

## Growing Up Wired: Social Networking Sites and Adolescent Behavior

Rashmi Kuwal\*

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

\*Corresponding Author: rashmichandiwal@gmail.com

*Citation: Kuwal, R. (2026). Growing Up Wired: Social Networking Sites and Adolescent Behavior. International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science, 08(02(II)), 143–149. [https://doi.org/10.62823/IJEMMASSS/8.2\(II\).9064](https://doi.org/10.62823/IJEMMASSS/8.2(II).9064)*

### ABSTRACT

Social networking sites (SNSs) have changed the communication, interaction, and social identity development of adolescents in recent years. Social media like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and X have become a part of teens' life, which affects their behavior, attitude and lifestyle. This study analyzes the influence of social networking sites in the behavior of adolescents in a positive and negative way. The study examines the impact of the use of SNS on communication skills, academic performance, self-esteem, social relationship and emotional health. Social networking sites can provide learning, self-expression, information sharing and social connection, but they can also provide distraction, cyberbullying, social isolation, anxiety and reduced academic engagement. The study is descriptive and analytical with the use of primary and secondary data to gain insights into the patterns of SNS use, and the behavioral implications of these patterns, among adolescents. The results indicate that social network sites have a notable effect on the behaviour of adolescents, and this effect varies according to the frequency and goal of the social network use, as well as personal characteristics. The study emphasizes the need for responsible and balanced use of social media and calls for increased involvement of parents, educators and policymakers in fostering digital literacy and positive social media behaviors among young people.

**Keywords:** Social Networking Sites (SNSs), Adolescents, Social Media, Behavioral Change, Academic Performance, Self-Esteem, Cyberbullying, Digital Literacy.

### Introduction

The digital revolution has transformed the ways in which people communicate, especially teenagers. The advent of cell phones, the Internet and social networking sites (SNSs) has opened new avenues for communication, learning and self-expression. Today's teenagers are inhabiting a highly interconnected digital universe in which social media platforms are central to their everyday lives. These platforms provide opportunities for sharing information, engaging with others, building online identities and joining virtual communities. Social networking sites are powerful tools that influence many aspects of adolescent development including social relationships, emotional health, academic achievement and behavioural patterns. They provide access to information, social support, skill development and more, but can also be harmful when overused or misused including cyberbullying, addiction, anxiety and reduced face-to-face social interaction. It is important to understand the impact of SNSs on the behavior of adolescents during this critical period of physical, emotional and psychological growth. As digital communication becomes increasingly an integral part of every aspect of life, parents, educators, researchers and policy makers are worried about the long-term impacts. For this reason, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between SNS and adolescent behaviour, in both positive and negative aspects of SNS use. The results of this research can be used to help guide initiatives to foster responsible, healthy social media use among youth.

## **Background of the Study**

Social networking sites have changed the way people communicate in the world. In the past twenty years platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and X have become a part of our lives, particularly young people's lives. Adolescents are one of the most active groups of digital technology users, as they are curious, need for social interaction and has more access to digital technologies. The internet has grown in popularity to date and has helped allow adolescents to communicate with friends, share experiences, find information and voice opinions in an instant. Social networking has given rise to new social interactions which are more than just geographically bound. Such platforms shape adolescent communication, learning, relationship-building and self-perception in society. Although SNSs have many benefits, problems have arisen about the effects of SNSs on the behavior of adolescents. Studies show that too much social media can negatively impact focus, school performance, feelings, and social skills. Cyberbullying, exposure to privacy concerns, harassment on the Internet, comparison of oneself with others, and online addiction are growing concerns for young users. Meanwhile, social networking sites can be used to facilitate educational activities, creativity, collaboration and social awareness.

This is particularly so as digital technologies continue to change and understanding the impact of these technologies on adolescent development is important. This study aims at understanding the influence of social networking sites on the behaviour of adolescents and what opportunities and challenges lie in their use.

## **Concept of Social Networking Sites (SNS)**

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are web-based applications that allow people to build personal profiles, network with other people and users and share information with others and join online communities. These apps make it easy to communicate, exchange messages, photos, videos, streaming and more. SNSs are an important part of today's digital communication and social interaction. The main function of the social networking sites is to create and sustain social relations. Users can make friends, family, classmates and other people with the same interests regardless of location. The social media platforms that are popular, like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and X offer networking, information exchange, entertainment, education and business promotion.

The features of social networking sites include UGC, the ability to communicate at the moment, interactivity, and global access. They enable users to share their opinions, experiences and to join in discussions on a range of topics. These spaces are important for teenagers to explore their identity, connect with others and express themselves." But there are some downsides to SNSs. Overuse can lead to decreased productivity, privacy issues, misinformation, cyber-bullying and psychological stress. Thus, it is important to understand the concept and operation of social networking sites in order to assess the effect of social networking on adolescents' behaviour. SNSs are not simply communication devices but powerful digital environments that impact attitudes, behaviours, and social experiences in today's society.

## **Adolescence: Meaning and Characteristics**

Adolescence is the period in the life of a human being in which he or she is in a transition between childhood and adulthood, usually starting at age 10 and ending at age 19. It is a period of marked physical, emotional, cognitive and social changes which help to shape an individual's identity and personality. Adolescents are considered one of the most critical periods of life due to its influence on attitudes, behaviour and relationships, which will have a lasting impact on the future.

Adolescents grow and develop rapidly and go through pubertal changes. Adolescents become emotionally more complex as they become independent, develop a sense of self and are looking for peer acceptance. Cognitive skills also develop and become more sophisticated allowing youth to think critically, problem solve and make decisions on their own. Adolescents are characterized by increased self-awareness, curiosity, emotionality, need for peer and social acceptance, risk taking, and increased influence of peer groups. Adolescents experiment with their identities, lifestyles and personal values and beliefs. Peer relationships are very important during this phase with social interactions occurring as a crucial part.

Social networking sites play a vital role in the life of the teenagers in today's digital world. These sites have a ripple effect on communication, self-expression, social interactions, and feelings. Adolescents are the most adaptable to new technologies and are thus especially vulnerable to the

positive and negative impacts of social media. Therefore, it is important to understand the traits of adolescents to analyze the effect of SNS on their behavior and development.

### Need and Significance of the Study

Adolescence is the transition from childhood to adulthood that is characterized by age (10-19 years). It is a time of great physical, emotional, cognitive and social development and change that contributes to the development of an individual's identity and personality. This period is one of the most crucial periods of life as it affects their attitudes, behaviours and their relationships and will have long term consequences for the future.

- **Adolescents:** change and grow at an accelerated pace and experience puberty. As adolescents grow up, they become more complex emotionally as they gain independence, a sense of self and are seeking acceptance by their peers. Cognitive skills have also developed which enable young people to think critically, make decisions and solve problems on their own. Adolescents have a greater awareness of themselves, curiosity, sensitivity to feeling emotionally vulnerable, desire for acceptance from peers and others, engage in risky behaviors, and are influenced by peer groups more than before. Adolescent's try out their identities, their lifestyle and their personal values and beliefs. The peer relationship is important during this period with social interaction being an integral component.

Today's teens have grown up with social networking sites playing an integral part in their existence. Communication, self-expression, social relationships and emotional health are factors included in these platforms. Young people are the most flexible in terms of using new technologies and so are more susceptible to the effects of social media, both positive and negative. Therefore, knowledge of the traits of adolescence is necessary to help analyze the effects of SNS on adolescents' behavior and development.

### Objectives of the Study

- To understand how social networking sites are used by adolescents.
- To examine the effect of SNS use on adolescent's behaviour.
- To assess the impact of social networking sites on students' academic work.
- To examine how SNSs affect the social relationships and communication skills.
- To examine the effects of social media and wellbeing/self esteem.
- To find which are positive and negative effects of the use of SNS.

### Limitations of the Study

- The study only considers selected respondents who are adolescents.
- Findings are self-reported information from the respondents.
- Individuals and social factors may differ in the behavior change.
- The study only concentrates on key social networking sites.
- The number of samples may be restricted by time and/or resources.
- Results may be of long-term relevance, but may be influenced by rapid changes in technology.
- The study may not reflect all the factors affecting behaviour psychologically and socially.

### Review of Literature

**Davey & Davey (2014)** studied the smartphone addiction among Indian adolescents and they kind of found that excessive smartphone and internet usage is linked to behavioural changes, decline in academic concentration, sleep disturbances and also psychological stress. Basically, the paper pointed out how digital dependency is turning out to be a rising issue for the adolescents all over India.

**Gupta & Izgi (2024)** explored the psychological impact of social networking sites on Indian adolescents. They found that social media can help with communication, information sharing, and social interaction, but if it's excessive it may also help trigger anxiety, emotional instability and even lower face to face social engagement among adolescents, which is kinda a big deal

**Sharma and Gera (2025)** explored online disinhibition and parasocial relationships among Indian adolescents. They reported that social networking platforms noticeably shape self-expression,

emotional conduct, and the way identity forms. Adolescents, often build strong emotional attachments to online personalities, and then those attachments end up shaping their attitudes, plus how they view other people socially

**Menezes, Nayak, and Yesodharan (2026)** investigated internet use patterns, and also risky online behaviors among Indian school going adolescents. The researchers said that high social media usage can increase exposure to cyberbullying, privacy risks and inappropriate online content. They strongly stressed the importance of digital safety education, like seriously

**Kher (2024)** analyzed the role of media consumption among Indian adolescents. The results suggested that social media significantly influences adolescents' emotions, perceptions, motivation, and self-image. The study also mentioned that social comparison on digital platforms can affect self-esteem, and emotional well being, and you know that can snowball quickly.

**Viner et al. Indian Adolescent Cohort Study (2023).** Psychological well-being of Indian adolescents: Association with social media use. They reported what feels like a two way relationship, so when social media usage goes up, mental distress also tends to go up. And also, if adolescents are already dealing with emotional difficulties, they seem more prone to use social networking platforms a lot.

**Awasthi (2024) studied** the effects of social media on adolescent development. The findings indicated that social media can have positive and not so positive outcomes for cognitive, emotional and social development. On one hand, digital platforms can improve communication, and even widen learning opportunities. But, when use becomes excessive, it may bring down behavioral, and psychological development.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

In this study a descriptive research design was used for sort of analyzing the behavioral impact of social networking sites on adolescents. This design is helpful because it allows to look at what's already happening, the real usage patterns, attitudes, and also the behavioral results that tend to be connected with SNS usage.

### Sample Size

The research was carried out with 100 adolescent respondents , aged from 13 to 19 years. The participants were chosen through convenience sampling from schools and colleges, where it was easier to reach them and gather the responses in a timely manner.

### Data Collection Method

#### Primary Data

- Structured Questionnaire
- Online survey forms
- Personal interaction

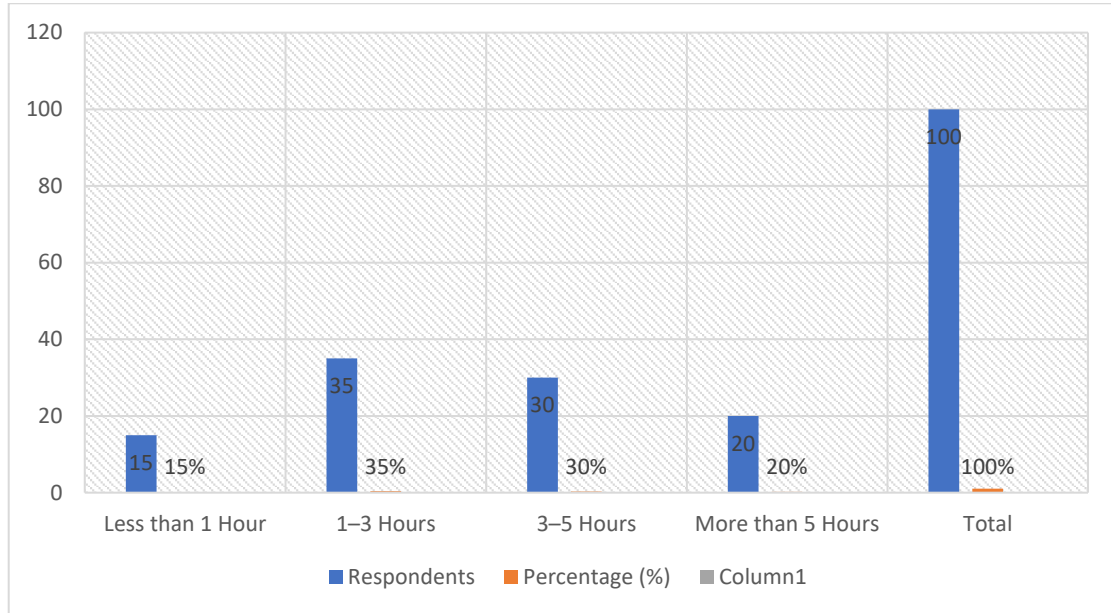
#### Secondary Data

- Research journals
- Books
- Government reports
- Published articles
- Online databases

### Data Analysis

**Table 1: Daily Time Spent on Social Networking Sites**

Time Spent per Day	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 Hour	15	15%
1–3 Hours	35	35%
3–5 Hours	30	30%
More than 5 Hours	20	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

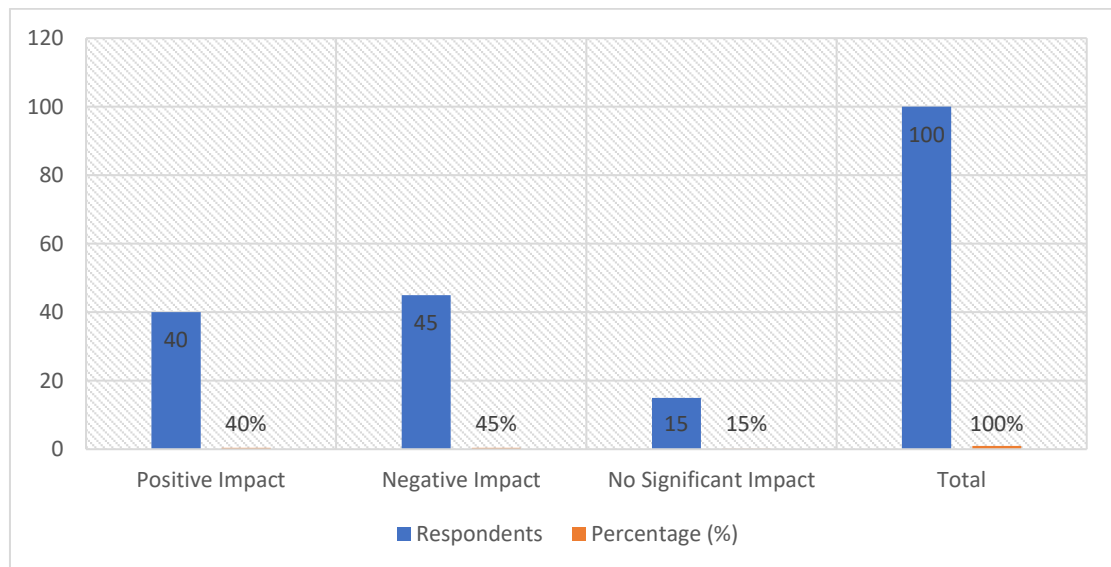


**Explanation**

The chart indicates that 35% of adolescents are spending 1–3 hours a day on social networking sites, and 30% are spending 3–5 hours. 20% of people spend more than 5 hours a day on social media. Only 15% spend less than one hour a day on social networking sites; Results show that social media is now a central element of adolescent life, and that many adolescents spend several hours online.

**Table 2: Influence of SNS on Adolescent Behaviour Perception**

Impact on Behavior	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Positive Impact	40	40%
Negative Impact	45	45%
No Significant Impact	15	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Interpretation:** The results show that about 45% of the respondents feel social networking sites have a negative impact on adolescent conduct. At the same time, around 40% think it has a positive impact. Only 15% say SNSs do not really change anything in any meaningful way. So, it seems that even if social media creates chances for interaction and learning, worries about behavioral plus psychological effects are still pretty visible for adolescents.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study points to how social networking sites are becoming more and more influential in the lives of adolescents. Many respondents said they spend roughly one to five hours a day on these platforms, which suggests strong involvement with digital communication tools. In other words, the findings imply that social networking sites can shape adolescents' behavior, their social relationships, and also their day to day routine.

The outcomes include both bright and darker consequences. On the positive side, there is more effective communication, easier access to information, educational help, and even a better space for self-expression. Adolescents mentioned using social media to keep contact, exchange personal experiences, and remain updated on what's happening in the world.

Still, the findings also bring out negative patterns. However, excessive use may lead to a weaker focus, academic distraction, emotional strain and an increasing dependence on online contact. Concerns were also expressed about cyberbullying, privacy issues and social comparison, which increases as young users compare their lives to others. Ultimately, the effect of SNSs on adolescents appears to be a function of their duration of use and the reasons behind it, such as seeking information or simply passing time.

### **Conclusion**

This study suggests that social networking sites have a noticeable influence on adolescent behavior in today's digital age, and honestly, it feels like a lot more than people assumed at first. Social media platforms have shifted how young people communicate, and now they are kind of a main avenue for information, entertainment, and social mingling. The results show that a big portion of adolescents spend a fairly long time on these sites, so it becomes more or less a routine part of their everyday life.

What's interesting is that the findings point to both gains and drawbacks. On the positive side, social networking supports conversation, offers chances for learning, sparks imagination, and helps adolescents stay socially connected. They can reach helpful knowledge and also interact with friends or communities, even when they are far away by geography. However, when use becomes excessive or not properly managed, it can also bring behavioral and psychological difficulties. These may include distraction, stress, cyberbullying, and even less attention for schoolwork. The study also notes that outcomes are not identical for everyone; they depend on how someone uses the platform, their personal traits, and why they engage in the first place. So, these platforms should be approached with responsibility, and not in a constant, unchecked way. Parents educators, and policymakers should collaborate to build digital literacy and promote healthier online habits, that balance is key.

### **Suggestion**

Adolescents really do need to be nudged, like gently, toward keeping a healthy balance between what happens online and what happens offline. For the parents part, it helps to keep an eye on social media usage, but also to guide children with safer online habits, you know the kind that actually stick. Schools and colleges should probably run digital literacy programs, because students need to learn about responsible social media use in a practical, not just theoretical way. Then there should be public awareness campaigns, focused on cyberbullying, privacy protection, and overall online safety—something that reaches beyond the classroom. Also, time-management strategies should be promoted, so excessive scrolling doesn't slowly take over, and social networking sites don't become the default background noise. Adolescents should also be encouraged to join sports, cultural events, and more face-to-face social interactions, not only "connecting" through screens. Social media platforms themselves should strengthen privacy controls, and make reporting mechanisms much easier, especially for harmful content. Finally, mental health support services should be accessible for adolescents dealing with stress or anxiety tied to social media use. Schools can directly teach digital citizenship education to students. And future research should investigate the long-term behavioral effects of social networking sites on diverse adolescent populations.

**References**

1. Ahn, J. (2011). The effect of social network sites on adolescents' social and academic development: Current theories and controversies. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 62(8), 1435–1445. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21540>
2. Anderson, M., & Jiang, J. (2018). *Teens, social media and technology 2018*. Pew Research Center.
3. Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210–230. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>
4. Davey, S., & Davey, A. (2014). Assessment of smartphone addiction in Indian adolescents: A mixed method study by systematic-review and meta-analysis approach. *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 5(12), 1500–1511.
5. Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook “friends”: Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4), 1143–1168.
6. George, M. J., & Odgers, C. L. (2015). Seven fears and the science of how mobile technologies may be influencing adolescents in the digital age. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(6), 832–851.
7. Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 79–93.
8. Livingstone, S. (2008). Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: Teenagers' use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self-expression. *New Media & Society*, 10(3), 393–411.
9. O'Keeffe, G. S., & Clarke-Pearson, K. (2011). The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. *Pediatrics*, 127(4), 800–804.
10. Pantic, I. (2014). Online social networking and mental health. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 17(10), 652–657.
11. Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. (2017). A large-scale test of the Goldilocks hypothesis: Quantifying the relations between digital-screen use and adolescent well-being. *Psychological Science*, 28(2), 204–215.
12. Rideout, V., & Robb, M. B. (2018). *Social media, social life: Teens reveal their experiences*. Common Sense Media.
13. Sharma, M. K., John, N., & Sahu, M. (2020). Influence of social media on mental health: A systematic review among adolescents and young adults. *Indian Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 36(Suppl. 1), S60–S68.
14. Subrahmanyam, K., & Šmahel, D. (2011). *Digital youth: The role of media in development*. Springer.
15. Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2009). Social consequences of the internet for adolescents: A decade of research. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18(1), 1–5.
16. Yadav, P., & Rai, J. (2017). Impact of social networking sites on youth: A study of Indian adolescents. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 7(8), 421–430.

