

## EFFECT OF CHANGING DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH: A STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD

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### Abstract

The present study required to examine the role of social media in shaping the changing behavioral dynamics of youth. In modern digital society, social media has evolved from an additional communication tool into an important element of daily life, mostly for young people. These platforms, despite being relatively recent within the global communication landscape, have quickly evolved into multiple channels for involvement between various population groups. Young users, in specific, show increased levels of engagement, utilizing social media for various purposes such as acquiring data, gaining expertise, entertainment, music listening, and the distribution of visual content. This widespread use demonstrates a great goal for connection, engagement, and selfexpression. However, the nature of such connections could result in both good and negative attitudes, impacting how young users see themselves, associate with others, and understand the world around them. This research, conducted at the International Islamic University Islamabad, employed a probability-based stratified sampling technique to gather data from 232 respondents, which were subsequently analyzed using SPSS. The findings revealed that 98.3% of participants actively use platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Skype, Facebook, and Twitter. Moreover, 46.6% of respondents reported that social media notably affects youth behavior, highlighting its considerable influence on the evolving social and emotional experiences of young people.

### INTRODUCTION

According to Katharine Paljug's definition from February 2025, "Social media is a form of digital engagement that allows users to establish online communities and networks for the purpose of exchanging information, interacting with others, and producing original material". Early platforms like Myspace and LiveJournal were initially developed to help users stay connected with friends and family. These platforms quickly gained popularity; for instance, Myspace became the first social network to surpass one million monthly users in 2004. By 2025, more than 5.42 billion individuals worldwide were

reported to be active on various social media platforms (Katharine Paljug, 2025). Social media applications are essentially online services designed to promote human connection and community, such as Facebook groups, Reddit, and LinkedIn. These platforms operate on two-way communication, allowing people to post content, comment, exchange messages, and build relationships (Payal Agarwal, 2025). Social media has become the most modern form of communication, offering diverse features like instant messaging, multimedia sharing, and real-time global connectivity. It is also the most accessible and

cost-effective way to engage with the world, making it particularly vital for young people. A growing number of youths are shifting from traditional media like television and radio to digital social platforms. Because of this shift, "Social media is playing an increasingly important role in shaping the lives and behaviors of young people". The rise in social media usage has led to continuous debates over how it affects society. While it's widely acknowledged that social media influences users' lifestyles, understanding exactly how it does so in different cultural and national contexts especially among youth is still evolving. One concern is that young users often compare themselves to others based on achievements, looks, or abilities, which can lead to negative self-perception.

(Pedalino F, Camerini 2022)

On various social networking sites (SNSs), young people publicly share their views and engage in digital conversations. Their main goal is to connect with others and satisfy their innate need to belong. After meeting basic psychological and safety needs, social interaction becomes a key motivator. These digital platforms provide opportunities for users to engage in online networks that facilitate communication, support, and content sharing. Being active on social media has become a defining trait of today's youth. Whether at home, school, or social events, young people remain connected through different apps. These platforms facilitate making new friends, exchanging ideas, exploring new interests, and finding unique ways to express themselves. Unfortunately, some young people engage in trolling often without realizing the consequences. Such harmful behavior often targets personal attributes like appearance, skills, language, or lifestyle. Victims of trolling may experience anxiety, depression, stress, social isolation, and even suicidal thoughts. Researchers have explored the effects of social media on youth well-being and proposed prevention strategies at individual, family, and community levels (Ulvi O, KaramehicMuratovic A, et al., 2022).

In terms of learning and cultural exchange, young users utilize social media to access knowledge and encounter diverse opinions on global issues and cultural practices (Nesi J. N C Med J., 2020). Social media use has increased dramatically in recent years, and for many young people, it has become an essential

part of their everyday lives. These platforms offer both new opportunities and complex challenges. They facilitate conversations that promote understanding across cultures and viewpoints. However, proper engagement with social media requires awareness of how personal traits may influence one's online behavior (Gupta C, Jogdand DS, Kumar M. Cureus 2022). Lastly, the addictive nature of many internet platforms including social media apps has led to growing concern about dependency, particularly among young users (Yu DJ and others, 2024). According to global statistics, 5.56 billion people (or 67.9% of the global population) used the internet in 2025. Of these, approximately 5.24 billion around 63.9% were active on social media (Ani Petrosyan, 2025).

## Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate the intensity of social media use among young people, as well as how the changing nature of social media influences their behavior. Social media is progressively affecting the views and activities of youth, with a major part of the population actively engaged on numerous platforms. This research seeks to better understand this trend, with a particular focus on behavioral changes and excessive usage among young users.

In today's digital age, the internet plays a crucial role in the global information society, linking billions of persons globally. As of 2025, internet and social media usage was particularly high among individuals aged 15 to 25, with global youth usage at 79%. European youth reported the highest levels of participation, with 98% claiming to be active social media users. A country's income level has a significant impact on internet access, especially social media. For instance, 93% of the population in high-income countries were connected online, while in lower-income nations, only 27% of the population did not use social media (Ani Petrosyan, 2025).

According to recent global data, the popularity of social networking platforms is on the rise. According to recent research, an estimated 63.9 percent of people worldwide is now engaged with social media platforms. The average time spent on these platforms is approximately 2 hours and 21 minutes per day. This means that roughly 5.07 billion people, representing 62.6 percent of the global population, are currently

connected to the internet. Additionally, over the past year, 259 million new users have joined social media platforms (Dave Chaffey, 2025).

Social media is an important part of modern young life, as they utilize these platforms for a number of reasons, making social media an essential part of their daily lives and relationships.

### Significance of the Research

The goal of this study is to investigate how the behavior of youngsters is changing because of their participation with various social networking sites (SNSs), specifically how these platforms impact communication patterns and general lifestyle. Today, the internet functions as a key platform for young people to connect, communicate, and express themselves, influencing how they interact with others and impacting different aspects of their lives. As of 2025, studies have highlighted both the risks and advantages associated with social media use among young people. While it raises creativity, innovation, and community building, it also presents challenges such as increased anxiety and depression, often triggered by social comparison. Social networking sites offer numerous opportunities for collaboration, including the sharing of knowledge, participation in group projects, and involvement in social or educational initiatives. Through tools such as group chats, video conferencing, file sharing, and online forums, young people can work collectively to achieve shared goals, solve problems, and create meaningful content (Linda C. Ashar, J.D. 2024).

Social media platforms also serve as a significant source of information and insight into the lives of others. While technology offers many positive benefits, it also carries potential risks. Although social media can be a valuable communication tool, its misuse by youth is a growing concern.

Young users engage in various activities such as chatting with friends, liking pages, and following trends, which can influence their behaviors and social habits.

The primary means through which youth access social networking platforms are mobile devices and the internet. These technologies have played a key role in transforming youth behavior and how they communicate. In recent years, the use of social networking applications has become increasingly

widespread among young people, becoming a central part of their daily routines.

### Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the demographic characteristics of the respondents.
2. To assess the influence of social media on the behavior of young people.
3. To determine the experience and engagement levels of adolescents using social media.

### Literature Review

As defined by Servidio in 2024, the term "Social media" refers to internet sites and apps that allow users to produce content, exchange information, and socially engage with others. It is a web-based approach to electronic communication that allows for the exchange of messages, videos, and knowledge across platforms including Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram. Its wide spread use has significantly altered the way people particularly young individuals live and communicate. Current research indicates that a growing reliance on social media platforms may result in adverse effects on the psychological health of young people. Regular and excessive use has been linked to mental health concerns, including low self-esteem, jealousy, depressive symptoms, and a general sense of dissatisfaction with one's life. These negative feelings often emerge as a result of constant social comparison and unrealistic portrayals of others' lives online (Servidio et al., 2024).

Despite these risks, social networking sites (SNSs) also offer potential benefits. Many young users access social media platforms to find motivational content, explore self-help resources, and even participate in online counseling sessions led by mental health professionals. Watching humorous videos or connecting with loved ones can also elevate mood and reduce communication barriers, contributing positively to mental and emotional health (Wu, Liew, & Dorahy, 2025). However, there is a well-established association between extensive social media usage and depression symptoms among young people. According to research, young individuals who use the internet more than twice every day are more likely to have moderate to severe depressive symptoms. Approximately one-third of youth experiencing

depression also report constant engagement with social media, compared to just 18% among those without such symptoms. Moreover, the intensity of "depression symptoms" seems to grow as the duration of time spent online. One study highlighted a higher risk of self-harming behavior in adolescents who spend three or more hours per day on social media (Lynch & Hettler, 2024). Psychological health is still one of the most affected areas among youngsters, "frequent users" of social networking sites. Research has found considerable links among continuous internet usage and increased levels of anxiousness and stress and low self-confidence. The more time young people spend online, the more likely they are to experience psychological distress (Ameen & Faye, 2024).

Problematic internet use (PIU) "a term for excessive or uncontrolled internet activity" has become an emerging concern, particularly among youth. PIU has been associated with emotional isolation, social withdrawal, and increased sadness (Ahuja & Elavia, 2024). Social media addiction, in particular, has been found to negatively influence both psychological and behavioral aspects of youth well-being. Extended screen time is linked to elevated stress levels, attentional difficulties, and anxiety. According to one study, young people who spend more than nine hours daily on different SNSs had the highest scores on addiction measures, indicating a strong association between excessive use and psychological harm (Han, Nagduar, & Yu, 2023).

The aim of this study is to present descriptive insights into the ways young people interact with social networking sites. Central questions include: how much time do youth devote to these platforms? What

motivates their use? How do they engage with content and others? And how does their behavior evolve through this engagement?

These concerns will be "investigated" within the context of websites like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, among many.

## **Theoretical framework The Combined Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**

The current study uses a combined theoretical approach grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) in order to examine how social media interactions, alter young people's experiences, engagement patterns, and behavioral outcomes. UGT describes the reasons and gratifications that young individuals desire while engaging with media, whereas SCT addresses how young people watch, absorb, and copy the actions of others in their immediate environment. Safran states in a recent 2025 study that UGT has undergone major changes in the age of technology (social media, streaming, mobile media, etc.), where new media opportunities such as user interaction, customization, media type challenge "common gratification groups" and introduce new "inspirational elements" (Safran Almakaty, 2025). Whereas on the other hand, SCT discusses how being exposed to social media information, including machinegenerated streams, short-form video, popular culture, and interactive media system, shapes young people's mental processes, sentiments, and behavior through channels like observing, comparison in society and adoption of values and norms (Lisa Lock, & Andrew Zinin, 2025).

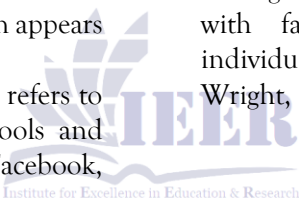
Dimensions of the Combined UGT + SCT

UGT (Motivational Dimension)	SCT (Behavioral Dimension)	Engagement Dimension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media use for entertainment, social interaction</li> <li>• Social media use for information seeking</li> <li>• Social media use for selfexpression</li> <li>• Time spent on social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observational learning</li> <li>• Molding behavior</li> <li>• Outcome expectations</li> <li>• Influence of influencers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posting, sharing, commenting and participation in online groups / communities</li> <li>• Emotional involvement and connection</li> <li>• Frequency and intensity of social media use</li> <li>• Discovery to trends and behavioral signs</li> </ul>

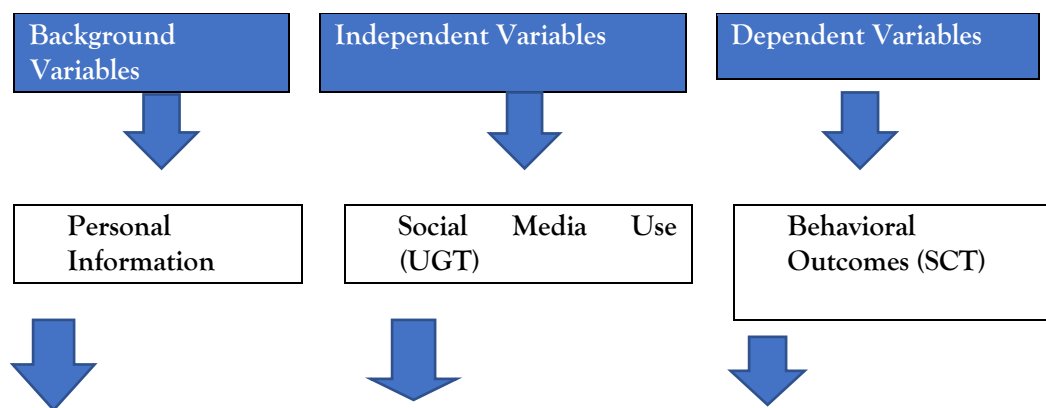
By merging the two theories, this research establishes an exhaustive structure for relating goals to behaviors related to social media access and, eventually, to behavioral accomplishments. This holistic strategy promotes an improved comprehension of how youngsters not only choose to spend time in social media devices, but also how this participation appears in actual social and cognitive adverse effects.

The phrase "social networking sites" broadly refers to various forms of online communication tools and platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook,

YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, and WeChat. This is why people often use the terms "social media" and "social networking sites" when they refer to the same thing. These platforms enable users and administrators alike to share content, exchange messages, build networks, and maintain connections with family, friends, local communities, and individuals with shared interests (Yasar, Kinza, & Wright, 2025).



Conceptual Framework



- Age
- Gender
- Educational level
- Area of residence
- Family background
- Socio-economic status
- Types of social media used
- Daily screen time

- Social interaction and entertainment use
- Information-seeking and identity use
- Time spent on social media
- Posting, sharing, commenting and following influencers
- Participation in online groups
- Emotional involvement

- Changes in social behavior
- Communication patterns
- Self-esteem and identity
- Emotional effects
- Internet dependency
- Academic performance changes
- Sleep deprivation
- Shifts in priorities
- Cultural influence
- Social confidence or withdrawal
- Quality of online relationships
- Openness in communication
- Sense of belonging



**Research Methodology**

The present study adopted a method of quantitative analysis in order to evaluate the impact caused by social media on the behaviors of young adults. This strategy was picked to meet the need for significant data collection, which made the quantitative design an ideal fit for the study.

The study approach consisted of carrying out a survey among International Islamic University Islamabad students. The intended study's audience consisted of

young adults aged 18 to 35 who resided in Islamabad. In order to assure objectivity, probability sampling was applied with individuals chosen at random. with the study's nature, stratified sampling was used to divide the young population into homogeneous categories according to factors such as education level, caste, and occupation. The sample size of 223 was established using Taro Yamane's (1967) method.

**Reliability Statistics**

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Youth perception of social media usage	06	0.781
Effect of social media on mood	05	0.832

The table above shows the reliability analysis of the independent and dependent variables employing Cronbach's alpha. The evaluation value of 0.781 for youth perception of social media usage shows a high level of reliability, indicating that the items are closely linked and regularly assess a desired concept. Similarly, the result of 0.832 for effect of social media on mood reveals good internal consistency, suggesting the validity and reliability of the tool used for assessing the influence of social media on young individuals.

**Hypothesis Testing**

According to Kendra Cherry, a "hypothesis" is an educated guess regarding the connection between two or more variables. It is a precise, verifiable estimate regarding the outcomes of a study. It is an initial response to the question which helps in guiding the course of the study.

Higher the media consumption, higher will be the changing behavior of the youth.

**Hypothesis I – There is an association between the amount of time spent on social media and the increasing mood swings observed in youth.**

		Social media is making you bad-tempered.					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Social media is a wastage of time	Strongly Agree	8 3.58%	13 5.82%	7 3.13%	6 2.69%	2 0.89%	36 16.1%
	Agree	5 2.24%	25 11.2%	8 3.58%	11 4.93%	3 1.34%	52 23.3%
	Neutral	4 1.79%	17 7.62%	11 4.93%	15 6.72%	3 1.34%	50 22.4%
	Disagree	4 1.79%	11 4.93%	14 6.27%	33 14.8%	6 2.69%	68 30.5%
	Strongly disagree	2 0.89%	4 1.79%	1 0.44%	3 1.34%	7 3.13%	17 7.62%
Total		23 10.3%	70 31.4%	41 18.4%	68 30.5%	21 9.41%	223
Chi-Square =51.227 <sup>a</sup>	DF = 16	Significance level = .000%					

The chi-square test results, which were used to investigate the relationship between the independent variable (social media is a wastage of time) and the dependent variable (social media is making youth bad-tempered), can be seen in the table above. According to the data, 7.6% of respondents strongly agreed that young people who use social media excessively become irritable, while 30.5% agreed with this sentiment. Meanwhile, 22.4% remained neutral or undecided on the matter. On the other hand, 16.1% strongly disagreed and 23.3% disagreed that youth's use of social media contributes to their lack of temper.

There is a significant correlation among the duration of period spent on internet sites and the belief that it has a negative impact on young people's temperament, as indicated by the statistically significant chi-square value.

Ongoing research on social media continues to raise concerns regarding the reliance on self-reported usage data, which often does not accurately reflect actual, measurable usage. This divergence highlights the need for further investigation using objective measurement tools. Studies have shown only a weak correlation between how much individuals believe they use

smartphones and the levels of usage that are objectively recorded through tracking tools or digital logs (Coyne, Voth, & Woodruff, 2023).

**Hypothesis II - There is an association between the utilization of social networking platforms and the learning process.**

		Social networking sites helps in learning process.					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Social networking sites keeps you up to date.	Strongly Agree		38 17.0%	4 1.79%	2 0.89%	1 0.44%	99 44.4%
	Agree	35 15.7%	61 27.4%	7 3.14%	1 0.44%	1 0.44%	105 47.1%
	Neutral	4 1.79%	7 3.14%	1 0.44%	0 0%	0 0%	12 5.38%
	Disagree	2 0.89%	1 0.44%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 1.35%
	Strongly Disagree	3 1.35%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 0.44%	4 1.79%
	Total		98 43.9%	107 47.9%	12 5.38%	3 1.35%	3 1.35%
Chi-Square = 32.198 <sup>a</sup>	DF = 16	Significance level = .009%					

The table above explores the association between the independent variable (social networking sites keeps youth up to date) and the dependent variable (social networking sites helps in learning process), using the chi-square test for analysis. The findings reveal that only 1.79% of participants strongly agreed, and 1.35% agreed that staying up to date through social networking sites supports learning. A small portion (5.38%) remained neutral on the issue. However, a significant number of respondents expressed uncertainty: 47.1% disagreed, and 44.4% strongly disagreed with the notion that staying updated via social networking sites contributes positively to the learning process. Despite this, the chi-

square value was found to be statistically significant, indicating a strong relationship between staying informed through social networking sites and their perceived role in enhancing learning. Social networking platforms are increasingly being recognized for their educational potential. They enable users to access current news, follow emerging trends, and stay informed about community developments. As of January 2025, over 5.24 billion people globally were active on social networks, reflecting the rapid expansion of digital connectivity (Data Report Statistics). As usage continues to rise, the influence of these platforms on daily life and

information consumption becomes ever more apparent (Yasar & Hanna, 2025).

### Research findings & Discussion

The study found that social media has an enormous effect on youngsters, especially young female, and has been deeply incorporated into their daily lives. An incredible 97.3% of female respondents aged 21-26 years showed a regular use of social networking programs, with many participating with multiple platforms at once. This development corresponds with previous research showing that young people actively choose online mediums to meet a number of requirements such as entertainment, communication, and information accessibility (Kircaburun et al., 2020; Valkenburg, Meier, and Beyens, 2022). These findings are strongly correlated with Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which sees consumers of media as active persons that seek information to meet psychological and social needs.

Social media was thought to have a major impact on juvenile behavior as well as development. Nearly 46.6% of respondents said the internet had a significant impact on young people of all ages, while 50.7% noted its emotional consequences. Recent study data confirms these concerns, suggesting that persistent social media usage is linked to anxiety, emotional instability, and variations in self-esteem among young adults (Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Twenge et al., 2021). These findings may be clarified via Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) methods of observational development and comparison in society, demonstrating that regular interaction with normative online representation changes cognitive and emotional reactions.

SCT's potential for clarifying social and personality characteristics is enhanced by its implications. The majority of respondents (53.4%) believed that social media has societal outcomes for youth, while 52.5% claimed it promotes the growth of personalities. Similar findings have been noticed by Nesi, Choukas-Bradley, and Prinstein (2020) and Appel et al. (2023), who assert that social media networks serve as communities of learning in which norms, behaviors, and identities are routinely reproduced and maintained. Such situations like these alter young women's relationshipbuilding strategies and perceptions of themselves.

Excessive social media use raises ethical and health problems. According to the survey, 43.9% of respondents experienced adverse health consequences, while 48.4% claimed that social media shaped young people's moral convictions. These beliefs are consistent with recent research that links excessive digital consumption to sleep problems, stress, as well as feelings of hypersensitivity (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020; Montgomery et al., 2024). According to UGT perspective, it is suggested that ongoing gratification-seeking behaviors, especially entertainment and pleasure, may result in excessive use, whereas SCT outlines how digitally reinforcing behaviors become normative through feedback processes such as likes, shares, and acceptance among peers.

While there are some issues, the study also emphasizes social media's educational advantages.

While there are some issues, the study also underlines social media's educational advantages. Nearly 47.5% of respondents claimed that social media sites are being used to promote learning. Latest study suggests that when used wisely, social media may improve shared learning, academic engagement, as well as access to knowledge (Greenhow & Chapman, 2020; Tang & Hew, 2023). The results reported here resemble the search for knowledge and cognitive gratifications observed UGT, whereas SCT points out the importance of peer modeling and self-confidence in digital learning environments.

The study found that social media has an extensive effect on youngsters. The combination of Uses and Gratifications Theory and Social Cognitive Theory gives an excellent foundation for understanding both the motives for social media use and the psychological, social, health, and moral implications. Along with the most recent research, the study indicates the impact of social media depends on by using patterns rather than spending itself, underlining the value of healthy, aware, and purposeful digital participation among adolescents (Valkenburg et al., 2022; Orben, 2023).

### Conclusion

The study reveals that social media's shifting dynamics have an enormous effect on adults interactions, social behavior, mental health, and educational experiences. Communication platforms give new chances for

interpersonal interaction, fun, and learning, allowing youngsters to maintain their relationships, express their thoughts, and gain access to learning resources in ways that had been previously unavailable.

According to the outcomes, young people use online platforms on for a purpose, motivated by communication, amusement, along with knowledge seeking, and their actions and opinions are shaped by observational learning and societal comparison. Regular consumption promotes networking and growth of identity, while overuse can lead to emotional strain, medical issues, and moral dilemmas. The results above show that the consequences of social media are neither fundamentally positive or bad, instead they rely on the extent, goal, and routine of its use. The study highlights a cultural shift in how young adults communicate with the internet. When handled properly, social media may improve learning, build interpersonal connections, and encourage expressing oneself, demonstrating its potential as a tool for personal development and social participation. Parents, schools, and policymakers ought to promote careful and appropriate use in order to maximize the benefits while limiting risks. To truly understand the increasing significance of online platforms in modern youth society, subsequent studies should look at the long-lasting effects of interaction across multiple cultural and demographic settings.

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