

Awareness and Understanding of Social Media: A Study on Undergraduate Students of West Bengal, India

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Abstract:

In this post COVID-19 world, majority of adolescent is shifting speedily from electronic media like as television viewers and radio listeners to the social media among all age of group. Because of their limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure, adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media. The present study has been designed to assess the general awareness and understanding of social media along with investigate the role of social media in academic development of respondents, and to identify key social media threats perceived by students among the undergraduate students of West Bengal, India. The present study is a survey type research. The study has been conducted during the month of March, 2025. Primary data have been collected through the self-made questionnaire scheduled in Google form from 331 students who are presently studying in different undergraduate courses across West Bengal. The present study reveals that 73.11% students are aware regarding privacy settings on social media. 67% respondents opined that they participate in online activism or social movements through social media. The respondents (61.64%) consent about addiction of social media a real problem among the undergraduate students. The majority of respondents (61.33%) opined to reduce time on social media.

Keywords: Social Media, Awareness and Understanding, Academic and Personal development, Undergraduate Students

Introduction: Social media has recently become part of people's daily activities; many of them spend hours each day on Messenger, Instagram, Facebook, and other popular social media. There is no disagreeing that social media has now become an important part of many undergraduate students' lives. Social media has many positive and enjoyable benefits, but it can also lead to mental health and well-being problems. Social media are applications that enable people to interact with each other and build social networks that increase social capital (Barnes, 2008). When it is used consciously, it is a beneficial social networking site for young people. On the other hand, when children and youths occupy more time on social media, they may grow many problems.

Now a days Majority of adolescent is shifting speedily from electronic media like as television viewers and radio listeners to the social media among all age of group. Because of their limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure, adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media. Recent research indicates that there are frequent online expressions of offline behaviours, such as bullying, clique-forming, and sexual experimentation, that have introduced problems such as cyber bullying, privacy issues, sexting, Internet addiction and concurrent sleep deprivation (Patchin et al., 2006).

With this background, the present study has been designed to assess the general awareness and understanding of social media along with investigate the role of social media in academic development of respondents, and to identify key social media threats perceived by students among the undergraduate students of West Bengal, India.

Objectives of the Study: The objectives of the present study are—

1. To assess the general awareness and understanding of social media among the undergraduate students of West Bengal, India.
2. To investigate the role of social media in their academic and personal development.
3. To identify key social media threats perceived by students.

Methodology of the Study: The present study is a survey type research. The study has been conducted during the month of March, 2025 in West Bengal, India. Primary data have been collected through the self-made questionnaire scheduled in Google form from the students who are presently studying in different undergraduate courses across West Bengal by applying purposive sampling technique. We have received data from 331 students from ten districts across the said state. The secondary data have been collected from different sources like research articles, news-paper articles, website etc. Then the collected data have been analyzed qualitatively. We highlighted some key features of respondents in the following sub-sections:

a. Background of Respondents:

Table 01 shows characteristics of study population. It has been revealed from the present study that the most of respondents belong to female students which are 78.25% and the male students are 21.45%. There are also one other gender respondent. The girl students are relatively higher among the general students population proportion. The age wise distribution of respondent in this present study is shown below in table 01. Rural area students (60.12%) are major reported than urban and semi-urban area students (19.94%) each.

Table 01: Background of Respondents

Background		N	Percentage
Gender	Male	71	21.45
	Female	257	78.25
	Others	01	0.30
Location of Residence	Rural	199	60.12
	Semi-urban	66	19.94
	Urban	66	19.94
Age	18 th years	58	17.52
	19 th years	114	34.44
	20 th years	83	25.08
	21 st years	59	17.82
	22 nd years	09	2.72
	23 rd years	03	0.91
	24 th years	02	0.60
	25 th years	03	0.91

Total N=331

Source: Primary Data

b. District wise Distribution of Respondents: We have received data from 331 undergraduate students from ten districts of West Bengal, India. In this present study, majority of the respondents (84.59%) reside in Purba Medinipur district. Significant numbers of students (10.88%) belong to Paschim Medinipur district. There are very small number of respondents found in Jhargram, Bankura, Kolkata, Birbhum, South 24 Parganas, Hoogly, Purba Bardhaman, and Howrah districts those data has been depicted in the following figure 01.

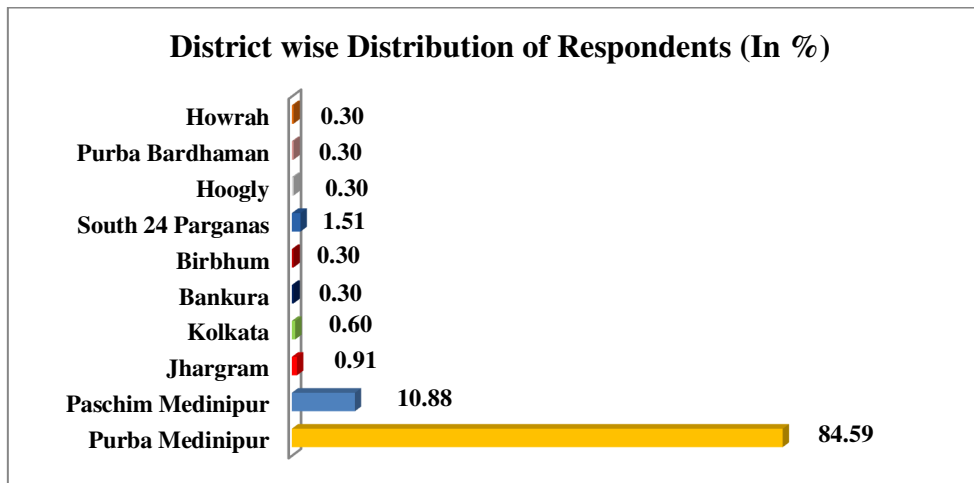


Figure 01: District wise Distribution of Respondents

Source: Primary Data

- c. **Respondent’s Academic Discipline:** It has been revealed from the present study that the most of the respondents (90.94%) read in Arts and Humanities section. Some of them study in Professional course (like B.Ed., L.L.B. etc.) which is 3.32% and Science 3.63%. Very small portion of student’s academic disciplines are Commerce, Engineering & Technology, and Medical & Health Science.

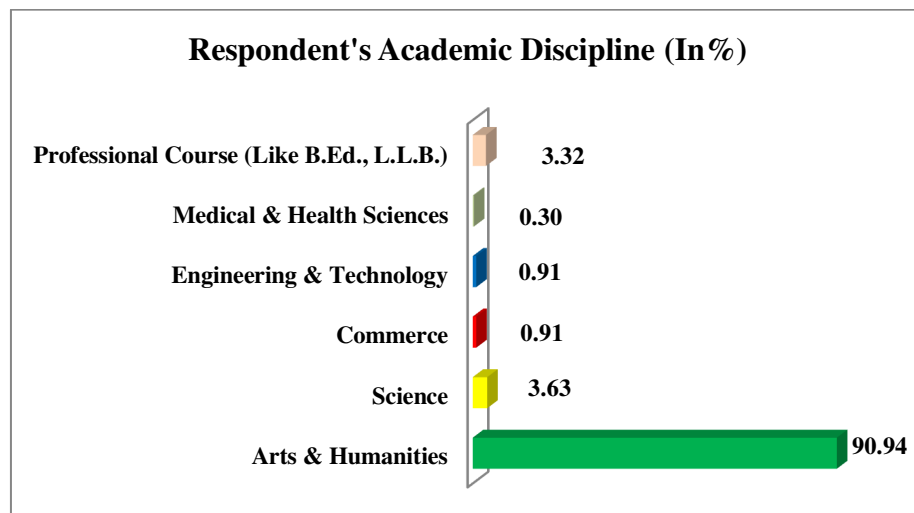


Figure 02: Respondent’s Academic Discipline

Source: Primary Data

Findings and Discussion: The findings of the study along with discussion are given below:

- 1) **Effect of Social Media on Academic Performance:** In this present study, the most of students (58.91%) expressed that social media are affected their academic performance positively. Some of them (12.39%) reported that their academic performance hampered by social media. The respondents (28.70%) also said that there are no significant impacts in educational performance by using social media.

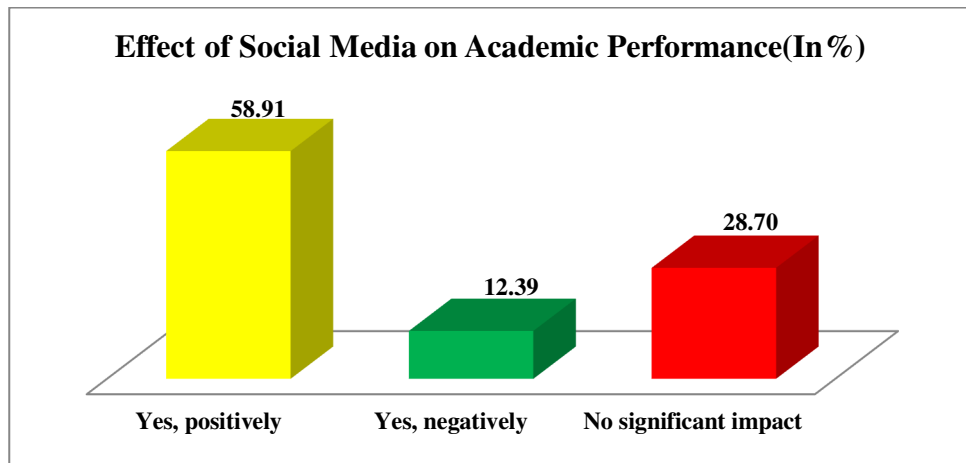


Figure 03: Effect of Social Media on Academic Performance Source: Primary Data

2) **Issues Faced on Social Media:** In this present study, it has been found that the most of students (36.86%) do not face any issues while using social media. Some students (25.08%) are getting fake news or misinformation through social media platform. Some other types of issues facing by students are cyberbullying (5.44%), privacy concerns and data breaches (9.97%), and excessive screen time affecting health (11.48%). 2.11% students are also facing cyberbullying, privacy concerns and data breaches as a problem on social media. The respondents get complication likes privacy concerns and data breaches, and fake news or misinformation (1.51%) and fake news or misinformation and excessive screen time affecting health (3.63%) respectively while using social media. It has been also shown that 3.93% students faced above all four issues on social media.

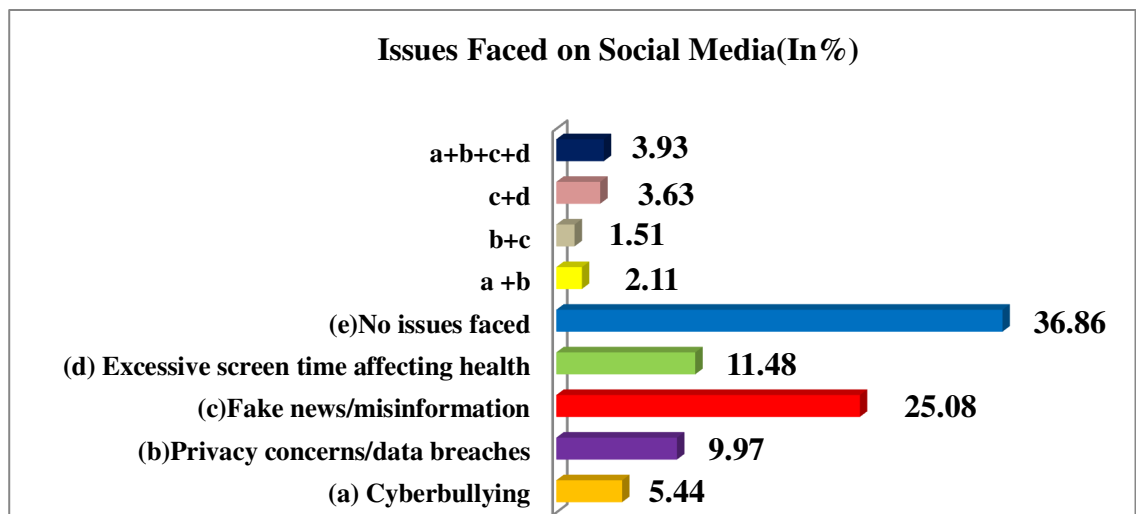


Figure 04: Issues Faced on Social Media Source: Primary Data

3) **Impact of Social Media on Personality Development and Communication Skills:** In this present study, it has been shown that a huge amount of students (77.04%) acknowledge that social media truly helps them in their personality development and communication skills. 6.04% students do not get any kind of helps while using social media account. Some of the students (16.92%) do not sure in above issues.

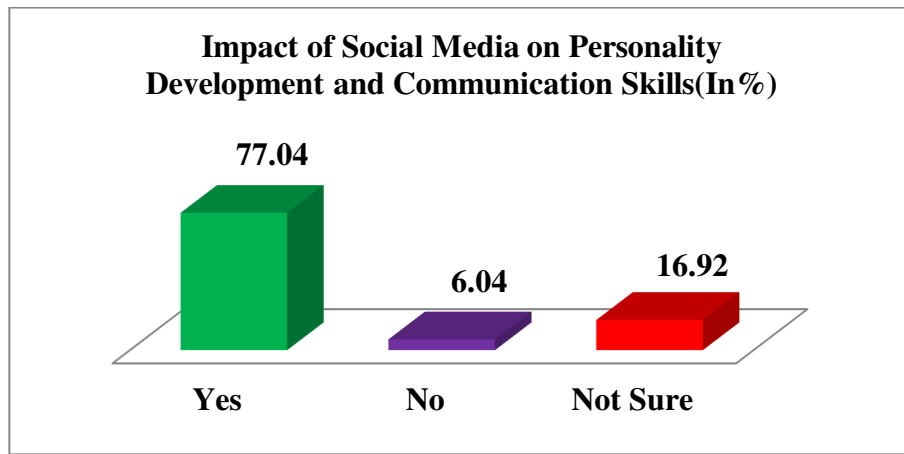


Figure 05: Impact of Social Media on Personality Development and Communication Skills
Source: Primary Data

4) **Privacy Setting on Social Media:** In this present study, it has been shown that 73.11% students are aware regarding privacy settings on social media. Only 4.84% students express that they do not careful about the privacy settings on social media accounts. Significant numbers of respondents (22.05%) are somewhat careful in above issues.

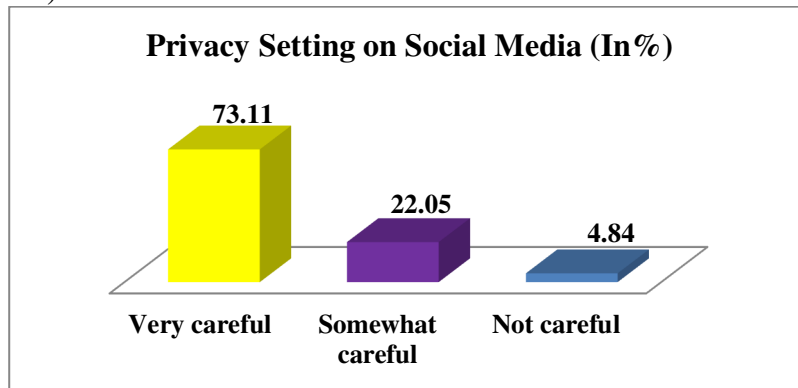


Figure 06: Privacy Setting on Social Media Source: Primary Data

5) **Verify News or Information Before Sharing on Social Media:** It has been revealed from the present study that the most of the respondents (45.92%) are always verify news or information before sharing on social media. 40.48% students sometimes do this thing in above situation. Some students are forward news or information on social media verify rarely (7.55%) and never (6.05%).

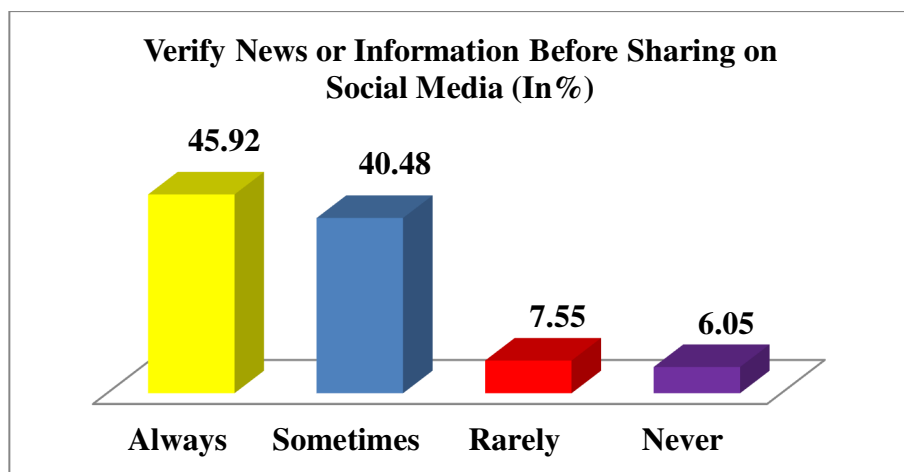


Figure 07: Verify News or Information before Sharing on Social Media
Primary Data

Source:

- 6) **Participate in Online Activism or Social Movements Through Social Media:** Analysing figure 08, it has been seen that 67% respondents opined that they participate in online activism or social movements through social media. The rest of students (33%) express that they do not take part in online activism or social movements through social media.

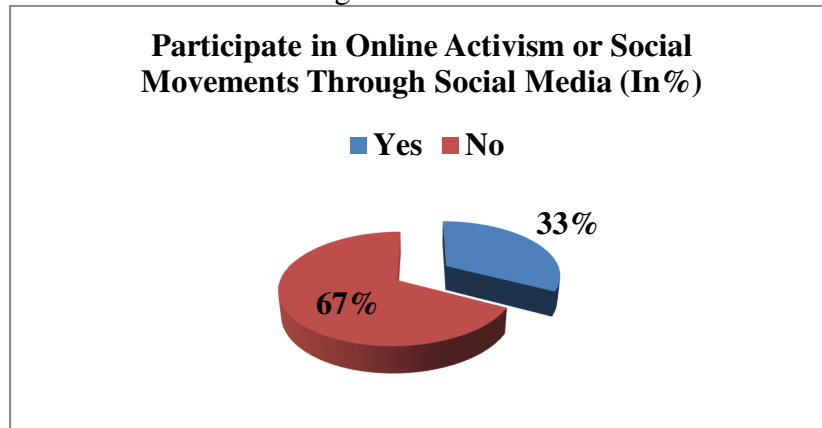


Figure 08: Participate in online activism or social movements through social media
Source: Primary Data

- 7) **Social Media Addiction among the Students:** It has been revealed from the present study that the most of the respondents (61.64%) consent about addiction of social media a real problem among the undergraduate students. 11.48% of respondents do not believe in such of things. Some of the students (26.88%) do not sure in above issues.

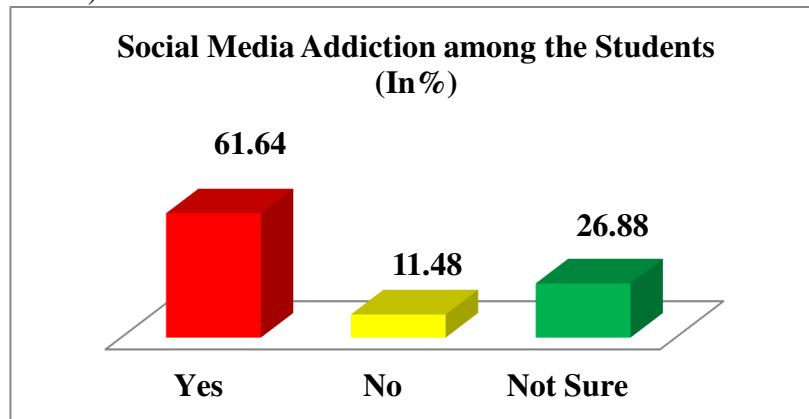


Figure 09: Social Media Addiction among the Students
Source: Primary Data

- 8) **Improvement or Change Need in Social Media among the Students:** In this present study, it has been shown that 47.43% respondents want more educational contents in social media. Some of students wish for stricter privacy policies (9.37%), awareness about mental health impacts (13.90%), and balance usage strategies (15.71%). The students also reported that the improvement or change needs in social media are more educational contents and stricter privacy policies (2.72%), more educational contents and awareness about mental health impacts (3.03%), more educational contents and stricter privacy policies and stricter privacy policies (4.23%), and all above four changes (3.63%)

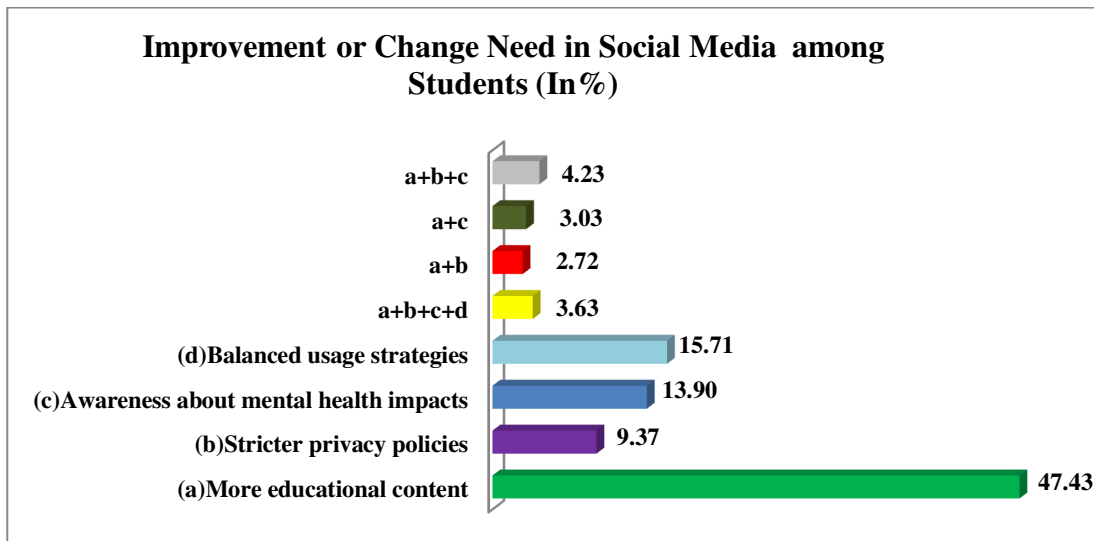


Figure 10: Improvement or change need in social media among the students
Source: Primary Data

9) **Views of Students regarding Time Spent on Social Media:** In this present study, the majority of respondents (61.33%) opined to reduce time on social media. Only 12.99% students do not agree to reduce time on social media. Some of the students (25.68%) do not sure in above issues.

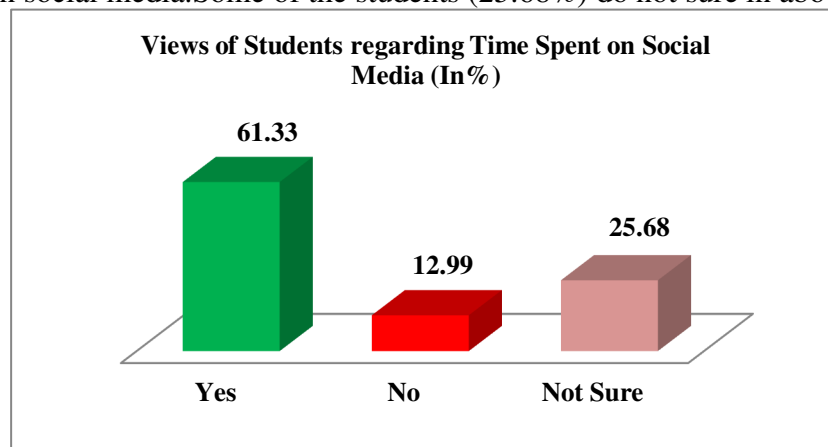


Figure 11: Views of Students regarding Time Spent on Social Media Source: Primary Data

Major Findings: The major findings of the present study are:

1. The most of students (58.91%) expressed that social media are affected their academic performance positively.
2. Some of them (12.39%) reported that their academic performance hampered by social media.
3. The respondents (28.70%) also said that there are no significant impacts in educational performance by using social media.
4. The most of students (36.86%) do not face any issues while using social media.
5. Some students (25.08%) are getting fake news or misinformation through social media platform.
6. Some other types of issues facing by students are cyberbullying (5.44%), privacy concerns and data breaches (9.97%), and excessive screen time affecting health (11.48%).
7. A huge amount of students (77.04%) acknowledge that social media truly helps them in their personality development and communication skills.
8. 6.04% students do not get any kind of helps while using social media account.
9. 73.11% students are aware regarding privacy settings on social media.
10. Only 4.84% students express that they do not careful about the privacy settings on social media accounts.

11. The respondents (45.92%) are always verifying news or information before sharing on social media.
12. Some students are forward news or information on social media verify rarely (7.55%) and never (6.05%).
13. 67% respondents opined that they participate in online activism or social movements through social media.
14. The rest of students (33%) express that they do not take part in online activism or social movements through social media.
15. The respondents (61.64%) consent about addiction of social media a real problem among the undergraduate students.
16. 11.48% of respondents do not believe in such of things.
17. 47.43% respondents want more educational contents in social media.
18. Some of students wish for stricter privacy policies (9.37%), awareness about mental health impacts (13.90%), and balance usage strategies (15.71%).
19. The majority of respondents (61.33%) opined to reduce time on social media.
20. Only 12.99% students do not agree to reduce time on social media.

Conclusion: In conclusion we may highlight that most of the undergraduate students (58.91%) of West Bengal, expressed that social media are affected their academic performance positively. A huge amount of students (77.04%) acknowledge that social media truly helps them in their personality development and communication skills. 73.11% students are aware regarding privacy settings on social media. 67% respondents opined that they participate in online activism or social movements through social media. The respondents (61.64%) consent about addiction of social media a real problem among the undergraduate students. The majority of respondents (61.33%) opined to reduce time on social media.

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