

## **"Virtual Connections, Real Impacts: A Sociological Study of Social Media Use among Rural Youth in Jaipur - North"**

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### **Abstract:**

Social media has transformed communication, but its rise hinges on the internet. Without it, social media's vast influence, especially on youth, would be unimaginable. Young people are deeply engaged in platforms like Whatsapp, Youtube, Instagram and Facebook, shaping their thoughts and behaviors. The internet acts as the lifeline of social media, driving its growth and accessibility. However, excessive social media use impacts mental health, fostering addiction, anxiety, and self-esteem issues. While it offers information and opportunities, a balanced approach is crucial to prevent its negative effects and ensure it remains a tool for empowerment.

**Keywords:** Social Media & Communication, Psychological & Cognitive Effects, Youth & Behavior, Smartphone & Screen Time Statistics, Internet Crimes & Child Safety, Cybersecurity & Fake Apps, Research & Studies

### **I: Introduction:**

In today's digital era, social media has become a dominant tool for raising connections and communication. It allows people to interact with individuals across the globe effortlessly; breaking geographical barriers and making the world feel more interconnected. However, while it strengthens distant relationships, it often weakens personal bonds with those physically present. Many individuals find themselves engrossed in online conversations while neglecting meaningful face-to-face interactions with family and friends. Beyond altering social behavior, excessive social media use has also impacted cognitive abilities, with the youth being the most affected. The constant exposure to digital content, endless scrolling, and rapid information consumption have led to reduced attention spans and decreased critical thinking skills. Young minds, in particular, are vulnerable to the psychological effects of social media, as they are frequently subjected to unrealistic portrayals of life, virtual validation, and social comparison.

Moreover, the overuse of social media has contributed to increased anxiety, stress, and a dependency on online interactions for self-worth. Many young people experience pressure to maintain an idealized online presence, leading to feelings of inadequacy and mental exhaustion. The addictive nature of social media further intensifies these effects, making it difficult for users to disconnect and engage in real-world experiences. While social media offers numerous benefits, including easy access to information and global connectivity, its psychological impact on youth cannot be ignored. A conscious and balanced approach to social media usage is necessary to ensure it serves as a tool for growth rather than a source of mental strain.

A report published by *Yonster & Young* states that Indians collectively spent 1.1 lakh crore hours on smartphones in the year 2024. As a result, entertainment and gaming companies earned significant profits. According to the report, on average, every Indian spends about 5 hours per day on mobile screens. Of this time, 70% is spent on social media, gaming, and watching videos. In comparison, the average screen time in the United States is 4.49 hours per day, while in Britain, it is 4.20 hours. The report also highlights that the valuation of the Indian media and entertainment industry stands at ₹2.5 lakh crore, with a projected increase to ₹3.1 lakh crore by 2027. Furthermore, the report states that India ranks third in smartphone usage worldwide, following Indonesia and Brazil.

*(Article published in Dainik Bhaskar, Jaipur Edition, 30.03.2024)*

According to the latest report, the internet is becoming a crime scene where a child is affected every 10 seconds. The report states that the internet is no longer just a source of information and entertainment—it has also become a hub for criminal activities. One of the most concerning aspects is that children are increasingly falling victim to these crimes. Last year, approximately 1 in every 12 children worldwide fell prey to online sexual harassment. The report highlights various forms of online exploitation, including:

- **12.7%** involving the sharing of photographs without consent, taking unauthorized photographs, and displaying them.
- **3.5%** involving sexual extortion.
- **12.5%** involving online sexual seduction.
- **4.7%** involving online extortion.

This disturbing trend is a global phenomenon. (Article Published on Rajasthan Patrika, Jaipur Edition 2024)

According to a 2021 report by Jagmeet Singh, "The fake WhatsApp version for iPhone could be used by hackers to gain details of individuals through a specially crafted configuration file." A fake version of WhatsApp allowed hackers to gather information about targeted users by tricking them into installing certain configuration files on their iPhones. After the installation of the fake application, the hackers could easily obtain users' information, including—but not limited to—the Unique Device Identifier (UDID) and the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI). WhatsApp was exploited by spyware developed by Israel's NSO Group, which enabled entities to target journalists and human rights activists in various global regions, including India. A website with the domain config5-dati[.]com was discovered, which was tricking visitors into installing a fake app that was, in reality, a specially crafted configuration file for the iPhone, Motherboard reported. The fake app appeared to be designed to collect information about the victims and transmit it back to the hackers.

In his 2023 study titled "**Psychological Impact of Social Media on Rural Youth: A Study**," Dr. Krishan Kumar concluded that the increasing use of social media among today's youth is leading to various psychological effects.

The study found that young people are predominantly engaged with social media applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter, which often results in social isolation, sleep deprivation, depression, irritability, anxiety, worry, behavioral changes, and a heightened focus on likes and comments. These psychological effects significantly impact their daily lives.

### Literature Review:

Rajasthan Patrika: An article published in *Rajasthan Patrika* in September 2025 discusses the growing concern over excessive social media use, which is increasingly being regarded as a form of behavioral addiction. The article asserts that medical science must urgently seek solutions to address this emerging dependency.

In response, the De-addiction Department of PGI Chandigarh has launched a comprehensive campaign aimed at liberating individuals from social media addiction. The initiative seeks to inform the development of a national policy that offers young people a balanced perspective on the digital world. This proposed policy is intended to help youth distinguish between appropriate and harmful online behavior, and protect themselves from cyberbullying and unsolicited sexual advances.

The report highlights a troubling shift: while smoking and drug use have long been recognized as public health concerns, digital addiction is now emerging as an even greater challenge. Symptoms such as diminished self-esteem, social isolation, and a sense of disorientation are increasingly observed among affected individuals.

Furthermore, the article notes that young people are highly susceptible to emotional manipulation through digital platforms. Their reactions to likes, comments, and online rejection mirror addictive behavior. This phenomenon was notably evident in recent events in Bangladesh and Nepal, where youth were mobilized by simple slogans, underscoring the emotional volatility triggered by social media engagement.

In 2025, Eisha Devi published a study in the *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Psychology* that examines the correlation between poor sleep quality and increased levels of anxiety and overthinking among young adults. The research highlights the intricate relationship between sleep, cognitive functioning, and emotional well-being, suggesting that enhancing sleep quality may serve as a potential strategy to alleviate anxiety and reduce patterns of overthinking.

2017, Topper M at al., A recent study featured on PubMed sheds light on the power of cognitive-behavioral training in tackling mental health challenges among adolescents and young adults. Conducted as a randomized controlled trial, the research explored how structured psychological interventions could help reduce persistent worry and rumination—two common precursors to anxiety and depression. The results were compelling: participants who underwent the training experienced notable improvements in their mental health, with reduced symptoms sustained for up to a year after the intervention. The result of research study over 251 Participants help in preventive intervention targeting RNT and support a selective prevention approach that specifically targets a known risk factor to prevent multiple disorders.

### A Closer Look at Usage and Mental Health

In today's hyperconnected world, social media has become a dominant force in shaping daily routines and interpersonal interactions. Research indicates that many individuals devote several hours each day to platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok—often engaging in compulsive scrolling behaviors. The design of these platforms, with their endless feeds and instant notifications, fosters a cycle of frequent checking and prolonged engagement, frequently displacing time that might otherwise be spent on offline activities or face-to-face interactions.

### **Anxiety and Depression in the Digital Age**

Mounting evidence points to a troubling link between excessive social media use and deteriorating mental health. Continuous exposure to curated portrayals of idealized lifestyles and appearances can trigger feelings of inadequacy, envy, and emotional unrest. These psychological effects are particularly pronounced among younger users. A pivotal 2019 study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* revealed that young adults who spent more than three hours per day on social media were significantly more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression—highlighting the urgent need for awareness and intervention in digital consumption habits.

A randomized controlled trial published on PubMed investigates the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral training in reducing excessive worry and rumination among adolescents and young adults. The findings demonstrate that such interventions can significantly lower symptoms of anxiety and depression, with effects lasting up to 12 months.

A web-based, single-blind, two-arm parallel-group randomized controlled trial was undertaken involving 236 individuals aged 16 to 24 years, all of whom self-identified as experiencing elevated levels of worry or rumination. The findings of the study underscore the efficacy and accessibility of delivering preventative mental health interventions via mobile applications, offering a promising avenue to address the global imperative of enhancing psychological well-being among adolescents and young adults.

Repetitive negative thinking (RNT)—characterized by persistent worry and rumination—has been empirically established as a significant risk factor for the onset of anxiety and depressive disorders. The primary objective of this trial was to evaluate the effectiveness of a self-guided mobile application, *MyMoodCoach*, specifically designed to target RNT, in mitigating these cognitive patterns among young adults residing in the United Kingdom. A secondary aim was to assess the app's potential in alleviating symptoms of anxiety and depression, while concurrently promoting overall psychological well-being.

These findings support the efficacy of unguided self-help interventions in reducing repetitive negative thinking (RNT). While promising for preventive mental health strategies, further research is needed to assess long-term outcomes.

A functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study, as reported by *Science Daily*, has identified a significant association between overthinking in adolescents and alterations in brain connectivity. The findings provide empirical support for the application of Rumination-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (RF-CBT) as a targeted intervention to mitigate overthinking and its corresponding neural patterns.

According to Dr. Scott Langenecker, PhD—Vice Chair of Research in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at Ohio State University and the study's corresponding author—the adolescent developmental phase is critical, marked by rapid brain maturation and the establishment of behavioral habits. He emphasized that interventions such as RF-CBT have the potential to substantially influence mental health trajectories, guiding adolescents toward healthier psychological outcomes. Notably, the therapy was found to be developmentally appropriate and was well-received when delivered via telehealth platforms during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RF-CBT, originally developed by Professor Ed Watkins, PhD, of the University of Exeter, represents a specialized cognitive-behavioral approach aimed at reducing rumination. It has demonstrated efficacy in adult populations, particularly among individuals experiencing recurrent depressive episodes, and is now showing promise in adolescent applications.

### 1. Overthinking in University Students

University students face high psychological stress due to academic pressure, social challenges, and career uncertainty. This often leads to overthinking, marked by constant rumination about grades, peer approval, and future plans. Such cognitive overload contributes to anxiety, poor focus, and academic decline, along with behaviors like procrastination and burnout. A 2021 study confirmed a strong link between chronic rumination and mental health disorders, while interventions like mindfulness and CBT have proven effective in building resilience.

### 2. Overthinking in the Workplace

- **Workplace Stressors:** Professionals face complex pressures—performance demands, job insecurity, social dynamics, and work-life balance—which often trigger overthinking about past mistakes and future risks.
- **Impact on Organizations:** Chronic rumination leads to higher stress, poor decision-making, reduced productivity, and increased burnout.
- **Evidence & Solutions:** Research links overthinking to lower job satisfaction. Effective interventions include stress management programs and cognitive restructuring techniques to improve mental well-being and workplace performance.

### 3. Overthinking Among Adolescents

- **High Vulnerability:** Adolescents are especially prone to overthinking due to brain development, identity formation, and sensitivity to social feedback—often focused on peers, body image, academics, and social media.
- **Mental Health Impact:** Persistent rumination is linked to emotional instability, social anxiety, and increased risk of depression.
- **Brain & Therapy Findings:** Neuroimaging shows disrupted emotional regulation in overthinking teens. Early interventions like RF-CBT have shown promise in improving both brain function and psychological outcomes.

"We wanted to see if we could adapt it for a younger population to prevent the ongoing burden of depressive relapse," said Rachel Jacobs, PhD, adjunct assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Northwestern University who conducted the pilot study in 2016.

### 2023, Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in its findings on RF-CBT and Adolescent Depression:

A recent study tested **Rumination-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (RF-CBT)** on 76 teens with a history of depression. Compared to standard treatments, RF-CBT significantly reduced rumination and showed **measurable changes in brain connectivity** via fMRI. These neural shifts suggest improved control over negative thought patterns. The findings replicate earlier results and highlight RF-CBT's potential to support adolescent mental health, especially post-COVID. Future research aims to expand access and validate results in larger clinical trials. 2020, Krishna C. Bathina, et al., Overthinking and Mental Health of International Students During COVID-19, A study published by Atlantis Press examines the impact of rumination and worry on the mental health of international students in China during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight the exacerbation of mental health issues due to overthinking in the context of global crises.



Research published on arXiv investigates how individuals with depression express more distorted thinking on social media platforms. The study suggests that these distorted expressions may reflect underlying cognitive distortions associated with depression.

### **Social Media, Depression & Mental Health Risks**

Depression remains a leading global disability, often underdiagnosed and poorly treated. Cognitive distortions—maladaptive thought patterns—are central to depressive symptoms and are notably amplified in individuals who self-identify as depressed on social media. Linguistic analysis reveals elevated distortions like personalizing and emotional reasoning, independent of language style.

Excessive social media use intensifies mental health challenges, especially among adolescents. Key risks include:

- **Overthinking:** Linked to anxiety, indecision, and stress.
- **Self-Esteem & Body Image:** Curated content fosters unrealistic standards, triggering dissatisfaction and eating disorders.
- **Sleep Disruption:** Screen exposure and stimulating content impair sleep quality.
- **Cyberbullying & Isolation:** Online hostility and overuse can lead to loneliness and emotional trauma.

While social media can offer support, its psychological impact depends on usage patterns. Promoting digital literacy and mindful engagement is essential for safeguarding mental well-being.

## **II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **Hypothesis**

1. Social media usage does not significantly impact the mental well-being of rural youth of North Jaipur.
2. Social media has become an essential part of daily life for rural youth of North Jaipur.

### **Research field:**

#### **i. Tehsil Viratnagar (village)**

**Villages :-** Luhakana khurd, Luhakana kalan, Bhabru, Jawanpura, Dholi kothi, Beelwari, Navrangpura, Chhintoli, Surajpura, Bahadurpura, Antela, Bagawas, Jaisinghpura, Maid, Bagawas Ahran, Gaskaan, Sitapur, Chatarpura, Kishanpura, Tanda, Barodiya, Paaladi, Khatolai, Papra, Sewra, Kukdela

#### **ii. Shahpura tehsil**

**Villages :-** Chhapuda khurd, Chhapuda kalan, Khori, Devan, Kant, Khora, Saatwas, Chimanpura, Sahiwad, Jaje kala, Jaje khurd, Manoharpur, Gadwari, Nithara, Rajpura, Triveni, Devipura

#### **iii. PAOTA tehsil**

**Villages :-** Panditpura, Bhonawas, Tulsipura, Bhankari, Manda, Rampura, Bawdi, Lada ka bas, Kiradod, Badnagar, Torda

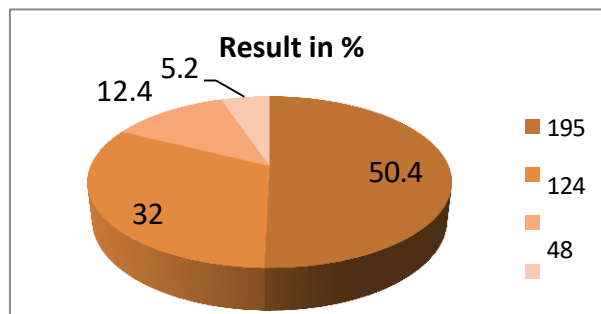
#### **iv. Kotputli tehsil**

**Villages :-** Kalyanpura, Maanjukot, Pathredi, Sundarpura, Saangteda, Kuhada, Lalaana, Rajnota, Amarpura

B. Looking to the increasing habit in almost every age group, there is no restriction of age group while making the survey

**Q. 1 How has social media usage influenced your daily life in the rural community?**

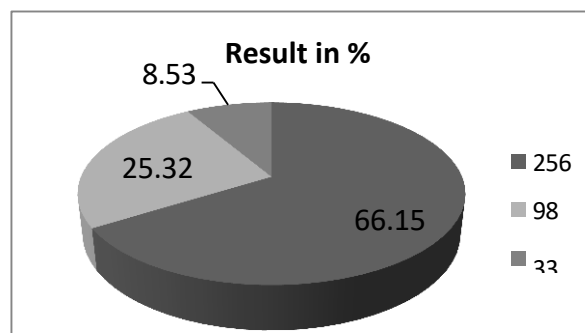
Option	No.	%
Awareness contribution	195	50.4
Education and opportunity enhancement	124	32
Affected productive time	48	12.4
Feeling unwell	20	5.2



**Conclusion:** "Based on the analysis of the obtained data regarding the use of social media in daily life by the rural population, 50.4% of participants believe that their level of awareness has increased, while 32% of participants believe that it has helped them in education and opportunity enhancement. However, 12.4% of participants think that the use of social media has affected their productive time, and 5.2% of participants feel unwell due to the routine use of social media. Therefore, it is concluded that the benefits of social media in daily life cannot be neglected."

**Q. 2 Do you feel that social media has played a role in shaping your personal identity and self-expression in the rural context?**

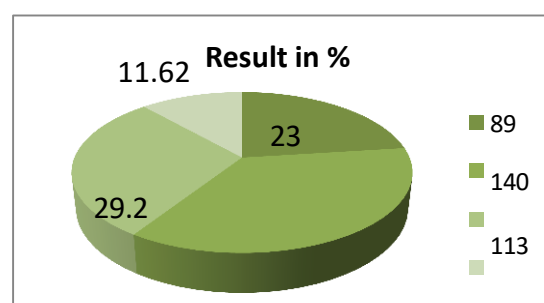
Option	No.	%
Yes	256	66.15
No	98	25.32
Any other	33	8.53



**Conclusion:** The data revealed that 66.15% of participants agreed that social media played a key role in shaping their personal identity and self-expression, while 25.32% did not agree with this view. Additionally, 8.53% of participants did not respond to the question. Based on the data, it is concluded that the majority of the rural population believes that social media plays a key role in developing personal identity within society.

**Q.3 How frequently do you use social media platforms?**

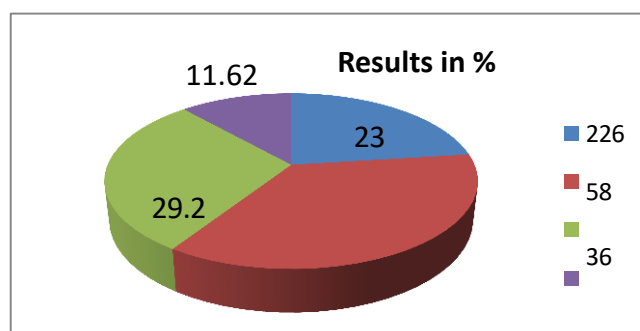
Option	No.	%
> 4 times in a hour	89	23.00
Hourly	140	36.18
Six hourly	113	29.20
Twelve hourly	45	11.62



**Conclusion:** The obtained data indicates that 23% of participants, on average, engaged with social media four times per hour as part of their daily routine. Additionally, 36.18% of participants reported using social media applications once per hour. Meanwhile, 29.2% and 11.6% of participants stated that they used social media every six hours and twelve hours, respectively. Based on the data, it can be concluded that almost everyone is engaged with social media in some form. However, the findings also reveal that the majority of the rural population actively participates in social media activities, which, in turn, has an undeniable impact on their productivity to varying degrees.

#### Q. 4 Which social media platform do you use the most?

Option	No.	%
You Tube	226	58.39
Whatsapp	58	14.99
Facebook	36	9.30
Instagram	67	11.62

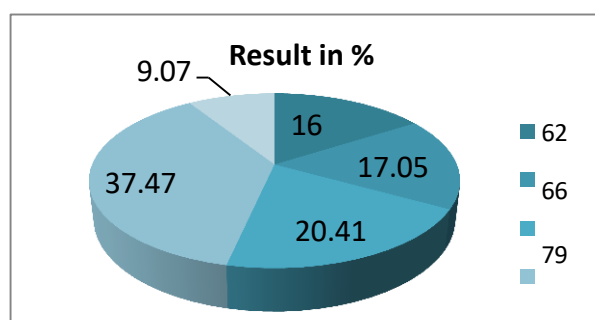


**Conclusion:** The obtained data indicates that 58.9%, 14.99%, 9.30%, and 11.62% of participants were primarily engaged with YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram applications, respectively, in rural areas. This suggests that most rural people are particularly interested in YouTube, possibly due to its content related to enhancing technical knowledge in agriculture, academic education, or entertainment.

The data also reveals that the rural population is still not fully aware of the features offered by WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram applications.

#### Q.5 What is your primary reason for using social media?

Option	No.	%
Connected with friends	62	16
Connected with family	66	17.05
Entertainment	79	20.41
News updates	145	37.47
Professional Network	35	9.07

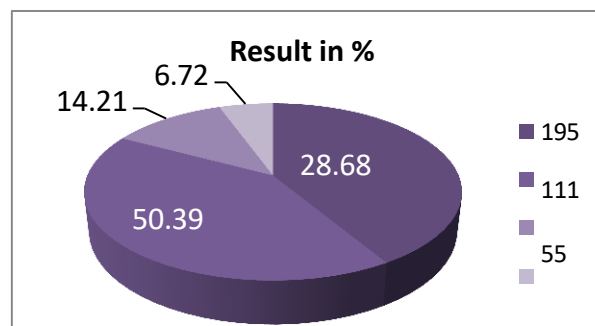


**Conclusion:** From the above data and graph, we can say that 20.41% were using social media for the purpose of Entertainment and 37.47% participants were using social media for News updates. Also 9.07% participants were engaged themselves for their professional enhancements. However, the percentage of 16 and 17 are very less in which they used the social media for stay connected with either their friends circle or family circle.



**Q.6 How many hours per day do you spend on social media on average?**

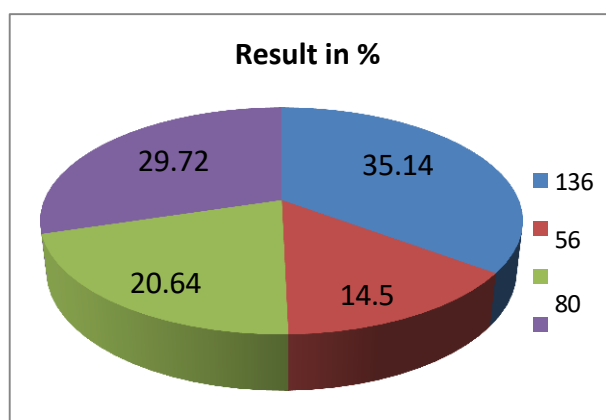
Option	No.	%
< 2 hours	195	50.39%
< 4 hours	111	28.68%
< 6 hours	55	14.21%
< 10 hours	26	6.72%



**Conclusion:** From the above data and graph, we can state that 50.39% participants between 2-4 hours busy on social media, 28.68% participants used up to 4-6 hours social media in a day, while 14.21% and 6.72% participants used 6-10 hours and more than 10 hours respectively busy on social media in a single day. Based on the data it is concluded that rural youths are almost engaged in social media irrespective of hours.

**Q. 7 Have you ever experienced negative emotions i.e.**

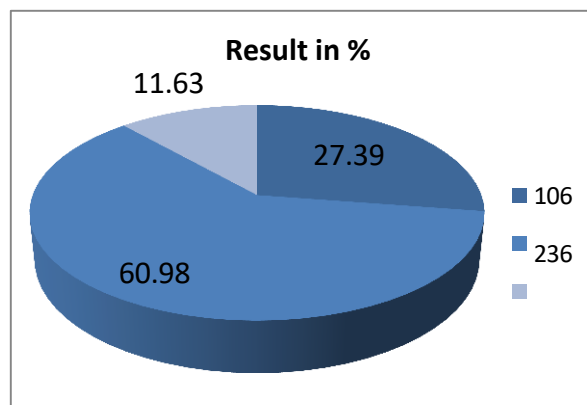
Option	No.	%
Anxiety	136	35.14%
Jealousy	56	14.50%
Loneliness	80	20.64%
All of these	115	29.72%



**Conclusion:** According to the available data almost all the participants suffering from negative impact or side effects of social media irrespective of its percentage. The Percentage of Anxiety was 35.14% is higher amongst all the other reasons. Meanwhile, 14.5% of participants exhibited feelings of jealousy, and 20.64% of participants experienced loneliness. Further, 29.72% the second highest result of the questions clearly speaks that continuous uses of social media facing all the negative emotions in their routine life.

**Q. 8 How often do you post content on social media?**

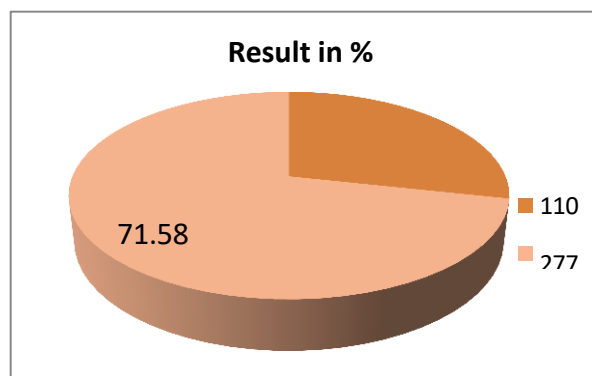
Option	No.	%
Photos	106	27.39
Status Updates	236	60.98
Videos	45	11.63



**Conclusion:** As per the available data and graph we can say that 60.98 percentage participants are interested on Updates their Status. While 27.39 percentage participants are showing their interest on updates photos and 11.63% participants were upload videos on Social Media Platforms.

**Q.9 Have you ever felt pressured to present a certain image of yourself on social media?**

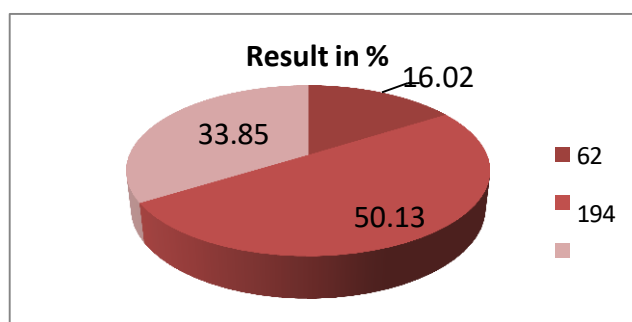
Option	No.	%
Yes	110	28.42
No	277	71.58



**Conclusion:** The outcomes of the survey clearly indicate that 71.58% of participants do not feel pressured to develop a particular personality or status on social media. However, 28.42% of participants actively seek to build their personality using social media. The results came from rural area might be different if the survey done in the urban area. The same has been viewed in the various articles published on daily newspaper time to time, and it was published many negative impacts of users.

**Q.10 How do you feel about the privacy of your personal information on social media platforms?**

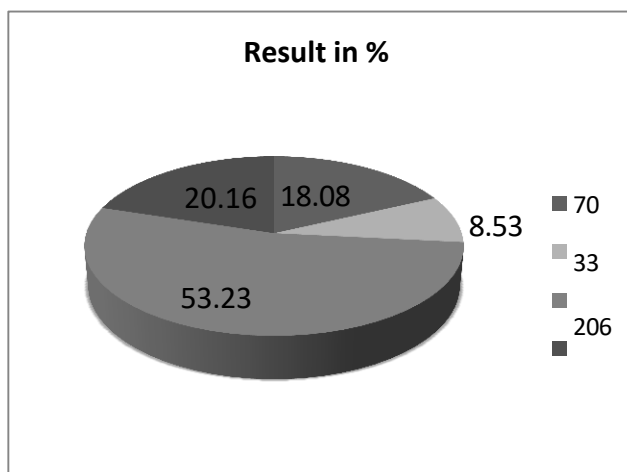
Option	No.	%
100% Secure	62	16.02
50% Secure	194	50.13
Not Secure	131	33.85



**Conclusion:** Based on the available data it is clearly states that sharing of personal information in social media is Not Secure. 50.13% believed that the information uploaded into social media is 50% secure and 33.85% participants believed that information is not secured on social media. While 16.02% participants still believed that the information shared on social media by them has secured. It might be one of the reasons behind it that their privacy system may be more protective.

**Q.11 Have you ever taken a break from social media? States the reason?**

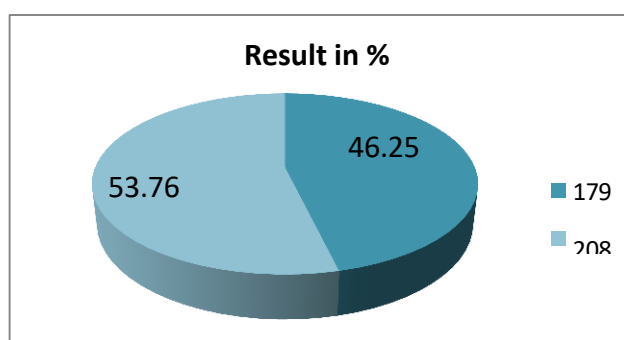
Option	No.	%
Irritation	70	18.08
Jealousy	33	8.53
Shortness of Time	206	53.23
All of them	78	20.16



**Conclusion:** Based on the available data, it is quite clear that the participants no longer wished to continue engaging in the same activities and needed a break in some form. It is human nature to not remain engaged in the same activity for too long and to need a break at some point. The results clearly indicate that participants took a break from social media for various reasons, including irritation (18.08%), jealousy (8.53%), and lack of time (53.23%). Among these factors, the highest percentage (53.23%) indicated that participants were willing to give up social media activities when they had important tasks to handle. Additionally, 20.16% of participants reported experiencing all three negative factors and subsequently reduced their involvement with social media.

**Q. 12 Do you trust the information you see on social media?**

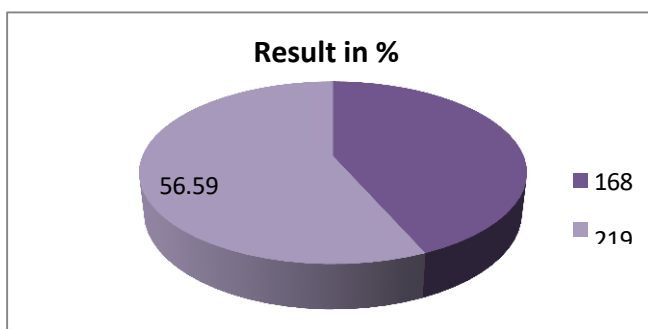
Option	No.	%
Yes	179	46.25
No	208	53.76



**Conclusion:** Based on the obtained data, it is evident that 53.76% of participants believed that the information shared on social media is not trustworthy, while 46.25% of participants thought that the information available on social media is accurate. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the obtained results, as they reflect a mixed outcome, both positive and negative.

**Q. 13 Have you ever encountered cyber bullying or harassment on social media?**

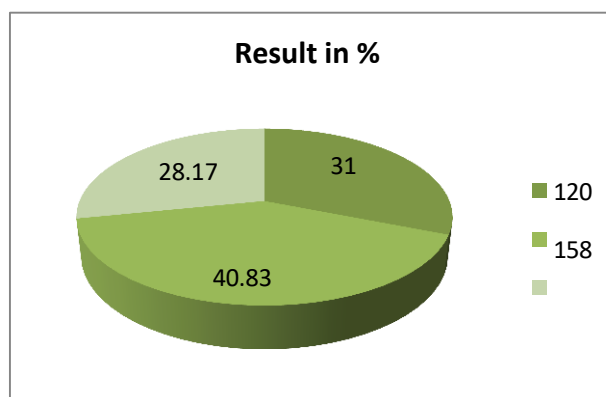
Option	No.	%
Yes	168	43.41
No	219	56.59



**Conclusion:** With the increasing use of social media, threats and cyberbullying have become significant challenges faced by users in the current scenario. The results also revealed that 43.41% of participants had encountered cyberbullying or harassment on social media. However, 56.59% of participants, who were either consistently alert or fully aware of the technical aspects and challenges of social media, reported not experiencing any negative impacts from its use.

**Q. 14 Overall, do you consider social media to have a positive or negative influence on the lives of rural youth?**

Option	No.	%
Positive	120	31.00
Negative	158	40.83
Neutral	109	28.17

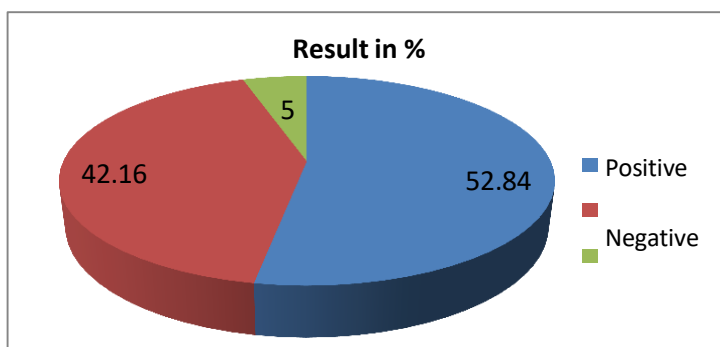


**Conclusion:** Finally, the overall survey conducted to examine the impact of social media on the lives of rural youth revealed the following findings: 31% of participants believed that social media has a positive impact on the routine lives of rural youth, while 40.83% of participants believed that social media has a negative impact on their natural lives. Additionally, 28.17% of participants acknowledged both positive and negative effects, indicating a mixed impact on their daily lives from the use of social media.

**Final Conclusion:**

Based on all the available results, the aggregated findings indicate that the impact of social media is positive at a level of 54.84%, negative at 42.16%, and neutral at 5%.

Result	Participants	%
Positive	2863	52.84
Negative	2284	42.16
Neutral	271	5



## DECLARATION:

Financial Support	: No, I did not receive.
Conflicts of Interest	: No conflicts of interest to the best of our knowledge
Ethical Approval	: No, the article does not require ethical approval
Consent to Participate	: Yes, it has taken
Availability of Data and Material	: Not relevant
Authors Contributions	: Dr. Lopamudra Das, Guide

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