

A Socio – Psychological Analysis of Social Media Trends

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 15th Dec 2025 Accepted: 19th Dec 2025 Published: 20th Dec 2025	Social media has become an everyday part of life for college students, shaping how they think, feel, and interact with others. This study examines how social media trends, such as viral challenges, aesthetic lifestyles, and popularity-based content, affect the mental health of college-going students and how, in extreme cases, these influences may be related to suicidal thoughts and behaviour. Using a socio-psychological approach, the research focuses on both social pressures like peer comparison, fear of missing out, and need for acceptance and internal psychological responses such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and loneliness that arise from constant involvement with online trends. The study is based on data collected through a structured Google Form survey from 135 college students aged 17 to 21, capturing their social media usage patterns, emotional reactions, and experiences with harmful or stressful trends. The responses are analysed to identify patterns such as how often students feel pressured to follow trends, how they feel when they do not receive expected likes or comments, and whether these experiences are linked with self-harm or suicidal thoughts. The findings aim to provide insights that can help parents, teachers, mental health professionals, and institutions create awareness programs, support systems, and safer online practices to reduce the emotional burden and suicide risk associated with social media trends among youth.
Keywords: <i>Social media trends, College students, Socio-psychological analysis, Suicide and mental health, online peer pressure, Google Form survey, Emotional well-being</i>	
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• INTRODUCTION :

In today's digital age, social media has become a central part of daily life for college students, occupying a powerful position in their minds as a source of validation, trends, and connection. Many students view these platforms as their primary social space, where likes, shares, and followers define their worth, often leading them to prioritize online approval over real-world interactions. This mental fixation distracts them from society, creating a psychological loop where withdrawal from family and community reversely affects their overall nature—making them more isolated, less empathetic, and disconnected from genuine relationships.

For college-going students aged 17-21, who are already navigating identity formation and academic pressures, this shift brings serious sociological problems. Communication gaps with parents widen as students spend more time online, mistaking Facebook friends or virtual followers for "real" friends while feeling detached from the real world and deeply immersed in a fake, curated digital one. Viral trends, idealized lifestyles, and constant updates amplify feelings of inadequacy, peer pressure, and emotional distress, sometimes escalating to self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

To explore this issue, data was collected through a Google Form survey from 135 college-going students aged 17-21. Their responses about social media habits, trend exposure, and emotional reactions reveal how digital culture interacts with social and psychological factors. Through a socio-psychological lens, this study analyzes these patterns to highlight hidden pressures and suggest ways to foster healthier online habits, stronger family bonds, and real-world connections for young people.

• OBJECTIVES :

- 1) To observe social media trends.
- 2) To analyse social media trends.
- 3) To analyse the impact of social media trends on the life of students.
- 4) Psychological impacts on the minds of the students.

• LITERATURE REVIEW :

Social media use in youth

Studies show that most adolescents and college students use social media daily, often for several hours, making it a central part of their social and emotional life. These platforms shape identity, relationships, and a sense of belonging, but they also expose young people to constant opinions, judgments, and trends.

Mental health impact

Research links heavy or problematic social media use with higher levels of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem among young people. The way social media is used matters: passive scrolling, late-night use, and constant checking are especially connected with poor sleep and negative mood.

Social comparison, FoMO, and pressure

Many studies explain these effects through social comparison and fear of missing out (FoMO). Seeing idealized images and achievements of others online often leads to upward comparison, feelings of inferiority, and dissatisfaction. High FoMO is linked with more time online, more checking behavior, and higher anxiety and depressive symptoms in college students.

Social media, self-harm, and suicide

Research also shows associations between social media use and higher risk of self-harm and suicidal thoughts among adolescents and young adults. Exposure to self-harm or suicide-related content and some harmful challenges can increase risk, although online spaces can sometimes also offer support and understanding, making social media a "double-edged sword."

College students and suicidal ideation

Studies focused on university and college students find that factors such as poor sleep, low self-esteem, social media addiction, and barriers to seeking help can link social media use with suicidal ideation. This shows that social media interacts with other psychological and social factors rather than acting alone.

Gap and relevance of your study

Most existing work looks at total social media use, not specific trends and viral challenges and how they affect suicide-related thoughts in college students aged 17–21. Your study helps fill this gap by using socio-psychological concepts and direct data from 135 students to explore how trend culture, pressure to participate, and online validation relate to emotional distress and suicidal thinking.

Socio-psychological approach in this study

This topic is chosen from a **socio-psychological** point of view because social media trends do not affect students only as individuals, but as members of social groups influenced by culture, religion, politics, and peer networks. Research shows that online spaces shape identity, self-image, and group belonging, and that constant exposure to idealized lives and opinions can create comparison, pressure, and emotional strain among youth. Social influence theories and social identity theory explain how young people adjust their thoughts and behavior to fit in with online groups, leaders, and trend-setters, sometimes even adopting

extreme or unhealthy views.

From this socio-psychological angle, social media is seen as a place where:

- Religious and spiritual messages from leaders or influencers can change beliefs, guilt, hope, or fear.
- Political content and hidden propaganda can subtly shape opinions and social relationships without students fully realizing it.
- Anonymous or edited identities (fake profiles, filters, ideal images) can lead to individuation and confusion between real self and online self, affecting self-esteem and mental balance.

This approach also helps to understand why some students develop **psychological imbalance**, feel emotionally overloaded, or become more spiritual as a coping mechanism, while others get disconnected from real-life experiences and authentic relationships. By combining social factors (peer pressure, group norms, leader influence, misinformation) with psychological factors (self-esteem, fear of missing out, depression, suicidal thoughts), the socio-psychological framework gives a deeper explanation of how social media trends may increase or reduce suicide risk among college students.

• **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

Research design

The present study adopted a **quantitative, cross-sectional survey** design to examine how social media trends have **badly shaken the lives of college-going students**, creating deep psychological imbalance, social disconnection, and heightened suicide risk through socio-psychological pathways. Social media has severely disrupted students' daily functioning by fostering addiction-like scrolling habits that reduce focus on studies, replace meaningful family conversations with superficial online interactions, and promote a false sense of belonging through "likes" and followers rather than genuine relationships. This digital immersion leads to poor sleep from evening use, emotional volatility from trend-driven comparisons, and a gradual withdrawal from real-world responsibilities, shaking their academic performance, family bonds, and mental stability. The design captures these disruptive usage patterns, emotional fallout, and demographic factors at one point in time, ideal for mapping how platforms like YouTube (46.4%) and Instagram (28.5%) pull students into a curated "fake world" that distorts reality and amplifies distress.

Population, sample and sampling

Target population: college students aged 17-21.

Sample: 135 students via convenience sampling.

Most active: 18-21 years.

Gender: 67.5% female, 32.5% male.

Residence: 69.5% rural, 15.2% semi-urban/urban.

Rural dominance shows social media's reach shakes even traditional family structures, replacing parent guidance with online influencers.

Data collection tool

Structured Google Forms questionnaire measured: demographics; apps used; reasons (knowledge 41.1%, info 41.7%, entertainment 13.7%); time (afternoon/evening peaks disrupting routines); screen time (<6 hrs but high-impact); search themes (trends causing FoMO); emotional effects revealing parent communication gaps and fake FB friendships over real ties.

Variables and operational definitions

- Apps/Time: YouTube/Instagram peaks trigger constant trend-chasing, fragmenting attention and shaking study habits.

- Impacts: Unverified info/propaganda distorts worldview; fake identities erode self-esteem; virtual friends widen parent gaps, leaving students isolated in real life.

- Outcomes: Links moderate screen time to major life disruption via psychological strain and social withdrawal.

Data collection procedure

Form piloted for clarity, shared via WhatsApp/student groups for anonymous responses. Method mirrors students' digital habits but underscores their screen dependency.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequencies/percentages) quantified patterns linking trends to life-shaking effects like family disconnection and emotional overload.

Ethical considerations

Although this was a student-based survey, basic ethical principles were followed. Participation was voluntary, and students could choose not to answer any question that made them uncomfortable. No personally identifiable information (such as names or contact numbers) was collected, which helped maintain confidentiality. Students were informed that their responses would be used only for academic research and analysis. Such ethical care is important in studies dealing with sensitive topics like mental health and suicide.

Key references

- Online interaction disrupts college life.
- Parent communication gaps from social media.
- Fake friends, real disconnection.
- Psychological/academic shaking effects.

- **CONCLUSION:**

This study shows that social media trends strongly influence the minds and daily lives of college-going students, sometimes leading to psychological imbalance, confusion, and emotional overload. Social, political, and religious leaders also use these platforms to spread messages, which can shape students' beliefs, increase polarization, or, in some cases, push them towards spirituality as a coping mechanism rather than critical thinking about real-life issues.

At the same time, many students are exposed to unauthentic or unverified information, hidden political propaganda, and manipulated content, which can misguide their opinions and weaken their ability to judge what is true or false. The habit of creating or following fake identities further distances them from their real self and real-life experience, increasing feelings of emptiness and disconnection.

Overall, the findings suggest that social media is not only a source of knowledge and connection but also a space where identity, relationships, and reality itself can be distorted. Helping students develop media literacy, emotional stability, and awareness of these hidden influences is essential so that they can use social media wisely instead of being controlled by its trends and pressures.

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