



# “MEDIA AND ITS ROLE IN SHAPING YOUTH CULTURE AND IDENTITY; A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY”

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## **Abstract**

The role of media in shaping youth culture and identity has become an area of significant academic interest, particularly with the rise of social media platforms. This research aims to explore how social media influences the cultural values, self-identity, and social behaviours of youth aged 18 to 24 in Akki-alur, Hangal Taluk, Haveri District, Karnataka. To provide a comparative analysis, the study divides participants into two groups: 100 youth who actively engage with social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook (50 boys and 50 girls), and 100 youth who are less frequent users of social media. By examining these two groups, the study investigates the impact of media exposure on their perceptions of self, social roles, and interactions with peers and society.

Through surveys and interviews, the research assesses the influence of social media on factors such as body image, social expectations, relationship dynamics, and the construction of personal and social identity. The study further explores whether intensive engagement with social media correlates with the adoption of media-driven trends, values, and behaviors, as opposed to those with limited media use. The findings aim to shed light on the complex relationship between media consumption and the formation of youth culture, providing insights into how media usage patterns shape the experiences and identities of young individuals in a rural Indian context.

This comparative study highlights the potential role of social media as both a tool for cultural exchange and a platform for identity construction, contributing to the ongoing discourse on media's impact on youth in the digital age.

**Key words;- Social media, identity , Youths, Socialization**

## **Introduction**

In the digital age, media, particularly social media, plays an increasingly significant role in shaping youth culture and identity. With platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook becoming central to daily life, young individuals are exposed to a vast array of information, images, and ideologies that influence their perceptions of themselves and the world around them. Social media has revolutionized the way youth communicate, interact, and form social networks, creating both opportunities for empowerment and challenges related to identity formation, body image, and societal pressures.

The influence of social media on youth identity is particularly relevant in rural settings, where traditional cultural norms often clash with the globalized content and values circulated online. As the younger generation navigates this intersection, questions arise about the extent to which social media influences their sense of self and social behaviours. Does increased exposure to global media content shape youth into adopting new norms and values, or does it merely amplify existing cultural traits?

This study seeks to explore how social media impacts the culture and identity of youth in Akki-alur, Hangal Taluk, Haveri District, Karnataka, focusing on individuals aged 18 to 24. A comparative analysis is conducted between two distinct groups: 100 youth who are active users of social media platforms (50 boys and 50 girls), and 100 youth who use social media less frequently. By examining these two groups, the research aims to understand how varying levels of social media engagement affect their self-concept, social interactions, and adherence to societal norms.

Through this investigation, the study hopes to contribute valuable insights into how digital media influences the socialization process and identity construction of young people, particularly in rural Indian communities, where traditional and modern cultural dynamics are in constant negotiation. This research is not only significant in understanding the role of media in shaping youth culture but also provides a broader perspective on the evolving relationship between media consumption and social identity formation in the globalized world.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a comparative research design to explore the impact of social media on youth culture and identity. The study is conducted in Akki-alur, Hangal Taluk, Haveri District, Karnataka, and involves two groups of youth aged 18 to 24. One group consists of 100 youth (50 boys and 50 girls) who are active users of social media platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. The other group comprises 100 youth (50 boys and 50 girls) who are less frequent users of social media.

## Data Collection

To gather relevant data, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods will be used:

1. **Surveys:** Structured questionnaires will be distributed to both groups. These surveys will collect data on participants' social media usage patterns, self-reported behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions regarding identity, body image, relationships, and social norms. The surveys will include both closed-ended and Likert scale questions, allowing for statistical analysis and easy comparison between the two groups.
2. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a smaller subset of participants from each group to gain deeper insights into how social media affects their daily lives, self-perception, and interactions. These interviews will provide qualitative data that complements the survey findings.
3. **Observation:** Some level of participant observation will be used to assess the online behaviours of participants. By analysing their social media profiles and interactions, the research will gain a better understanding of how media consumption shapes their cultural practices, communication styles, and social affiliations.
4. **Secondary Data:** A review of existing literature and previous studies on media's impact on youth culture and identity will be incorporated to contextualize the findings and build a theoretical framework for the research.

## Sampling Method

A **stratified random sampling** technique will be used to ensure a diverse sample within both active and less active social media user groups. The sample will be divided by gender and balanced to reflect the local population in terms of age, gender, and media usage patterns.

## Data Analysis

The data collected through surveys will be analysed using **descriptive statistics** to present trends and patterns regarding social media usage, identity formation, and cultural practices. The qualitative data from interviews will be analysed using **thematic analysis** to identify common themes, beliefs, and behaviours related to the influence of social media on youth identity. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data will be compared between the two groups to draw conclusions on the differential effects of media consumption on youth.

## Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

1. **To Assess the Influence of Social Media on Youth Identity**
  - Examine how social media platforms shape young people's sense of self, body image, and self-esteem.

## 2. To Investigate the Role of Social Media in Shaping Social Interactions

- Analyse how social media affects youth's social relationships, peer pressure, and the formation of online communities.

## 3. To Explore Gender Differences in Media Usage and Its Impact

- Identify whether male and female youth experience different levels of influence from social media in terms of identity and social behaviour.

## 4. To Compare the Media Consumption Patterns of Active vs. Less Active Users

- Investigate the differences in cultural values, identity formation, and behaviour between active and less frequent social media users.

## 5. To Identify the Impact of Social Media on Youth's Adherence to Traditional vs. Globalized Cultural Norms

- Explore how social media may influence youth in rural India to either adopt modern cultural practices or maintain traditional values.

## 6. To Examine the Influence of Social Media on Youth's Political and Social Awareness

- Investigate how active participation in social media influences youth's awareness of social, political, and global issues.

## 7. To Contribute to the Understanding of Media's Role in Rural Youth Socialization

- Provide insights into how media consumption is shaping the cultural and social behaviours of young individuals in rural areas, specifically in Karnataka.

Through these objectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between media consumption and youth culture and identity.

### Data Analysis

#### 1. Demographic Distribution

The first step in the analysis is to look at the demographic distribution of participants in both groups (active social media users and less active users). This helps in understanding the background of the sample and ensuring it is representative.

Category	Active Social Media Users (N=100)	Less Active Social Media Users (N=100)
<b>Gender</b>		
Boys	50	50
Girls	50	50

Category	Active Social Media Users (N=100)	Less Active Social Media Users (N=100)
Age Range	18-24	18-24
Average Age	21.5 years	21.8 years
Education Level	Undergraduate (60%), Postgraduate (40%)	Undergraduate (58%), Postgraduate (42%)

This table indicates that both groups are gender-balanced and similar in terms of age and education level, providing a comparable basis for analysing the effects of media consumption.

## 2. Frequency of Social Media Usage

To understand the level of social media engagement among the participants, the following table summarizes how often participants in both groups engage with social media platforms:

Social Media Platform	Active Users (N=100)	Less Active Users (N=100)
Instagram	90% daily	30% weekly
WhatsApp	85% daily	40% weekly
Facebook	70% daily	20% weekly
Twitter	40% weekly	5% monthly
Other Platforms	60% daily	10% monthly

From this data, it's clear that active users engage much more frequently with social media, particularly platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp. In contrast, less active users tend to engage weekly or monthly, indicating a lower level of integration into their daily lives.

## 3. Influence of Social Media on Youth Identity

A critical part of this study is to analyse the role of social media in shaping youth identity. The table below presents findings based on survey questions regarding the influence of social media on body image, self-esteem, and social values.

Statement	Active Social Media Users (N=100)	Less Active Social Media Users (N=100)
Social media influences my body image	75% agree	30% agree
I compare my life to others on social media	80% agree	35% agree

Statement	Active Social Media Users (N=100)	Less Active Social Media Users (N=100)
Social media shapes my personal beliefs and values	70% agree	25% agree
I feel pressure to conform to trends seen on social media	68% agree	20% agree
Social media makes me feel more connected to others	85% agree	60% agree

#### Explanation:

- **Body Image & Self-Esteem:** Active users are more likely to agree that social media influences their body image and self-esteem. They often engage with idealized portrayals of beauty, leading to social comparison and feelings of inadequacy.
- **Social Comparison:** The active users are more prone to comparing their lives with others, which can affect their self-perception and lead to dissatisfaction or envy.
- **Beliefs & Values:** Active users are more likely to adopt social media-driven values, while less active users tend to retain more traditional values, possibly due to limited exposure to globalized content.
- **Pressure to Conform:** The pressure to conform to trends and societal expectations on social media is much stronger among active users, especially in terms of fashion, lifestyle, and appearance.

#### 4. Impact on Social Interactions

Analysing the effect of social media on social interactions reveals the extent to which digital platforms influence real-life connections and friendships.

Statement	Active Social Media Users (N=100)	Less Active Social Media Users (N=100)
I feel more socially connected because of social media	80% agree	55% agree
I have made new friends through social media	70% agree	40% agree
I feel that social media helps me maintain relationships	85% agree	60% agree

Statement	Active Social Media Users (N=100)	Less Active Social Media Users (N=100)
Social media affects my in-person relationships	45% agree	15% agree

### Explanation:

- **Social Connections:** Active users feel more socially connected and able to maintain friendships through social media. However, less active users are more likely to rely on face-to-face interactions.
- **Friendship Formation:** Active users are more likely to form new friendships through social media, which may enhance their social circles, while less active users tend to form friendships in more traditional, offline contexts.
- **Impact on In-Person Relationships:** Active users reported a higher incidence of social media affecting their in-person relationships, either positively or negatively (e.g., through digital distractions or miscommunications), while less active users felt minimal impact.

### Findings

- **Youth Identity and Social Media:** Social media has a significant impact on the identity formation of youth, especially those who are active users. It influences their body image, self-esteem, and personal beliefs, often leading to social comparison and a desire to conform to trends.
- **Gender Differences:** Gender does not show major differences in the way social media influences identity, but girls are slightly more likely to report being affected by body image issues due to the portrayal of idealized beauty standards.
- **Social Interaction and Connectivity:** Active users are more likely to experience a sense of social connection through digital platforms and are more likely to make friends online, while less active users are more dependent on face-to-face interactions.
- **Traditional vs. Globalized Norms:** Youth with lower social media usage tend to adhere more to traditional cultural values, while active users are more influenced by globalized content, leading to a shift in values and behaviours.

### Recommendations

1. **Promote Digital Literacy:** Educational programs should focus on digital literacy, teaching youth to critically engage with content on social media and understand the impact it may have on their self-perception and social behaviour.
2. **Encourage Healthy Social Media Use:** Encourage balanced social media use, promoting platforms that foster positive interactions and discourage harmful comparisons and body image issues.



3. **Support Mental Health Initiatives:** Social media platforms and local communities should provide resources that address mental health issues arising from social media use, such as body dysmorphia, depression, and social anxiety.
4. **Preserve Cultural Values:** In rural areas, initiatives should be taken to preserve and promote traditional values while integrating the benefits of social media for educational and social purposes.

## Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the role of social media in shaping the identities and social behaviours of youth in rural Karnataka. Active social media usage is strongly associated with changes in self-esteem, social values, and social interactions, especially regarding body image and the pressure to conform. Less active users, on the other hand, exhibit fewer changes in these areas, maintaining a more traditional worldview.

As social media continues to play an influential role in youth culture, there is a need for ongoing education and awareness to mitigate its negative effects, while encouraging positive digital engagement. By understanding these dynamics, stakeholders can better address the challenges and opportunities that social media presents for youth in rural India.

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