



Social Media Impact on Behaviour and Correlation with Crime: A Prospective Study

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Abstract

The rapid growth of social media platforms has transformed the way individuals interact, communicate, and engage with information. Social media has become an integral part of modern day communication and has had a significant impact on the way people interact with each other. Social media regulates society and has the power to alter morality, human behaviour, and outcomes. It reflects in two ways: positive as well as negative. The study was conducted to explore the impact of social media on behaviour and its influence on criminal activities. The sample size included 200 individuals in the age group of 15 to 25 years, including both males and females, from the city of Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The purposive sampling method was adapted, and a structured questionnaire was used for the data collection. In light of this study, it was revealed that the impact of social media is highly reflected in the behaviour of people and its influence on criminal activities. The youth have been impacted by social media in terms of the tendencies that are visible on social media that lead to criminal activity. The study's main finding is that social media has changed people's behaviour, and that behaviour has caused certain people to engage in criminal activity.

Keywords: Social Media; Impact; Behaviour; Criminal Activities; Social Media Platforms.

INTRODUCTION

Today, social media has become an integral part of modern-day communication and has an important impact on the way people interact with each other. While social media has many advantages, it has also been associated with a

rise in crime rates. The impact of social media on behaviour and its influence on crime are topics of great concern for law enforcement agencies, policy makers, and researchers.¹

Holt and Bossler (2015) found that social media has revolutionized the way people interact, communicate, and gain information.² It has become an integral part of our daily lives and has changed the way we interact with each other, conduct business, and access news and entertainment. With the proliferation of smartphones and the internet, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become ubiquitous in our lives.³⁻⁶

India is a country with a population of over 1.3 billion people, of whom more than half are under the age of 25. With the rapid growth of the internet and mobile penetration, India has witnessed

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a dramatic increase in the use of social media platforms in recent years.⁷ According to the report by Hootsuite and We Are Social, India has over 448 million active social media users, making it the second-largest market for social media after China.⁸ Social media platforms are widely used in India for communication, socialising, entertainment, and even political activism.

However, the increased use of social media has also brought about new challenges in the form of cybercrime, hate speech, fake news, and other forms of online misconduct. The anonymity provided by social media platforms has made it easier for criminals to perpetrate crimes such as cyberbullying, online harassment, identity theft, and fraud. Social media has also been linked to the spread of extremist ideologies and propaganda, which can lead to radicalization and violent behaviour.⁹⁻¹²

At the individual level, social media has been linked to changes in behaviour, including addiction, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Studies have shown that excessive use of social media can lead to poor academic performance, reduced productivity, and lower self-esteem. Social media has also been linked to changes in social behaviour, including a decrease in face-to-face communication, reduced social skills, and an increase in the number of online friendships.¹³

The impact of social media on behaviour and its influence on crimes in India is a complex issue that requires a multidisciplinary approach to understand.¹⁴ The study of social media's impact on behaviour and crime in India can be divided into two broad categories: the impact of social media on individual behaviour and its impact on crime at the societal level.

Social media has also been linked to criminal activities on a societal level. Social media has been used to spread hate speech, fake news, and propaganda, which can fuel communal tensions and incite violence. Social media has also been linked to the spread of child pornography.¹⁵

The role of law enforcement agencies in regulating social media platforms and preventing crime is a critical issue that requires careful consideration. The Indian government has taken several measures to regulate social media platforms, including the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. These rules require social media platforms to appoint a grievance redressal officer, a nodal officer, and a chief compliance officer to

address complaints from users and comply with government orders. The rules also mandate social media platforms to remove content that is illegal, defamatory, or against the public interest within 36 hours of receiving a complaint.¹⁶⁻¹⁷

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consists of 200 people in the age group between 15 to 25 years, including both males and females, from the city of Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The participants hail from different schools and colleges.

Procedure

In order to test the hypothesis, a questionnaire design was administered. The questionnaire was conducted through a google form, which was further sent to the participants through the google groups and whatsapp groups, and the hyperlink to the Google Form was sent to their personal accounts. The questionnaire was only filled out with their consent. The instructions for filling out the questionnaire were attached, along with the reason for such a survey. This procedure was followed to prevent the participants from being influenced by some groups or seeing others give up or answer similar questions. After each participant completed his or her questionnaire, he or she was thanked for their contribution to this report. A conclusion was reached after additional analysis of the Google form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Behaviour changes according to the time spent on social media

Change in behaviour	Less than 2 hours	2-4 hours	4-8 hours	More than 8 hours	Total no. of subjects
Not at all	44.5%	40.5%	9.4%	5.4%	74
Very low	20.5%	62.1%	18.9%	-	37
Moderate	20.2%	59.4%	20.2%	-	79
Very high	-	40%	-	60%	10

According to this table, when the participants spend less than 2 hours on media, 44.5% of them show no change in their behaviour. While 20.5% of subjects have very low change, 20.2% have moderate change, and very high change is not

experienced by any subject. Similarly, when the participants spend 2 to 4 hours on media, 40.5% of them show no change in their behaviour. While 62.2% of subjects have very low change, 59.4% have moderate change, and very high change is experienced by 40% of subjects. Similarly, when the participants spend 4 to 8 hours on media, 9.4% of them show no change in their behaviour. While 18.9% of subjects have very low change, 20.2% have moderate change, and very high change is not experienced by any subject. Similarly, when the other 10 subjects spend more than 8 hours on media, 5.4% of them show no change in their behaviour. While the other six subjects experienced very high changes in their behaviour. The overall change in behaviour caused by media, however high or low, is experienced by 126 subjects out of a total of 200 subjects. But fewer subjects are moderately or

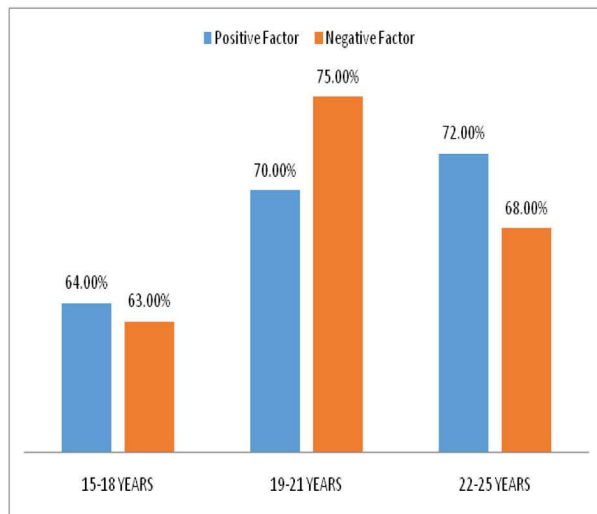


Fig. 1: Positive and negative factors of social media

highly affected by media, i.e., 89 subjects out of 200 subjects, and fewer subjects access media for long durations. i.e., 40 out of 200.

Graph 1 shows that the effect of social media impacts identified in the prior on the participants. This study explicitly focused on determining the positive and negative elements of social media that characteristically influence the participants. These social media factors were identified and classified into two sets, namely, positive and negative factors. The positive factors include creating awareness, easy communication, helping to maintain contacts, lecture sharing, improving confidence, improving social and communication skills, increasing knowledge, reducing stress, etc. And the negative factors include lack of critical thinking, waste of time, lead to breakups in study connectivity,

increase cyberbullying, create depression, anxiety, problematic communications, etc. From this graph, the age groups between 15 and 18 years have a

Table 2: Participants using various applications of social media

Social media types	No of subjects	Percentage
Facebook and Instagram	68	34%
What's App	48	24%
Skype and Twitter	22	11%
Telegram and YouTube	36	18%
Webchat and SnapChat	14	7%
All	12	6%
Total	200	100%

positive impact (64%), the age group between 19 and 21 years has a negative impact (75%), and the age group between 22 and 25 years has a positive impact (72%).

This shows that the participants are using various applications of social media according to their interests. When there were 68 subjects using Facebook and Instagram, 48 subjects using What's

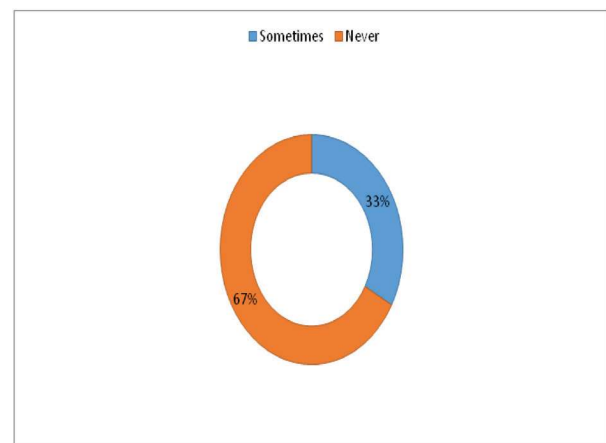


Fig. 2: Participants participated in any criminal activity through social media

App, 22 subjects using Skype and Twitter, 36 subjects using Telegram and YouTube, 14 subjects using Web Chat and Snap Chat, and 12 subjects using all of these applications, Facebook and Instagram were used most commonly among them (34%).

According to this graph 2, the subjects participated in social media to participate in criminal activity. This data is drawn from the 12th to 14th questions of the questionnaire. It shows that 33% of the subjects sometimes participated in

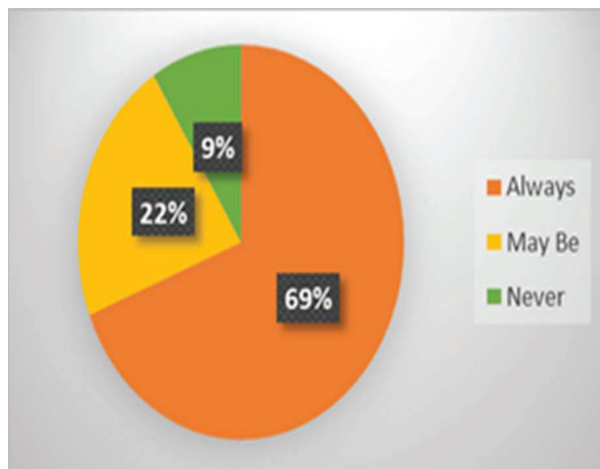


Fig. 3 Social media is responsible for criminals committing crimes.

criminal activity through social media, and 67% of the subjects never participated in criminal activity through social media.

Graph 3 shows demographic opinion about how social media platforms have made it easier for criminals to commit crimes. This cumulative data is from the 14th question of the questionnaire. From this graph, it shows that the majority (69% of them) agree that social media is responsible for criminals committing crimes.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study provide some fascinating insights into the change in behaviour caused by the media's influence on criminal activities. According to what we predicted, time is an important factor in influencing the effects of media on humans and thus changing their behaviour. It can be seen that the longer the duration of accessing the media, the higher the effect of such behaviour on the person. While the majority of participants spent a moderate amount of time on social media, indicating a potentially higher influence on behaviour, it was also observed that fewer individuals accessed social media for longer durations.

The analysis of social media platforms and applications highlighted the popularity of platforms like Facebook and Instagram among participants. Additionally, the data revealed a significant presence of criminal activities and behaviour on social media platforms, with both victims and participants in such activities reported by the participants. A substantial proportion of

participants reported witnessing criminal activity or being victims themselves, under scoring the potential risks and negative consequences associated with social media use.

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