most preferred platform (50%), followed by YouTube (35%) and WhatsApp (30%), highlighting that visually engaging and interactive platforms attract the most attention among students.

The primary purpose of usage being entertainment (60%) suggests that students primarily view SNS as a source of leisure and relaxation, which can help relieve stress. However, the fact that 20% of students use these platforms for academic purposes shows that SNSs are also becoming tools for learning, collaboration, and accessing educational content. This dual use reflects a balance between personal enjoyment and academic engagement, emphasizing the potential of SNS as supportive educational tools if used responsibly.

The findings suggest that while social networking sites are predominantly used for entertainment, there is a meaningful integration of academic use, indicating that educators and policymakers can leverage these platforms to enhance learning experiences. Excessive use among a minority of students, however, may lead to distractions or reduced productivity, highlighting the need for strategies that promote responsible and purposeful engagement with social media.

### 8. Conclusion:

The study concludes that social networking sites are an integral part of college students' lives. While entertainment remains the leading reason for usage, educational content is also accessed by a notable percentage of students. Therefore, understanding these patterns can help educators and policymakers create better strategies to harness the benefits of SNSs while addressing potential distractions.

## 9. Suggestions:

1. Educators and administrators can integrate SNS platforms into learning strategies to make academic content more engaging and accessible.
2. Awareness programs can be conducted to guide students on balancing entertainment and academic use, minimizing distractions.
3. Workshops on digital literacy and responsible social media usage can help students use SNS effectively for academic and personal growth.
4. Policymakers can encourage the creation of online academic communities and discussion groups on popular platforms to enhance peer learning.
5. Parents and guardians should monitor excessive usage to prevent negative impacts on productivity and mental health.

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