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AGE AND GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONG YOUTH IN MADURAI DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study investigates the age and gender-based analysis of social media usage among youth in Madurai district. Social media would be any item or apparatus that unites individuals in dialogue or collaboration individually, in print or on the web. As something of shared utilization, social media now mean a particular class, innovation, instrument and online locales that include social connections, investment and client created substance. The social media has brought about significant changes all around the globe with India standing as no exception. With social media, college students can promote cooperation and discussion, create meaningful conversation, exchange ideas and boost their interaction. Age and gender significantly influence social media usage in Madurai, with younger users exploring platforms more actively, while older youth focus on career or education. Gender also influences content preferences and engagement patterns, with males and females navigating different experiences and challenges. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for responsible social media use. This research is a survey type and the sample consists of 800 students studying degree from twenty five colleges through simple random sampling technique. Use of social media tool was prepared and validated by the investigator. The data were collected and examined with statistical methods such as percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation and 't'-test. On the basis of the found results precise interpretation is also given.

Key Words: Social Media Usage, Youth Behaviour, Age based analysis and Madurai District.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the Internet has become a valuable tool that enriches our daily lives. It has become an integral part of human life because it has revolutionized how we save time and obtain information. Individuals have become able to perform tasks with minimal effort and cost through the Internet. It is evident that the Internet possesses numerous advantageous attributes for the whole society. However, aside from numerous positive attributes, it has highlighted a new addiction phenomenon (Ciftci, 2018). Individuals increasingly communicate through virtual relationships in the digital world rather than face-to-face (Aygar & Uzun, 2018).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The investigator made a brief glance on the related literature in order to find the findings in the area of social media among college students.

RELATED STUDIES

Frank Senyo Loglo; Olaf Zawacki-Richter; Wolfgang Muskens (2024) Patterns of Media Usage by Higher Education Students in Germany and Ghana: A Cross-Country Analysis. The study analyzed data from higher education students in Germany and Ghana, focusing on access to digital devices, perceived value of digital media, and media usage profiles. Both groups had mobile devices and engage with external media, tools, and services. However, there was a clear difference in the availability and expressed need for digital teaching and learning formats due to differences in internet infrastructure and service delivery. Most students were classified as entertainment users of media. In Germany, students showed distinct differences in media usage patterns between non-traditional and traditional students, while Ghanaian students showed minimal differentiation. The study recommends strengthening support for non-traditional learning and advancing digital education in Ghana and similar settings.



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Cakir (2023) made a study on A Study on Social Media Addiction. This study sought to examine the extent of social media addiction in university students. A study of 238 participants at Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa Faculty of Sports Sciences found that social media addiction is influenced by age, gender, grade level and daily usage frequency. The study used the 5-point Likert type "Social Media Addiction Scale" and descriptive statistical methods. The results showed a significant difference in "Occupation" sub-dimensions based on age, but no significant differences were found in gender, grade level, or daily usage frequency. Understanding these demographic characteristics can help reduce social media addiction among young individuals.

Research undertaken in India highlighted the detrimental effects of Facebook dependency on the study behaviors and academic success of adolescents. A distinct relationship was identified, indicating that increased levels of addiction corresponded with subpar study practices, ultimately leading to lower academic outcomes and grades. The investigation involved 200 teenagers from various educational institutions across India (**Vashishtha et al., 2021**). Additionally, the exploration of alternative communication methods revealed that the utilization of WhatsApp groups for interaction between educators and students during the pandemic produced significant results. Engaging actively in these groups was associated with better knowledge retention and enhanced performance in online education. Interestingly, the reliance on online networking dependency did not mediate the connection between demographic factors and student achievement (**A.r et al., 2021**).

Jamil et al. (2020) demonstrate that increased participation in digital social platforms adversely impacts academic planning and, as a result, educational performance. It indicates that intensified participation in digital social platforms adversely impacts academic timetables, leading to detrimental effects on educational achievements. Although definitive statistical validation may be lacking, a discernible pattern emerges, indicating that elevated social media engagement disrupts study routines and affects scholarly success.

In addition, Bou-Hamad's (2020) study reveals notable correlations between high levels of social media engagement, tobacco consumption, and romantic involvement, alongside a decline in academic performance among college students in an emerging country. Notably, the findings suggest that the use of digital social platforms has a distinct impact on educational outcomes, independent of other behavioral patterns. The study also introduces a predictive classification model offering insights into academic success.

In their 2021 study, **Wan Pa et al.** identified a detrimental relationship between reliance on digital networking and academic achievement. Conversely, **Barton and associates (2021)** highlighted the scarcity and variability of studies examining the influence of virtual social platforms on educational outcomes. Additionally, research by **Siah et al. (2020)** revealed a connection between social media compulsiveness and traits such as perseverance and adaptability in academic adaptation, whereas grit personality is directly correlated to academic adjustment.

From an academic perspective, digital networking sites serve as a conduit for student engagement, yet they may simultaneously contribute to a decline in in-person communication (Chukwuere, 2021). These platforms possess the capacity to unite individuals, disseminate knowledge, and shape social conduct in both beneficial and detrimental ways (Singh N & Guruprasad, 2019). WhatsApp emerges as the predominant social media application among students. The predominant social networking application is WhatsApp. A significant portion of the student population reported a decline in their academic efficiency attributed to the engagement with digital social platforms (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017).

RESEARCH GAP

Overall, these findings underscore the dual role of social media as both a tool for student engagement and a potential detriment to academic performance. The predominance of platforms like WhatsApp among students indicates a significant area for further exploration in understanding how these tools can be leveraged for positive educational outcomes while



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mitigating their adverse effects. This body of research is particularly relevant to my study on the analysis of social media usage among youth in Madurai area, as it highlights the intricate dynamics between digital media usage and academic performance, providing a foundation for further investigation into effective strategies for enhancing educational experiences in the digital age and in the 21st century gender and age plays a vital role in using social media among youth. So investigator decided to analyse the age and gender-based analysis of social media usage among youth in Madurai district.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the current digital landscape, social media significantly influences the behaviors, attitudes, and interactions of youth Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2011). Young individuals, especially in developing areas such as Madurai District, are significantly impacted by social media platforms across multiple dimensions of their lives, encompassing education, communication and socialization. However, the ways in which different genders engage with these platforms, the objectives they fulfill, and the effects they exert on their everyday experiences can differ markedly Haferkamp, N., & Kramer, N. C. (2011). Comprehending these gender-based differences is crucial for recognizing digital gaps, tackling issues such as social media addiction, and creating specific interventions that encourage healthy and productive social media use among youth of all genders Pallesen, S. (2012). This study holds importance as it illuminates the gender-based intricacies of social media usage among youth in Madurai, a region where conventional gender roles and evolving digital trends converge. Through an analysis of the varying ways in which young men and women interact with social media, this study aims to provide insights for policymakers, educators and parents on optimizing social media as a means for empowerment, education and social activism Livingstone, S. (2008). Furthermore, the results can assist in customizing digital literacy initiatives, fostering gender equality in online environments and tackling potential challenges such as cyberbullying, misinformation and social media-induced stress that may impact various genders differently. Social media usage among youth in Madurai District, both age and gender play significant roles in shaping online behaviors and preferences. Younger individuals may be more tech-savvy and willing to explore new platforms, while older youth might focus on professional or educational purposes Zickuhr, K. (2010). Gender influences the type of content consumed and shared, with males and females engaging in different social media activities and facing unique challenges, such as online safety and representation. Analyzing these factors helps in understanding diverse user experiences and crafting tailored interventions for responsible and equitable social media use.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

“Gender-Based Analysis of Social Media Usage Patterns among Youth in Madurai District.”

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The investigator has evolved the following objectives for his study:

1. To find out the level of Use of Social Media among Under Graduate Students with regard to gender.
2. To find out the level of Use of Social Media among Under Graduate Students with regard to age.
3. To find out the significant difference if any between under graduate students in terms of gender in their use of social media.
4. To find out the significant association if any between under graduate students in terms of age in their use of social media.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The investigator has evolved the following hypotheses for his study:

1. There is no significant difference if any between under graduate students in terms of gender in their use of social media.



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2. There is no significant association if any between under graduate students in terms of age in their use of social media.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1. The study is limited to college students in Madurai district only.
2. The investigator has proposed to choose only 800 college students as sample size for this study.

METHOD USED

Survey is a fact finding method. (Best, 1986) states that "The survey method involves interpretation, comparison, measurement, classification, evaluation and generalization. All directed towards a proper understanding and solution of significant educational problems". So the researcher has chosen survey method to study about Gender-Based Analysis of Social Media Usage Patterns among Youth in Madurai District".

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of the present study consists of college students those who are studying in Madurai district, Tamil nadu. The investigator has used simple random sampling technique for selecting the sample from the population. The sample consists of 800 college students. Among them 367 were male and 433 were female college students.

TOOLS USED

Use of Social Media Scale

This study aims to evaluate the use of social media scale among college students. The investigator has prepared and validated the Use of Social Media Scale (USMS) (2023). It has nine components namely, Quality of Life, Collaborative Learning, Literacy Skill, Academic, Language, Addiction, Adverse Effects and Teacher.

Establishing the Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretation of test scores entailed by proposed uses of test (Best & Khan, 1999). The validity of the tool has been found in different methods. For the present study, the investigator established the face validity for this tool.

Establishing Reliability

Reliability refers the extent to which differences in respondents observed scores are consistent with difference in their true scores (Furr & Bacharach, 2008). Of the different methods, test-retest method were used to determine the reliability coefficient of the tool. To establish the reliability of USMS by test-retest method, it was re-administered to the same set of teachers after an interval of 15 days. The two sets of scores were correlated using Pearson product moment correlation and the value was found to be 0.897, which is substantial.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

Percentage Analysis, Mean, SD, 't' test.

ANALYSIS

1. To find out the level of Use of Social Media among Under Graduate Students with regard to Gender.



Table 1
Level of Use of Social Media among Under Graduate Students with regard to Gender

Dimensions	Gender	Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Quality of Life	Male	45	12.3	279	76.0	43	11.7
	Female	71	16.4	310	71.6	52	12.0
Collaborative Learning	Male	54	14.7	261	71.1	52	14.2
	Female	86	19.9	280	64.7	67	15.5
Literacy Skill	Male	47	12.8	277	75.5	43	11.7
	Female	69	15.9	308	71.1	56	12.9
Academic	Male	46	12.5	286	77.9	35	9.5
	Female	78	18.0	282	65.1	73	16.9
Language	Male	53	14.4	249	67.8	65	17.7
	Female	74	17.1	289	66.7	70	16.2
Adverse Effects	Male	33	9.0	294	80.1	40	10.9
	Female	52	12.0	321	74.1	60	13.9
Teacher	Male	63	17.2	238	64.9	66	18.0
	Female	77	17.8	274	63.3	82	18.9
Addiction	Male	33	9.0	292	79.6	42	11.4
	Female	66	15.2	303	70.0	64	14.8
Use of Social Media Total	Male	37	10.1	293	79.8	37	10.1
	Female	72	16.6	296	68.4	65	15.0

It is inferred from the above table that the level of Use of Social Media and its dimensions among Under Graduate Students in terms of total sample are moderate.

Among the sample,

- 12.3% of college students from male and 16.4% from female have low, 76.0% and 71.6% of them have moderate and 11.7% and 12.0% of them have high level of Quality of Life.
- 14.7% of college students from male and 19.9% from female have low, 71.1% and 64.7% of them have moderate and 14.2% and 15.5% of them have high level of Collaborative Learning.
- 12.8% of college students from male and 15.9% from female have low, 75.5% and 71.1% of them have moderate and 11.7% and 12.9% of them have high level of Literacy Skill.



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- d) 12.5% of college students from male and 18.0% from female have low, 77.9% and 65.1% of them have moderate and 9.5% and 16.9% of them have high level of Academic.
- e) 14.4% of college students from male and 17.1% from female have low, 67.8% and 66.7% of them have moderate and 17.7% and 16.2% of them have high level of Language.
- f) 9.0% of college students from male and 12.0% from female have low, 80.1% and 74.1% of them have moderate and 10.9% and 13.9% of them have high level of Adverse Effects.
- g) 17.2% of college students from male and 17.8% from female have low, 64.9% and 63.3% of them have moderate and 18.0% and 18.9% of them have high level of Teacher.
- h) 9.0% of college students from male and 15.2% from female have low, 79.6% and 70.0% of them have moderate and 11.4% and 14.8% of them have high level of Addiction.
- i) 10.1% of college students from male and 16.6% from female have low, 79.8% and 68.4% of them have moderate and 10.1% and 15.0% of them have high level of Use of Social Media Total.

2. To find out the level of Use of Social Media among Under Graduate Students with regard to Age.

Table 2
Level of Use of Social Media among Under Graduate Students with regard to Age

Dimensions	Age	Low		Moderate		High	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Quality of Life	Below 20	64	14.0	344	75.1	50	10.9
	Above 20	52	15.2	245	71.6	45	13.2
Collaborative Learning	Below 20	87	19.0	301	65.7	70	15.3
	Above 20	53	15.5	240	70.2	49	14.3
Literacy Skill	Below 20	68	14.8	337	73.6	53	11.6
	Above 20	48	14.0	248	72.5	46	13.5
Academic	Below 20	64	14.0	333	72.7	61	13.3
	Above 20	60	17.5	235	68.7	47	13.7
Language	Below 20	74	16.2	309	67.5	75	16.4
	Above 20	53	15.5	229	67.0	60	17.5
Adverse Effects	Below 20	53	11.6	345	75.3	60	13.1
	Above 20	32	9.4	270	78.9	40	11.7
Teacher	Below 20	80	17.5	278	60.7	100	21.8
	Above 20	60	17.5	234	68.4	48	14.0
Addiction	Below 20	54	11.8	347	75.8	57	12.4
	Above 20	45	13.2	248	72.5	49	14.3
Use of Social Media Total	Below 20	64	14.0	336	73.4	58	12.7
	Above 20	45	13.2	253	74.0	44	12.9



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It is inferred from the above table that the level of Use of Social Media and its dimensions among Under Graduate Students in terms of total sample are moderate.

Among the sample,

- 14.0% of college students from Below 20 age group and 15.2% from Above 20 age group have low, 75.1% and 71.6% of them have moderate and 10.9% and 13.2% of them have high level of Quality of Life.
- 19.0% of college students from Below 20 age group and 15.5% from Above 20 age group have low, 65.7% and 70.2% of them have moderate and 15.3% and 14.3% of them have high level of Collaborative Learning.
- 14.8% of college students from Below 20 age group and 14.0% from Above 20 age group have low, 73.6% and 72.5% of them have moderate and 11.6% and 13.5% of them have high level of Literacy Skill.
- 14.0% of college students from Below 20 age group and 17.5% from Above 20 age group have low, 72.7% and 68.7% of them have moderate and 13.3% and 13.7% of them have high level of Academic.
- 16.2% of college students from Below 20 age group and 15.5% from Above 20 age group have low, 67.5% and 67.0% of them have moderate and 16.4% and 17.5% of them have high level of Language.
- 11.6% of college students from Below 20 age group and 9.4% from Above 20 age group have low, 75.3% and 78.9% of them have moderate and 13.1% and 11.7% of them have high level of Adverse Effects.
- 17.5% of college students from Below 20 age group and 17.5% from Above 20 age group have low, 60.7% and 68.4% of them have moderate and 21.8% and 14.0% of them have high level of Teacher.
- 11.8% of college students from Below 20 age group and 13.2% from Above 20 age group have low, 75.8% and 72.5% of them have moderate and 12.4% and 14.3% of them have high level of Addiction.
- 14.0% of college students from Below 20 age group and 13.2% from Above 20 age group have low, 73.4% and 74.0% of them have moderate and 12.7% and 12.9% of them have high level of Use of Social Media Total.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female degree students in their use of social media and its dimensions.

Table 3
Difference between Male and Female Degree Students in their Use of Social Media and its Dimensions

Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	S. D.	Calculated 't' Value	'P' value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
Quality of Life	Male	367	45.174	7.6295	3.165	0.000	S
	Female	433	44.326	9.0859			
Collaborative Learning	Male	367	27.158	5.3154	2.935	0.001	S
	Female	433	26.751	6.2103			
Literacy Skill	Male	367	26.063	4.0155	2.720	0.002	S
	Female	433	25.605	4.6292			
Academic	Male	367	18.016	4.3826	2.707	0.002	S
	Female	433	18.000	5.3537			
Language	Male	367	23.243	4.3089	2.964	0.003	S
	Female	433	22.887	4.9548			



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Addiction	Male	367	26.087	3.6899	2.389	0.001	S
	Female	433	25.875	4.4125			
Adverse Effects	Male	367	45.877	8.5898	2.466	0.003	S
	Female	433	46.111	9.3522			
Teacher	Male	367	43.155	3.2052	2.224	0.004	S
	Female	433	43.178	3.2522			
Use of Social Media Total	Male	367	254.77	18.321	2.688	0.002	S
	Female	433	252.73	24.449			

It is inferred from the above table that there is a significant difference between rural and urban college degree students in their Quality of Life, Collaborative Learning, Literacy Skill, Academic, Language, Addiction, Adverse Effects, Teacher and Use of Social Media Total.

While comparing the mean scores female degree students (44.326, 26.751, 25.605, 18.000, 22.887, 25.875, 46.111, 43.178 and 252.73) and male degree students (45.174, 27.158, 26.063, 18.016, 23.243, 26.087, 45.877, 43.155 and 254.77) degree students, male degree students are better than their counter part in their Quality of Life, Collaborative Learning, Literacy Skill, Academic, Language, Addiction, Adverse Effects, Teacher and Use of Social Media Total.

H₀2: There is no significant difference between below 20 and above 20 age group degree students in their use of social media and its dimensions.

Table 4
Difference between below 20 and above 20 age group degree students in their Use of Social Media and its Dimensions

Dimensions	Df	'P' value	Remarks at 0.05 Level
Quality of Life	2	0.508	NS
Collaborative Learning		0.356	NS
Literacy Skill		0.714	NS
Academic		0.354	NS
Language		0.896	NS
Addiction		0.578	NS
Adverse Effects		0.461	NS
Teacher		0.216	NS
Use of Social Media Total		0.946	NS



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It is inferred from the above table that the calculated ' χ^2 ' value is less than the table value (5.991) for df 2, at 5% level of significance. Hence the respective null hypothesis is accepted. It shows that there is no significant association between age group of the degree students and their use of social media and its dimensions namely Quality of Life, Collaborative Learning, Literacy Skill, Academic, Language, Addiction, Adverse Effects, Teacher and Use of Social Media Total.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- From Table 1, it is evident that the level of social media usage among undergraduate students, both male and female, is predominantly moderate across all dimensions of social media use. The following trends are observed:

In terms of Quality of Life, 76.0% of male and 71.6% of female students fall under the moderate level, while 11.7% of male and 12.0% of female students exhibit a high level of use.

For Collaborative Learning, 71.1% of male and 64.7% of female students have moderate usage, with a slightly higher percentage of female students (15.5%) having high-level usage compared to males (14.2%).

In Literacy Skill, moderate levels are reported by 75.5% of male and 71.1% of female students.

In the Academic dimension, 77.9% of male students show moderate use compared to 65.1% of females. However, a larger percentage of females (16.9%) report high-level usage compared to males (9.5%).

The Language dimension shows similar patterns, with moderate use levels being almost equal for both genders.

Across all dimensions, male and female students have predominantly moderate levels of social media use, with some variations in high and low categories.

The findings indicate that gender does not significantly impact overall social media usage among undergraduate students. However, nuanced differences emerge, particularly with female students exhibiting higher engagement in areas related to Academic and Collaborative Learning. This trend may reflect the distinct motivations behind social media use, with females possibly leveraging these platforms for academic collaboration and skill enhancement. Furthermore, the prevalence of moderate usage across both genders underscores a balanced approach to social media, suggesting that students utilize these tools for both academic and personal purposes.

- Table 2 highlights the social media usage levels among students aged below 20 and above 20. Key findings include:
 For Quality of Life, 75.1% of students below 20 and 71.6% of those above 20 show moderate usage levels.
 In Collaborative Learning, 65.7% of students below 20 and 70.2% of those above 20 exhibit moderate levels.
 Across dimensions like Literacy Skill, Academic, and Language, both age groups show similar moderate usage patterns, with slight variations in the high and low categories.
 Notably, in the Teacher dimension, 21.8% of students below 20 report high levels of engagement compared to 14.0% of those above 20.

Overall, both age groups predominantly exhibit moderate levels of social media usage across all dimensions.

The findings indicate that social media usage levels are consistent across different age groups, potentially attributed to comparable academic and social pressures faced by both cohorts. Notably, students under 20 exhibit greater engagement in the Teacher dimension, implying that younger individuals may be utilizing social media more effectively for educational interactions. This observation presents an opportunity for researchers to develop targeted interventions aimed at enhancing the academic use of social media tailored to specific age groups.

- From Table 3, the calculated 't' values for all dimensions are statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that male and female students differ significantly in their use of social media across all dimensions. Male students show higher mean scores in all dimensions compared to females, suggesting better use of social media for academic and personal development.

The observed differences in social media engagement between genders suggest that male students may prioritize aspects like Collaborative Learning and Addiction, indicating a more targeted or frequent use of these platforms. This underscores the importance of investigating gender-specific motivations and obstacles to enhance the positive impacts of social media for both male and female students.



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- Table 4 indicates that the calculated ' χ^2 ' values for all dimensions are not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, confirming no significant association between age group and social media usage across all dimensions. The findings indicate that social media usage among undergraduate students is largely homogeneous across different age groups. This consistency suggests that common academic pressures and social dynamics play a crucial role in shaping social media behavior, rather than age being a significant determinant.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- The findings highlight the importance of promoting responsible social media use among students, as most report moderate usage levels. Educational institutions are encouraged to implement programs that emphasize the productive use of social media for both academic and personal development.
- The study also reveals gender differences in social media engagement, suggesting that tailored strategies could enhance academic collaboration and participation. For instance, leveraging male students' strengths in collaborative learning and fostering female students' engagement through mentorship programs could be beneficial.
- Furthermore, social media's potential as a learning tool is underscored, with recommendations for encouraging participation in online academic forums and utilizing platforms that enhance academic literacy and professional growth.
- The research indicates a need for improved digital literacy, advocating for courses that teach students to assess online content credibility and responsibly create academic resources. Notably, the absence of significant age-related differences in social media usage suggests that interventions should be age-neutral, promoting inclusive online engagement.
- Teacher involvement is crucial, as educators can model effective social media use for academic purposes and foster peer learning. Additionally, addressing concerns about social media addiction through time management training and support groups is vital for maintaining a healthy balance between academic responsibilities and personal use.
- The study also identifies opportunities for enhancing language skills through interactive social media platforms and content creation. Lastly, the development of institutional policies on social media use is recommended to guide students in utilizing these platforms constructively while minimizing distractions.
- Overall, the research emphasizes the need for educational institutions to adopt a comprehensive approach to social media use, ensuring it serves as a constructive tool for students' academic and personal growth while mitigating potential negative effects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance Awareness Programs:** Implement programs promoting balanced social media use for personal and academic growth.
- Provide gender-specific support:** Offer gender-specific workshops on collaborative learning and literacy skills.
- Introduce Age-Based Interventions:** Introduce targeted interventions for younger students, such as digital well-being courses or mental health support.
- Develop social media literacy:** Incorporate digital literacy training into the curriculum to manage social media's adverse effects.
- Encourage Positive Social Media Use:** Foster a culture where online interactions align with academic and personal development goals.
- Monitor and Support for Addiction:** Provide resources for managing screen time and social media addiction.

Conclusion

The study shows moderate social media use among undergraduate students in Madurai District, with gender and age differences. Male students show higher engagement, while younger students experience more adverse effects. No significant age association was found. Targeted interventions like awareness programs and digital literacy training are needed to support positive growth and avoid addiction.



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