An Analysis on Social Media Growth and Its Impact on Indian Youth

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***Abstract*—social media has evolved quickly, revolutionizing worldwide communication, entertainment, and business. This study examines its historical development, highlighting major evolutionary milestones and the most recent usage statistics, with over 5.24 billion active users globally as of 2025. In India, where social media penetration is at an all-time high, platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram command user attention. The article also discusses the top ten most popular social media platforms in India and their impact on users. While social media has many benefits, including increased connectivity, educational resources, business prospects, and artistic expression, it also has drawbacks, such as mental health problems, privacy hazards, misinformation, and addiction. By investigating growth trends, user behaviour, and societal implications, this study emphasizes the significance of digital literacy, responsible usage, and regulatory measures in fostering a balanced and beneficial social media environment.**

***Index Terms*—Digital literacy, Facebook, Mental health impact, social media, social networking, WhatsApp,**

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has become a pervasive part of daily life, particularly for the younger generation in India. With a population that is both youthful and digitally connected, the influence of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok is undeniable. Young people in India, especially those in urban areas, have embraced social media as a primary means of communication, entertainment, education, and social interaction. This digital revolution has brought both opportunities and challenges, influencing the lives of young Indians in ways that were previously unimaginable. While social media offers platforms for creativity, selfexpression, and global connectivity, it also introduces concerns related to mental health, selfesteem, addiction, and privacy. In a country as diverse and vast as India, the effects of social media are felt differently across various social, economic, and cultural groups, making it an essential area of study. As of January 2025, over 5.24 billion people are using social media worldwide, and the average user accesses 6.83 social media platforms monthly.

II. HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Orkut was among the first social media platforms in India, launched in 2004, allowing users to connect and share content, but Facebook soon overtook it. Social media has evolved significantly since online communication, starting with email in the 1970s and the first social networking site, Six Degrees, in 1997. Platforms like Friendster, LinkedIn, Myspace, and Facebook emerged in the early 2000s, followed by YouTube and Twitter, which introduced video sharing and real-time updates. The rise of Instagram, Pinterest, and Snap chat brought new features like photo sharing and disappearing messages, while TikTok's global launch in 2016 further reshaped digital interactions. Over time, social media has revolutionized communication, influencing culture, business, and everyday life worldwide.

III. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE STATISTICS

As of January 2025, around 5.24 billion individuals worldwide, or 63.9% of the global population, were active on social media, representing a 4.1% rise over the previous year with 206 million new users. The

most popular platforms among active users are Facebook (3.07 billion), YouTube (2.53 billion), WhatsApp (2 billion), Instagram (2 billion), and TikTok (1.59 billion). On average, users interact with 6.8 different platforms per month and spend about 2 hours and 21 minutes per day on social media, accounting for almost 14% of their waking hours. Northern Europe has the highest social media penetration (82%), followed by Western Europe (80%) and Southern Europe (75%), whilst Eastern Africa and Middle Africa have much lower penetrations (10% and 9%, respectively).

As of January 2025, 54.6% of global social media users are men and 45.4% are women, with distribution varying by platform. Facebook has 56.7% male and 43.3% female users, whereas YouTube has 54% male, 46% female, and Instagram has 52.7% male, 47.3% female. TikTok has 55.7% male, 44.3% female, while LinkedIn has 56.9% male and 43.1% female. Pinterest is 70.3% female, while X (Twitter) is 63.7% male. Snapchat is more balanced, with 48.4% females and 50.7% males. In the United States, 51.2% of users are women and 48.8% are men, indicating varying gender trends across platforms.

IV. ANNUAL GROWTH TRENDS IN SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social media usage has increased significantly in recent years. In 2024, the global number of social media users increased by about 4.1%, adding 206 million new members since January 2024. This pushed the total to approximately 5.24 billion users globally, accounting for 63.9% of the world's population. This increased trend illustrates the growing importance of social media platforms across regions and demographic groups. Some platforms are growing faster than others. For example, TikTok saw a 10% user increase in 2024, while Facebook's growth has slowed, particularly in Western markets. More than 90% of social media users access platforms via mobile devices, making app-based networking the dominant mode of social interaction.

10 Year Social Media Growth Statistics:

Year	Users (in billion)
2015	2.08
2016	2.31
2017	2.79
2018	3.20
2019	3.46
2020	3.71
2021	4.20
2022	4.62
2023	4.72
2024	5.04
2025	5.24

Source; web site

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shabir et al. (2014) investigated "The Influence of Social Media on Youth's Social Life" in Bahawalpur, Pakistan, and discovered that 49.3% favoured Facebook and 36.6% strongly agreed that social media promotes education. Singh (2014) used secondary data to investigate the "Effect of Internet Use on Students in India" and discovered that students spend 2-3 hours online every day, largely for chatting, socializing, and intellectual discussions, which influences their lifestyle and study habits. Khurana (2015) researched "The impact of social networking sites on the youth," and discovered that 75% of respondents preferred Facebook, while 74% thought SNS helped create personal and professional relationships. Haddon (2015) conducted research on "The Impact of Social Media on Youth" and underlined how social media has transformed behaviour, asking parents and schools to provide direction. Bharadwaj et al. (2017) investigated "The impact of social networking on Indian youth" and discovered different usage patterns, with 45% checking social networking sites (SNS) in the morning and 28% before bedtime, raising addiction concerns. Singh et al. (2017) investigated "Social media usage: positive and Negative Effects on the Lifestyle of Indian Youth", and discovered that excessive social media use caused worry, weariness, and decreased real-life interactions, despite its entertainment value. Sengupta (2018) investigated "Internet addiction and its impact on academic performance" among 153 medical students in the United States, employing the Internet Addiction Test (IAT). The survey discovered that 17% of respondents were internet addicts, with age and time spent online being significant variables. It also revealed a negative association between internet

addiction and academic performance and a positive link with selfreported depression.

VI. SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDIA

WhatsApp dominates India's messaging space, with over 500 million monthly active users. It is vital for personal chats, group talks, video calls, and corporate interactions. YouTube, with over 500 million users, remains the top platform for video content consumption, providing pleasure, education, and news, fuelled by low-cost cell phones and data access. Facebook, with over 350 million members, remains significant, particularly among older demographics and small businesses, providing as a hub for networking, marketplaces, and content sharing. Instagram, with over 300 million users, is popular among young people, influencers, and content creators, with features such as Stories, Reels, and commerce. Twitter (X), despite its smaller user base of over 30 million, remains an important forum for real-time updates, political conversation, social activity, and entertainment news. TikTok, which was recently revived in India, has regained popularity, with over 100 million users focusing on short-form videos, trends, and viral material. LinkedIn, with over 100 million users, dominates the professional networking arena, assisting job seekers, recruiters, and business professionals with career advancement and industry connections. Snapchat, with over 60 million users, is popular among Indian young due to its ephemeral content, filters, and interactive features. Pinterest, with over 75 million members, is becoming a go-to platform for fashion, home decor, DIY projects, and creative inspiration. Share Chat, with over 200 million members, stands out as an Indian social networking platform that caters to regional languages and cultural preferences, allowing users to exchange memes, movies, and other content. These platforms reflect India's digital landscape, in which social media and messaging applications play important roles in communication, entertainment, business, and networking. As smartphone usage and internet availability grow, these apps evolve to match user needs.

VII. POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS

Social media offers several valuable benefits that have transformed how people communicate and interact globally. It enables individuals to stay connected with friends, family, and colleagues across vast distances, fostering relationships and maintaining networks. Social media also serves as a powerful tool for spreading information and education, allowing users to access news, educational content, and awareness about various social issues. Businesses can leverage these platforms for marketing, reaching a wider audience with targeted campaigns, and engaging directly with customers. Additionally, social media creates support communities where people can share experiences, and advice, and offer mutual support on a wide range of topics. Lastly, it provides a space for personal expression, enabling users to showcase creativity, build personal brands, and share their interests with others.

Access to Learning Resources: Social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram provide access to a wealth of educational content. Young people can learn about almost any subject, from science and history to coding and photography. Many creators and educators share free tutorials, lessons, and discussions that can enhance learning.

Creative Platforms: Social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube allow young people to express their creativity in various forms, such as videos, photography, writing, and art. These platforms provide a space for youths to share their passions and talents, whether it's through music, dance, or visual arts.

Staying Informed: Social media provides access to real-time news and updates from around the world. Young people can stay informed about global events, trends, and important societal developments. This helps foster a sense of global citizenship and awareness of world affairs.

Critical Thinking & Communication: Social media challenges young people to think critically about information, source credibility, and engage in meaningful conversations. These platforms often encourage open dialogue, which helps to develop communication and problem-solving skills.

VIII. NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS

Youngsters often face several problems related to social media, including mental health issues like anxiety and depression, as they may experience pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards or lifestyles portrayed online. The constant need for validation through likes and comments can lead to low self-esteem. Additionally, social media can be addictive, causing distractions that affect academic performance and real-life social interactions. Cyberbullying and online harassment are also prevalent, making young people vulnerable to emotional harm. Finally, exposure to misinformation or harmful content can negatively influence their beliefs and behaviours, making it crucial for young users to navigate social media mindfully.

Privacy and Security Risks: Because social media platforms collect large volumes of user data, they are prime targets for hackers and cybercriminals. Personal information may be used for identity theft, scams, or unlawful monitoring. Many users unwittingly reveal sensitive information, making them more vulnerable to online dangers.

Mental Health Issues: Excessive social media use has been associated with increased anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Constant exposure to curated and idealized content can result in unhealthy comparisons, body image problems, and feelings of inadequacy. Cyberbullying and online harassment exacerbate emotional discomfort, particularly among teenagers and young adults.

Misinformation and Fake News: social media allows for the quick transmission of misleading information, propaganda, and conspiracy theories. Fake news about health, politics, and social issues can confuse individuals, cause panic, and sway public opinion. The lack of adequate fact-checking processes makes it difficult for users to distinguish between trustworthy and false content.

Reduced Productivity and Distraction: social media can be extremely seductive, causing users to spend too much time looking through feeds, viewing videos, or participating in online arguments. This causes lower focus and productivity at work, school, and in personal life. Overuse of social media can also disrupt sleep, relationships, and in-person social interactions.

IX. CONCLUSION

The swift rise of social networking has dramatically altered global communication, with billions of people participating across many platforms. Over the previous decade, social media has grown at an annual rate of about 4%, with platforms such as TikTok and Instagram seeing the most rapid development, particularly among younger users. While Facebook is still widely used, its growth has slowed in mature countries such as North America and Europe. Mobile accessibility and affordable internet have been critical to this expansion, with over 90% of users accessing social media by smartphone. While social media provides opportunities for networking, knowledge, and self-expression, it is critical to balance its benefits with possible drawbacks. Governments, educators, and technology businesses must work together to promote responsible use, strengthen privacy protections, and promote digital literacy. Awareness initiatives and parental advice are also essential for ensuring young people's safe usage of social media.

Social networking in India has grown at an unprecedented rate as a result of increased internet access, low-cost gadgets, and a tech-savvy youth population. By 2025, around 500 million Indians will actively use platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, making India one of the world's largest social media markets. The popularity of regional language material, short video platforms, and influencer marketing has increased engagement in both urban and rural locations. However, this digital expansion raises worries about privacy, misinformation, and mental health implications. The social media landscape in India will continue to evolve, propelling growth in e-commerce, digital entertainment, and education. However, its long-term viability will be determined by effective regulation, customer satisfaction, and technology developments.

Overall, social media serves as both a valuable tool for global engagement and a potential source of stress and pressure. The key is for young individuals and those guiding them to strike a balance between leveraging social media’s advantages while staying mindful of its potential downsides.

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