

Social Media And Social Emotional Learning: Adolescents' Perspective

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Abstract

Social media network has infiltrated our world to become a permanent companion. Last decade has seen a considerable change in the social media usage of young people. They have become increasingly dependent on social media. The shift in teens' social media usage is just one example of how adolescents today have grown up immersed in technology and how social networking sites are influencing their life and choices. From seeking validation to gratification, social networking sites provide diverse ways to interact, learn, and adapt. Around the globe, the most widely used social media platforms are Facebook, twitter, and Instagram. Each platform attracts diverse kinds of users and extends distinctive services or features to their userbase. Adolescents is a transitional phase of life. The rise in the use of social networking sites by adolescents raise the question whether it is for their benefit or not as they are in an impressionable age. Past research has focussed on the adverse effects of social networking sites but the question in line is, has any of the social networking site is positively impacting adolescents' social skills, learning and knowledge. A pilot study was conducted on 12 to 18 years old to find the impact of social networking sites on the receptive mind. The present study is planned to find out the influence of social media on social emotional learning. As we are sitting in the inflection point in history where tech revolution must be supported by social emotional abilities, it is essential to find out if social media has an impact on social emotional learning of adolescents.

Keywords: social media, social networking sites, social emotional learning, adolescents.

Introduction

The digital communication revolution - the internet, social media has reshaped society in an unimaginable way. We've been around long enough to witness this revolution. The world's first social networking sites appeared in the early twenty-first century, and quickly grew in popularity. If we go by the social media usage statistics, we can see its exponential growth. 42 percent of the world's population which is 3.2 billion people use social media (Banda, 2022).

Due to widespread internet availability, the number of social media users in India has been steadily increasing, reaching 467 million in 2022 (The Global Statistics). Social media sites play a dominant role in most people's everyday life. The online landscape is dominated by YouTube and Facebook (81% and 69%, respectively). There has been a substantial growth in the use of other platforms like Pinterest, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp and TikTok. YouTube and Facebook have enormous reach but applications like Instagram, Snapchat and

TikTok have a strong adult userbase. For the 18 to 29-year-olds in the US - Instagram has a maximum usage. Instagram (71%) followed by Snapchat (65%) and TikTok (50 %). The statistics confirm that social media is proving to be a major phenomenon that allows individuals of every age group to stay connected and share content. 41% of over 65-year-old are currently using Facebook followed by LinkedIn and Instagram. Aged 30-49 are using social media for getting news. Millennials on the other hand are using Image led social media which makes Instagram an apparent favourite. As social media is the easiest and quickest way to gain validation and to connect with the world at large, it also has the power to change opinions, perspectives, and self-belief. The numerous data on social media and its use confirms that social networking is here to stay for the foreseeable future and will continue to be an essential part of most people's lives. As a result, identifying, managing, and controlling the various ways social media is impacting social emotional learning is more crucial than ever.

Why Adolescents?

Adolescence is a phase of life between 10-19 years of age, it brings transformation from childhood to adulthood. The phase is easily distinguished by physical growth, emotional, psychosocial, and behavioural changes, which are normal due to release of various hormones. Some of these changes can be externally visible, while others could be internal. Environmental factors like nutrition, education, infection, and parenting are believed to alter how brain cells respond to hormone changes (estrone, progesterone, testosterone). Although full maturation does not occur until late in adolescents, the limbic areas of the brain, which relate to socio-emotional development, are among the first to suffer alterations with the onset of puberty. It is a vulnerable stage as a child is growing at a fast pace and there are phenomenal changes in their body as well as their mind. They are learning to find difference between right and wrong. They want to get exposed to risk, new experiences, adventures. Also, they get easily influenced and try several components. For them to grow exposure is critical; for which they try new activities, generate new ideas,

and broaden the horizons, experiment with new ideas and concepts to spread their wings.

Adolescents and Social Media

Like any other age group, adolescents have been creating and maintaining personal profiles on social networking sites, where they exchange information about themselves and their life with large group of people. This has become a common online pastime among adolescents. Adolescents use social networking sites to express themselves, communicate with friends, and receive peer evaluation. 45 % of the teenagers (both boys and girls) say that they are compulsively and constantly online. Factors like family income, ethnicity, and parental education has no role to play in their use of internet. (Teens, Social Media and Technology 2018). Various research has been conducted on how social media negatively impacts adolescents, but if we flip the other side of the coin, there are positives too. The findings presented by (Kelly A. Allen) indicated that social media can help adolescents' sense of belonging, it helps them carve an identity and keep their social and psychological well-being in check. However, it does expose them to potential negative outcomes at the same time. A decade of Research done by (Patti M. Valkenburg, Jochen Peter) on Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents states a time related shift from negative to positive internet effects. According to the study internet is primarily used by adolescents to maintain friendships. The inter-connection between the negative effects of the internet and social connectedness and well-being no longer exists. Online communication stimulates social connectedness and well-being in adolescents, rather than reducing it. In India, the age group between 18-24 years are primarily using Facebook and Instagram. This elucidates that these platforms designed mostly to serve the needs of teen adults.

Factors Responsible for Social Media Usage

Predominantly there are two elements accountable for the rise in social media usage among teenagers. First, is the need to stay in touch and secondly; easy availability of

devices and internet. (Chetty, 2021). Teens have mixed views on social media effect on people their age. Among those who said mostly positive, the reasons were connecting with friends/ family, easier to find news/ info, meeting others with same interest, keeps you entertained/ upbeat, self-expression, getting support from others, learning new things.(Anderson & Auxier, 2021).Also, majority of teens have described their internet use as near constant.

Why is there a need for social emotional learning?

In the ever-changing world it is very important for our children to keep the human side alive. The tech revolution must be supported with empathetic revolution. Therefore, we want our children to have the capability to feel for others, become better decision makers who can manage relationships and self. In a world dominated by AI, machine learning, data analytics, and robotics, the differential factor is to be happy, successful, and grounded and that can only happen with social emotional learning. Enormous amount of research has reaffirmed that these competencies lead to positive outcomes for students' success not only during schooling but during adulthood as well. The competencies can be developed by teaching, practice, and modelling. It has been seen that SEL supports improvement and enhancement of the social and emotional abilities, attitude in general, inter-personal relationships, educational and academic performance, and self-worth and self-esteem in adolescents. Anxiety, behavioural issues, and substance abuse also go on the decline. Adolescents' abilities, attitudes, prosocial behaviour, and academic performance also improve over time.

Social Media and SEL (Social Emotional Learning)

Social media has given people an opportunity to know the world around them better, to socialise, make connections, share information. Whereas Social emotional learning helps children to manage self-better, be more socially aware, handle relationships and be more responsible with decision making. Social media and social emotional

learning are intertwined in a way. (Incorporating Social Media Platforms into Social-Emotional Learning - Graduate Programs for Educators, n.d.) Social media proficiency had a significant impact on the SEL six outcomes. Therefore, it becomes important for children to use social media to their advantage. Digital literacy should be learned. Use of technology should be given importance

(The Influence of Social Media on Social-Emotional Learning, n.d.) With the tech overdrive and digital transformation, being emotionally well adjusted is an important competency for adolescents. Social emotional learning is the need for the future as it tries to navigate the seamless world with emotional and social context.

Literature Review

(Blyth & Traeger, 1983) Theory and research on early adolescents maintain that cognitive changes take place during this phase. Validation from the core circle is an important aspect of adolescent's self-approval. New significant others are added in their circle. Changes that take place are gradual and not disruptive so one should focus on building their core competencies which would eventually lead to positive feelings about self. Attaining and keeping self-esteem is a special kind of challenge for adolescents. At the time of adolescence, they are worried about what others think about them. Opinion of people matter in bringing up their self-concept and self-esteem (Minev et al., 2018) Theories and perspectives on adolescents' decision-making process encapsulates that adolescent stay in the state of a "happy dilemma" while making decisions. Decision making during this phase is not easy as lot of factors like parental influence, peers, school, and social environment come into play. Openness to situations and active involvement in society encourages mature decision making. (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983) Another research on Psychosocial milestone in normal puberty and adolescents (Remschmidt, 1375) reiterate how physical changes during puberty influence the adolescents and they consider reaction of the environment to be important for self-approval. It's during this phase that they develop new cognitive structures and

ability to introspect and analyse emotions. They use hypothetical deductive pathways to reason out better. Development takes place at all levels (emotional, personality, moral, ego) and it helps in the development of the self-concept. In addition to finding more acceptance, teens experience a lot of pressure to socialise from peers, parents, and teachers. They are constantly self-evaluating and self-regulating and that's why any kind of influence during adolescents' is of key concern (Jacobs, 2003). The digital transformation of technology has been phenomenal in the last two decades. An entire generation has grown up with digital devices and platforms. There has been a dramatic shift in the way adolescents spend time on social media. Smartphones, online videos, online games, interactive content changed the whole spectrum. Nine out of 10 teenagers in America use social media, and they don't perceive it as negative. 29 percent of social media users believe that it has helped them become more outgoing and confident. (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). In India, predominantly YouTube is the most used medium with 85.80 % of the social media users enrolled, followed by Facebook (79%) and Instagram (70.60%). (Content, 2022).

Research on Active and Passive Social Media Use (Thorisdottir et al., 2019) indicated that passive use of social media is far more harmful than active use of social media in both girls and boys. Active use of social media provides greater emotional support, but it conversely impacts your relationship with parents and increases the time spent on social media. The research supports the active use of social media can provide a protective awning at the time of distress. The anonymity of the internet has opened many channels for communication and forming social connections. Social networking sites cater to all kind of userbase with different objective to be online. For some it is forming connections, for others it could be seeking validation. Jochen Peter conducted research on 493 adolescents between 9-18 years (Peter et al., 2005) The study was done on developing a model of adolescents friendship formation on the internet. The predictors of online friendship formation are online self-disclosure, introversion/extroversion, frequency of online

communication, motive for social compensation.

(Juvonen & Barker, n.d.) studied the internet use and psychological adjustment of adolescents with specific references to instant messaging and provided the following interesting results. Usage of internet "occasionally" or "regularly" at home was 90%, Online access on a "typical day" was 84 %. At least one internet session over a period of three days was 70 %. No online access on a given single day was 40 to 57 %. Consistent with the expectation, the relationship with the Instant messages partner was long standing with peers who first met in school. Also, partners who are socially anxious and feel lonely are more likely to interact with people on Instant message (IM). It can also lead to long standing friendship.

Further, as online communication fare better to personal communication on aspects such as higher positivity of interaction, enhanced likability of partners on an online platform, and wider reach of interaction. A study on teens and social media during the covid 19 pandemic (Hamilton et al., 2020) reinstated how the loneliness during the time of physical distancing during covid had become even more pronounced. It provided teens with securing their "me time". Social media was not just used for securing emotional space but for broadening horizon.

A study on Using Social Networking to create online community for the organic chemistry laboratory established (Schroeder & Greenbowe, 2009) that Course related Facebook group is a viable alternative for students to discuss and interact. At Iowa State University there was low level of participation in the organic chemistry laboratory. The use of bulletin boards and chat functions did not enhance participation among students. Based on the preliminary results, it was proved that students used Facebook group as an alternate way of communication, particularly when there was need to discuss, and timelines were approaching. An online platform for learning, promotes more participation and clarity on concepts. Time spent on social networking sites is not always futile as it is perceived to be. Survey conducted on effects of social networking on 569 students from four Rapides Parish schools in 6th – 12th grades

(Miah et al., 2012) measured factors like usage of social networking sites, time spent on social networking sites, specific websites that are used, subjects studied on social networking sites. The purpose of the research was to help the educators, teachers, parents, to discover how and whether the social networking sites are helping the students in their learning process. According to the analysis 44 percent of students use social network for classwork. 78 percent of students said that they were not spending too much time on social networking websites. 85 percent students were aware of the security and privacy of personal information. A preponderance majority of 83 percent said that they never faced cyber bullying or were hacked while using social networking sites. Since most students use Facebook, schools can adapt a social networking website with a similar interface as Facebook, such as Edmodo. It creates interaction between teachers and students.

(Wodzicki et al., 2012) dealt with the question, "If teenagers and young adults use social networking sites for learning and knowledge exchange". The online survey consisted of questions to find out the study related exchange. Findings from the online survey on 140 participants concluded that one third of the participants were interested in discussing general study related topics, and about one fifth were interested in exchanging course material. Most active groups are based on shared interest or originating from real life social groups. In the study related groups, fresher groups are focussed on exchanging course material, detailed discussion on the topic and preparing for exam. From the study it was clear that though the primary intent of social networking sites was to stay in touch with close friends and family, but it can very well be used to exchange study related material as well. A clean break in perception is required that social networking sites cannot provide opportunities for growth. (Brady et al., 2010) suggested that social networking sites in educational setting can lead to more collaborative and interactive discussions among students. It reaffirmed that SNS initiate sharing of information by students which help them connect better. The study was designed to see the benefits associated with using social network technologies, such as Nine in

education which was primary used as a discussion tool for students to share ideas and deliberate the topics in the courses.

A study on the Impact of Social emotional learning intervention on emotional intelligence of adolescents aimed to understand if there is an increase in Emotional intelligence post SEL intervention. (Kothari S) The study revealed that a SEL intervention had a significant influence on EI scores, though no gender differences were found. The sample consisted of 80 eighth-grade students (40 males and 40 females) who were enrolled in a CBSE school for formal education. The findings also suggest that how we were taught to express and manage emotions as children has an impact on how we deal with situations as adults. Interacting with wide range of people might help them become more socially competent.

On the same line, subjective well-being was assessed by an SEL intervention through the use of a video games called "Aislados". The video game was used to evaluate the mental health and emotional intelligence of adolescence. (Javier Cejudo) The sample was taken from 187 adolescents, aged 12 to 17 years. The findings suggested that "Aislados" had significantly impacted the experimental group in terms of their quality of life, physical and mental health. Despite the drawbacks, the program produced positive effect on the physical-mental and social well beings of the adolescents.

Adolescents is a vulnerable sensitive phase and any kind of influence (good or bad) make an impact. Social media unquestionably have great influence on the growing minds. For balanced happy future generation, the need for soft skills in terms of social emotional learning has picked up momentum in the last decade. The use of social media to enhance the social emotional learning of adolescents is the best combination we can provide for the future generation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this pilot study was to identify how social media is impacting/ influencing adolescents in terms of their learning, social connections, and self-image. It is also to identify and suggest better usage of social

media as a tool for personal and professional enrichment. Empowering adolescents on how time spent on social media can be capitalised in developing social emotional competencies.

Research Objectives

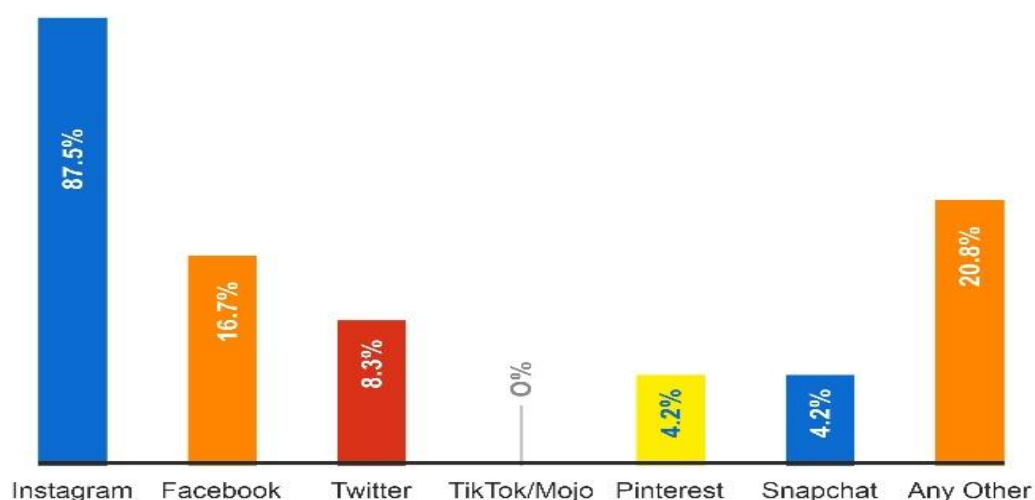
- To explore the role of social media on the Social Emotional Learning of adolescents.
- To empower adolescents about the mindful usage of social media

Research Methodology

A mixed method research approach was followed. Data collection was done by administering online questionnaire on children between age group of (12-18) years. As the questionnaire was administered online, we got responses from three metro cities namely, Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore. Data was analysed quantitatively. All responses to the questionnaire were used purely for research analysis and they played a significant part in the pilot study. The responses helped to get a deeper perspective and to build postulation of the influence of social media. The questionnaire had 17 specific questions to understand the usage of social media and the influence it has on (12-18) age group. Responses were received from 50 participants.

Results and Discussion

3. Instagram is the most approved and admired social networking platform among adolescents as compared to the rest.



Few of the important answers to the responses are depicted below.

1. Male/ Female Ratio of the responses received from 50 participants.

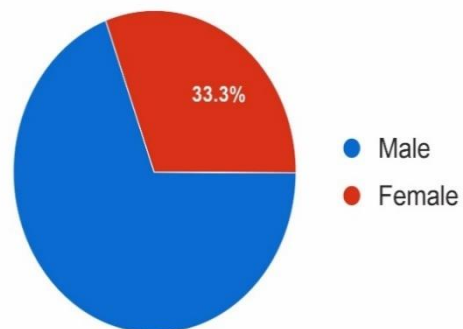


Figure 1

2. We can safely assume that the age group between 16-18 is using social media much more than their younger counterparts.

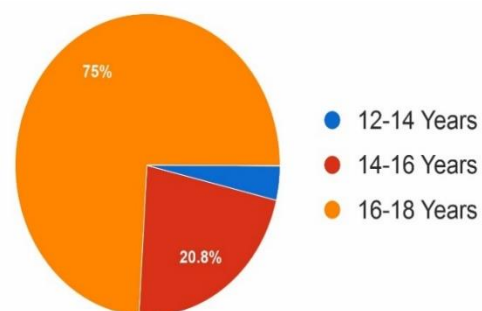


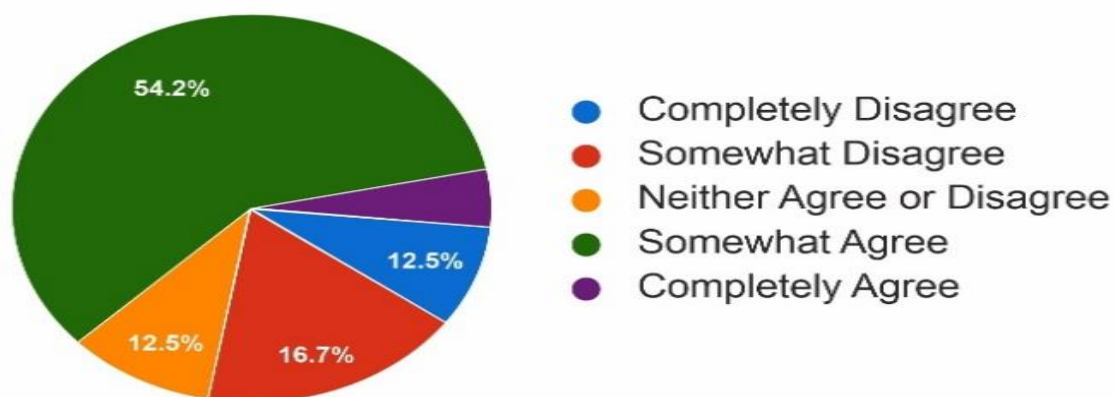
Figure 2

Figure 3

4. When asked what do the respondents use their social media account for 58.3 percent use it to stay in touch with family and friends.

**Figure 4**

5. The participants were asked if comments on social media can change their self-image, does the medium has the power to which 54.2 percent said that they “somewhat agree” while 16.7 said that they “somewhat disagree”.

**Figure 5**

6. The presence of social media in the life of adolescents has made them more joyful and friendly as 50 percent of the respondents said that social media keeps them cheerful.

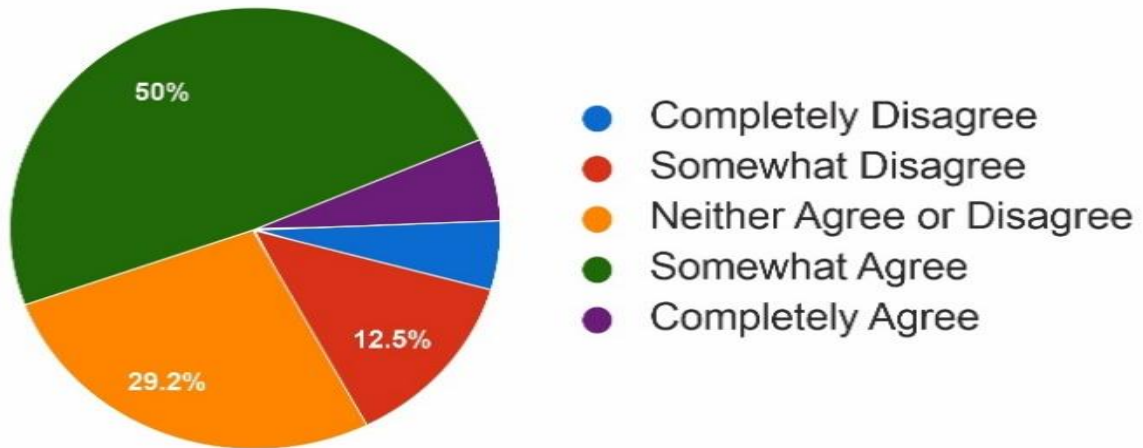


Figure 6

7. The medium helps adolescents to stay in touch with family and friends as 66.7 percent use social media for that purpose.

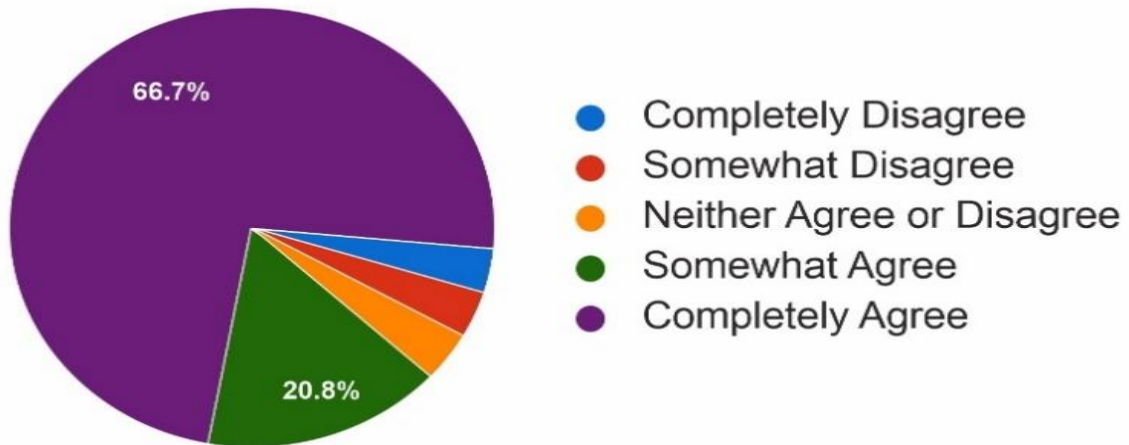


Figure 7

8. Displays result to the participants response to the question if social media provides emotional support during tough times.

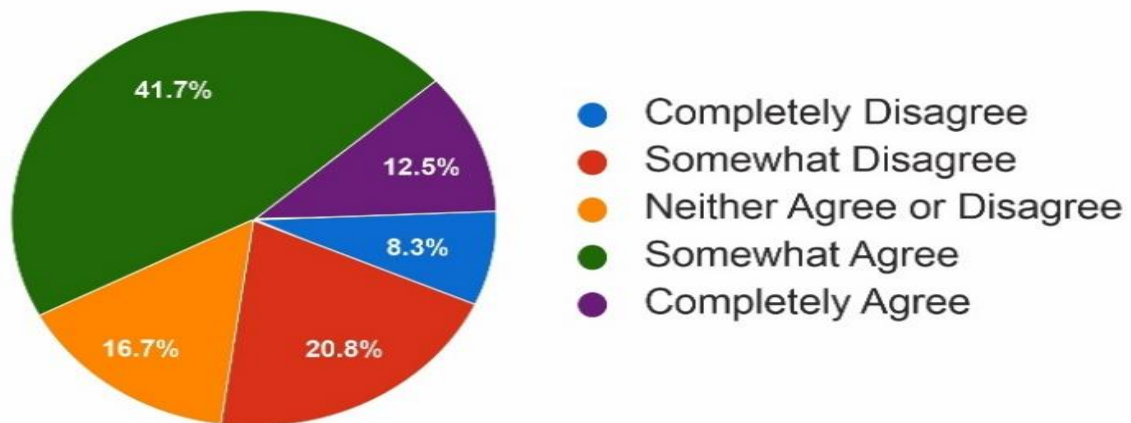


Figure 8

9. Displays result to the participants response to the question if social media helps in joining or promoting worthwhile causes or raise awareness on important issues.

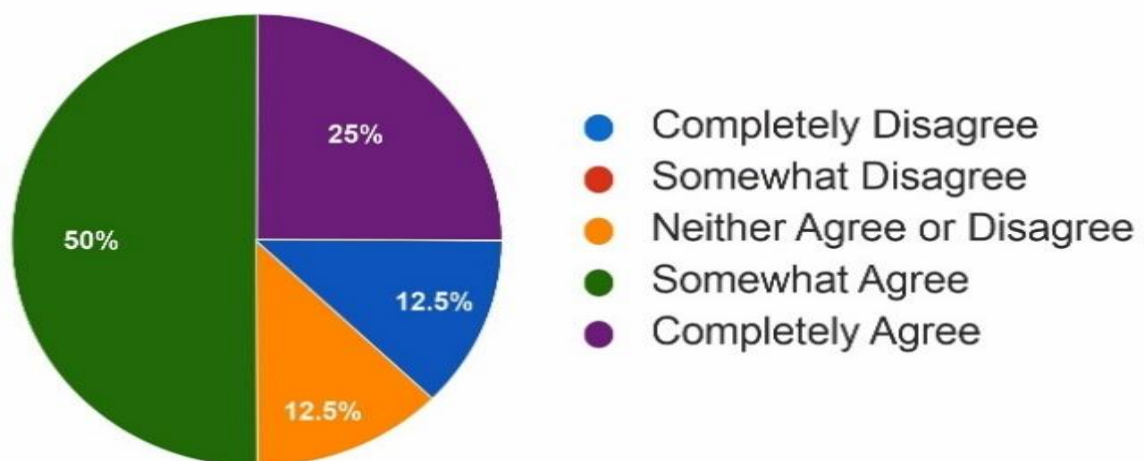


Figure 9

10. According to the participants social media also helped them in discovering sources of valuable information and learning.

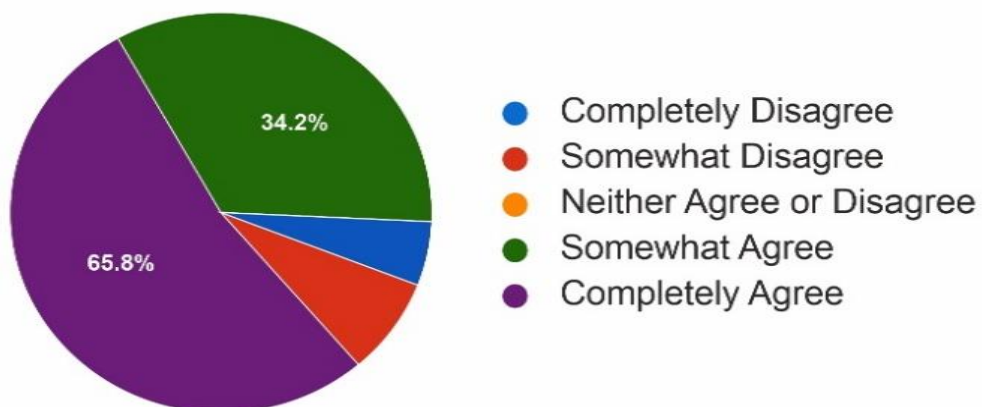


Figure 10

11. When participants were asked whether social media helped them find vital social connection or feel supported and connected, 45.8 percent somewhat agreed.

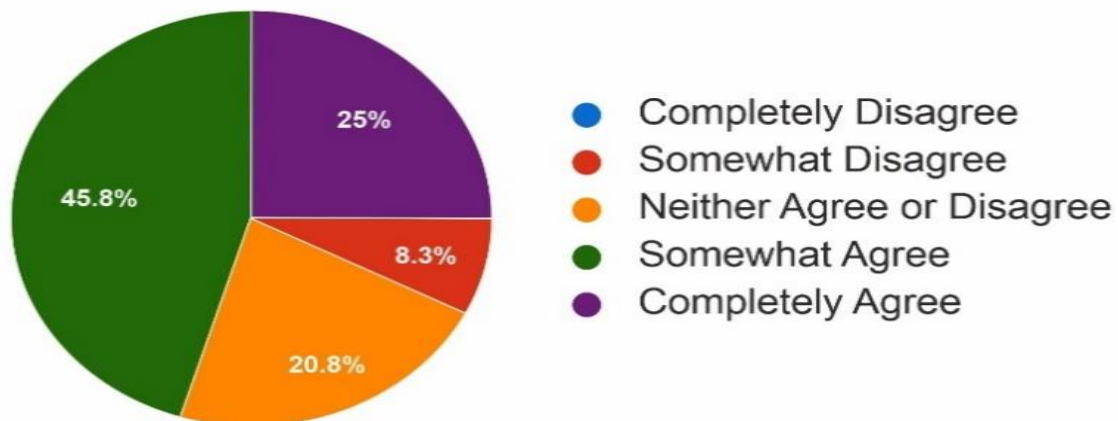


Figure 11

12. Displays the result of the participants response to the question if social media has helped them in gaining a perspective.

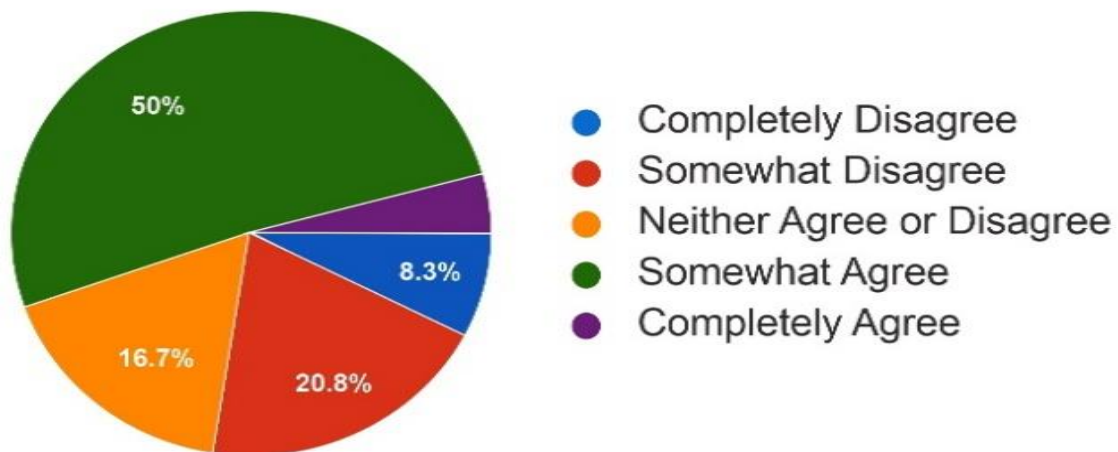


Figure 12

13. Looking at the result we can say that social media has helped adolescents showcase their creativity and self-expression to which 41.7 percent somewhat agree.

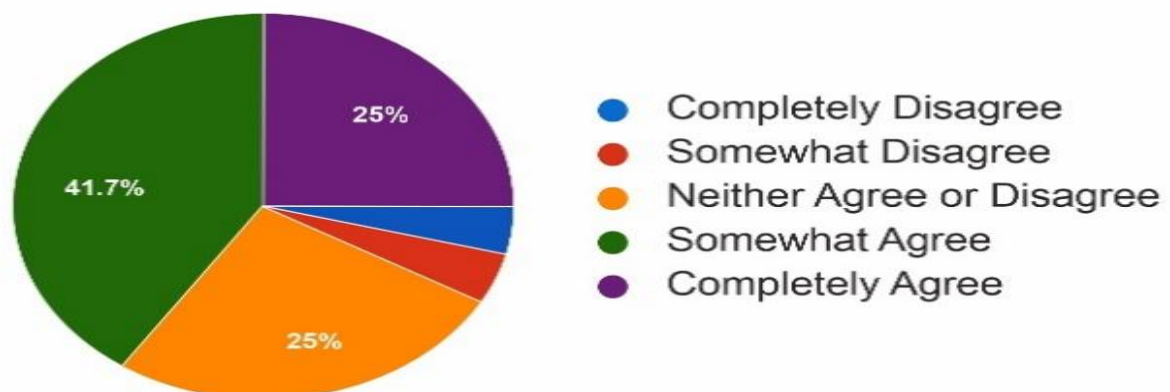


Figure 13

Conclusion

We cannot deny the presence and influence of social media / social networking sites. They are unarguably and undeniably a part of our life. Millennials, Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z are all under the influence of social networking sites. Social media is designed in a way that it has something for everyone. The beauty of using the medium lies in the algorithm one chooses. Learning and knowledge is supported by watching informative videos, and similar motivational content. The pilot survey measured the usage, influence, and outcome of the social networking sites. The age group (16-18 years) seems to be using social media more than the other 12-14 and 14-16 age group. As we can see from the results, almost everyone is on social media. They have an active account, and most used social networking site is Instagram. Primarily the usage of social media is to stay in touch with family and friends. Participants agreed that social media comments have the power to change self-image and number of friends/followers / likes/ views on the post have an impact on their mood.

Our finding add weight to the growing evidence that social media enhances social connections, provides emotional support during tough times, promote worthwhile causes, discover sources of valuable information and learning, can help in career choice, and in gaining perspective. There is a thin line between use and abuse of the medium. If we learn to navigate the way through nooks and crannies, we will empower children to use social media to their advantage as the pilot study has helped us measure how social media helps in self-expression and creative expression. It has helped them with different viewpoints, perspectives, opinions, and discussions.

The purpose of the survey will help education administrators, teachers, parents to discover how social networking sites can help further or are constantly helping adolescents in their learning and growth. The recommendation based on the pilot survey would be to encourage adolescents to choose mindfully where they want to draw attention. The profiles they follow, the content they are exposed to. Improving their understanding

and awareness on how social networking sites can help them identify new opportunities for growth and development.

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