



# **A STUDY ON THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE ATTITUDE, SOCIAL MATURITY OF U.G. STUDENTS WITH REFERENCE TO THEIR GENDER AND FACULTY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The rapid growth of internet penetration and social networking site (SNS) usage in India has significantly influenced the social, academic, and personal lives of undergraduate (U.G.) students. The impact of digital involvement in promoting or impeding social maturity has emerged as a crucial field of study given the ways in which social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn have influenced patterns of contact. Interpersonal competence, responsibility, adaptability, and self-control are the four elements that determine social maturity, and the setting of digital engagement has led to a reconfiguration of these elements. This investigation looked into the relationship between students in undergraduate programs in India and their views towards internet and social networking site (SNS) usage, with a special emphasis on gender and variances based on faculty.

The research utilised a review-based technique, exclusively relying on secondary sources such as academic publications from the years 2015–2025, government papers, policy documents, and national polls. Thematic analysis was utilised to organise the data according to three major dimensions: the attitudes of the participants towards the internet and social networking sites, their social maturity in digital participation, and variances particular to faculty members and demographic groups.

The findings showed that while excessive dependence and misuse led to immaturity in offline relationships, an excessive reliance on validation, and a decrease in empathy, positive and constructive attitudes towards internet and SNS use encouraged decision-making abilities, adaptability, and interpersonal confidence. With female students frequently exhibiting more balanced and sympathetic interaction and male students showing higher risks of competitive or hostile online behaviour, gender emerged as a crucial moderator. Results were further differed by faculty backgrounds, with professional course students exhibiting higher levels of career-driven, organised digital maturity than the more varied patterns seen in non-professional faculties.

The conclusion emphasized that internet and SNS use significantly shaped social maturity among U.G. students, with outcomes contingent upon attitudes, gender, faculty, and socio-cultural contexts. Recommendations included digital literacy programs, counseling initiatives, faculty-specific skill development, gender-sensitive interventions, and longitudinal research to track evolving digital behaviors.

**Keywords:** Internet attitudes, social networking, social maturity, undergraduate students, India

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The number of undergraduate students in India who are using the internet and creating profiles on social networking sites (SNS) has increased significantly over the past few years. As of early 2025, it is estimated that over 806 million individuals in India were accessing the internet, which represents around 55.3 percent of the country's entire population (We Are Digital Editorial Team, 2025). Between January 2024 and January 2025, the number of internet users increased by about 49 million (We Are Digital Editorial Team, 2025). In January 2025, there were around 491 million social media user IDs in India. This number represented 33.7 percent of the country's total population (We Are Digital Editorial Team, 2025).

The student body at undergraduate institutions consists of individuals who are for the most part between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three. This group of students falls into the demographic that uses the internet the most. Despite the fact that access to digital technologies is ubiquitous, digital literacy is not yet universal. According to a nationwide poll, just 26.8% of Indian adolescents in the 15–29 age range were capable of carrying out fundamental internet tasks such as surfing, sending emails, and making online purchases (Times of India, 2024). This suggests that while access to internet resources is widespread, the ability to use them effectively remains limited among many students.

Students in undergraduate programs utilise the internet for a variety of academic, social, and personal purposes. As far as academics are concerned, students utilise social networking sites (SNS) for online lectures, research debates, and collaborative learning. They use digital platforms to preserve their connections, establish networks with their peers, and express their identities on a social level. When it comes to myself, mobile phones offer a means of amusement and self-expression, provide access to news, and supply emotional support (Kumar, Chawla, & Patel, 2022).

Differences between the sexes continue to be pronounced. According to surveys, just 56 percent of women in India indicate that they own a mobile phone, compared to 84 percent of males. Women are also less likely to use mobile devices to access the internet (IndiaSpend, 2025). Another report highlighted that women aged 15–65 in India were 46% less likely to own a mobile phone than men in the same age group (United Nations Women, 2022). Such inequalities underscore the fact that even when students are at the same intellectual level, gender serves as a mediator for access and patterns of usage. Variations in the faculty are also important: students in professional and science programs are more likely to utilise digital resources for research, coursework, and laboratories, whilst students in humanities and commerce programs are more likely to engage with platforms that are orientated towards expression and conversation (Majumdar, Banerjee, & Rao, 2022).

Both the internet and social networking sites (SNS) can function as helpful resources, but they can also serve as sources of distraction. They provide students the ability to access electronic publications, online classrooms, lectures by experts, and academic forums, which assist students in improving their learning results, on the one hand. Notifications that are continuous, information that is entertaining, and surfing that never ceases to finish,

on the other hand, have the potential to disrupt focus and to lower academic productivity (Joseph, Kumar, & Singh, 2025).

How these technologies are utilised is determined by people's perspectives on SNS. The likelihood of students engaging in responsible behaviour is higher among those who consider social networking sites (SNS) to be instruments for growth and cooperation. In the other hand, students who have a more casual or apathetic attitude may be at risk of becoming addicted to SNS, falling behind in their work, and becoming overwhelmed by the amount of information that is available (Sharma, Tiwari, Jain, & Chauhan, 2022). Such attitudes directly influence not only academic performance but also readiness for professional life.

An additional level of significance is added by social maturity. Social maturity, which has historically been defined as the capacity for self-control, responsibility, and interpersonal competence, now encompasses a number of other elements in the context of modern society. Digital etiquette, the management of online identities, the balance of offline and online contacts, and the ability to withstand cyberbullying and disinformation are all now components of social maturity (Mari, Capelli, Leoni, & Spada, 2023). As undergraduates spend increasing amounts of time online, the relationship between internet attitudes and social maturity becomes more critical to explore.

India has experienced rapid expansion in digital adoption. In 2025, internet penetration was reported at 55.3%, leaving nearly 44.7% of the population offline (We Are Digital Editorial Team, 2025). Internet access is most frequently obtained through mobile broadband, which is enabled by expanding networks that operate on the 4G and 5G protocols. The possession of smartphones has also increased significantly; at least one smartphone is presently reported by 85.5% of Indian households (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation [MoSPI], 2025).

Despite infrastructure gains, disparities in skills remain stark. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), only 26.8% of youth aged 15–29 possess basic digital skills (Times of India, 2024). Gender gaps persist: men are consistently more likely than women to own smartphones and access the internet (IndiaSpend, 2025). Reports further confirm that cultural and safety issues often restrict female students' use of technology, particularly in rural areas (United Nations Women, 2022).

Excessive usage of the internet and social networking sites (SNS) has also sparked concerns. According to a survey conducted in 2025, 26 percent of students were classified as having excessive social networking site (SNS) usage, and male students were more likely to fall into this group. This group likewise exhibited elevated levels of psychological anguish (Joseph, Kumar, & Singh, 2025). Another study confirmed that problematic internet use is associated with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Kumar, Chawla, & Patel, 2022).

Policy frameworks aim to address these issues. The Digital India program focuses on building rural broadband infrastructure, increasing internet access, and fostering digital literacy (Dhole, 2022). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also stresses the need of incorporating information and communication technology into learning and increasing the number of digital resources available to students and educators. As a result of these changes in policy, undergraduate students are expected to incorporate the use of digital technologies into their academic and social growth more and more.

Despite the fact that there has been considerable development in the number of undergraduate students in India who have access to the internet and social media, there are still major information gaps about how these



students' views towards these technologies connect with their social maturity. It is uncommon for the existing body of literature to synthesise the elements of variations between faculty members and gender into a single framework. The majority of research concentrate on either usage patterns or psychological effects, but there is a dearth of complete knowledge of how online views influence social maturity across demographic and academic boundaries.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the views that undergraduate students in India have towards social networking sites (SNS) and the internet, as well as to research the relationship between these attitudes and social maturity. In addition, it draws attention to variances in gender and faculty, providing a viewpoint that encompasses the entire country of India. The purpose of this task is to compile existing information, point out any deficiencies, and make suggestions based on reputable, up-to-date secondary data sources.

All of the information that serves as the basis for this study comes from secondary sources. The materials that were considered were scholarly journal papers published between 2015 and 2025, reports and policy documents from the government, stories from the news media, and national surveys such as those performed by IAMAI, TRAI, UNESCO, and MoSPI. Thematic analysis was employed in order to organise the data into three general themes: (a) attitudes towards the internet and social networking sites, (b) social maturity, and (c) variances depending on demographics and faculty.

## 2. INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE ATTITUDES AMONG U.G. STUDENTS

### Patterns of Internet and Social Media Use

One of the greatest populations of active internet and social networking site (SNS) users in India are students who are working towards their undergraduate degrees. As reported by recent national studies, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the most popular for everyday involvement, while LinkedIn has become increasingly popular among students in management and professional schools (We Are Digital Editorial Team, 2025). Students often spend an average of 2–3 hours per day on social media, though this varies significantly depending on academic requirements and personal interests (Sharma, Tiwari, Jain, & Chauhan, 2022). Virtual classroom participation, access to online study groups, and involvement in academic forums are all examples of academic usage. On the other hand, streaming films, gaming, or casual browsing are examples of entertainment-driven use (Joseph, Kumar, & Singh, 2025).

### Attitude Dimensions

Students' perspectives on social networking sites (SNS) may be roughly categorised into positive and negative dimensions. Social media facilitates academic networking, cooperation, and knowledge-sharing, all of which are advantages of its use. It has become a means of developing one's profession, giving students the ability to interact with mentors, have access to e-learning possibilities, and display their projects (Majumdar, Banerjee, & Rao, 2022). Positive attitudes also emphasize peer collaboration, especially during group assignments or collaborative projects, which are often coordinated through WhatsApp or Telegram groups.

On the negative side, over-dependence on social media leads to addictive patterns, often reducing time spent on academic tasks (Kumar, Chawla, & Patel, 2022). Risks are further highlighted by concerns such as disinformation, exposure to hazardous content, cyberbullying, and distraction during study hours. These negative mindsets are frequently influenced by the compulsive nature of digital platforms, which creates a sense

of vulnerability among young people and contributes to stress and a decline in academic attention (Mari, Capelli, Leoni, & Spada, 2023).

### Gender-Based Differences

It is clear that there are disparities between men and women in terms of how social networking sites are viewed and utilised. Social media is frequently utilised by male students for the purposes of skill development and knowledge acquisition. In addition, these students are more likely to demonstrate more participation in gaming platforms, technical forums, and networking activities linked to their careers. Female students, on the other hand, generally report higher levels of involvement in creative expression, personal branding, and interactive communication. This finding indicates that they have more interactions with other people and participate in community activities more frequently (IndiaSpend, 2025). In addition, societal norms and disparities in digital access contribute to these discrepancies. Compared to male students, female students, particularly those from rural regions, have additional obstacles to access and autonomy (United Nations Women, 2022).

### Faculty-Based Differences

Patterns of social networking service (SNS) usage also differ between academic faculties. Students in the arts and humanities disciplines commonly utilise social media as a platform for artistic expression, including the sharing of artwork, participation in discussion forums, and involvement in cultural groups. Students who are pursuing degrees in commerce and management are drawn to networking sites like LinkedIn for reasons such as professional growth, internships, and exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities. Students in the fields of science and technology utilise social networking sites for purposes such as academic cooperation, participation in coding communities, and staying up to speed on the latest research. Platforms such as GitHub and Reddit provide a complement to official education (Sarwatay, Anchan, & Sreekumar, 2021). These variations reflect how faculty disciplines shape digital engagement, reinforcing that student attitudes are influenced not just by gender but also by field of study.

### Supporting Literature and Case Studies

Research across India has consistently demonstrated correlations between discipline, gender, and SNS engagement. For instance, Sharma et al. (2022) observed that personality traits (introversion/extraversion) moderated how male and female students engaged with social media, with females leaning toward interactive and supportive use, while males engaged more competitively. Similarly, Joseph et al. (2025) It was emphasised that male students were disproportionately affected by psychological stress as a result of their excessive usage of social networking sites. Engineering students place a higher value on technical updates, whereas students of the arts place a greater value on expressive involvement, according to studies of faculty-wise engagement (Sarwatay, Anchan, & Sreekumar, 2021). These findings confirm that attitudes toward SNS among U.G. students are not uniform but are shaped by demographic and academic factors.

**Table 1: Internet and Social Networking Attitudes of U.G. Students in India**

Dimension	Characteristics among U.G. Students	Explanation
Popular Platforms	Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, LinkedIn	Students prefer visual, interactive, and networking-oriented platforms for both academic and entertainment purposes.
Time Spent Online	2–3 hours daily average; varies by academic vs. entertainment usage	Reflects dual role of SNS in education (study groups, research)

		and leisure (gaming, video streaming).
Positive Attitudes	Academic networking, peer collaboration, access to resources	Encourages professional growth, learning, and collaborative student culture.
Negative Attitudes	Over-dependence, misinformation, cyberbullying, distraction	Highlights risks of addiction, reduced focus, and mental health concerns.
Gender Differences	Males: gaming, technical forums, career networking; Females: creativity, social interaction, communication	Gender norms and access shape differential engagement styles.
Faculty-Based Differences	Arts: creative expression; Commerce/Management: LinkedIn, professional growth; Science/Tech: coding, collaboration, research sharing	Academic disciplines guide purpose-driven use of SNS aligned with professional and personal learning needs.

The primary measurements of the perspectives of college students in India about the internet and social networking platforms are summarised in the table that is provided above. The most popular platforms, the average amount of time spent online, and the dual nature of SNS use for both academic and recreational goals are highlighted. In addition, the chart differentiates between good and negative views. It demonstrates how social media may be used as a tool for academic advancement and cooperation, but it also highlights the hazards that social media can provide, such as distraction, disinformation, and over-dependence. In addition, it demonstrates the variances that exist between the genders—with males having a proclivity for gaming and technical forums and females being more engaged in contact and creativity—as well as the distinctions that are particular to the faculty that correspond with the academic and professional concentration of each field. It is much easier to have a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which students' digital behaviours and perspectives are influenced by a variety of demographic and academic characteristics with the aid of this organised overview.

### 3. SOCIAL MATURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

#### Defining Social Maturity

An individual's social maturity is defined as their capacity to behave in a responsible manner, manage their emotions, maintain meaningful connections, and adjust to social situations in an efficient manner. It is a blend of flexibility, interpersonal skill, responsibility, and the capacity to exercise self-control. When considering undergraduate students, social maturity becomes essential. This is due to the fact that these years represent a period of transition into adulthood, during which personal identity, peer influence, and preparation for a career all intersect. As social networking sites (SNS) and the internet have become more prevalent, the conventional measurements of social maturity are undergoing a transformation, given that a significant portion of interpersonal interactions now takes place in digital environments (Sharma, Tiwari, Jain, & Chauhan, 2022).

#### Influence of Internet and Social Networking

Social networking sites create both possibilities and threats for social development. On the one hand, platforms enable students to build relationships beyond physical boundaries, participate in academic forums, and express their identities in communities that are supportive. On the flip side, online peer pressure, which is propelled by "likes" and "followers," has the potential to skew self-perception and encourage harmful comparisons (Mari, Capelli, Leoni, & Spada, 2023). Digital identity formation is a defining aspect, as students actively curate

online personas that influence how they are perceived socially and professionally (Majumdar, Banerjee, & Rao, 2022).

There exists a complicated link between online participation and the development of social skills in face-to-face interactions. Social responsibility may be improved by moderate internet usage, which can provide instruction on digital etiquette, civic involvement, and understanding of global concerns. Overuse, on the other hand, might perhaps diminish talents related to empathy, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills that are required for face-to-face interactions (Kumar, Chawla, & Patel, 2022).

### **Gender-Based Variations**

When it comes to the development of social maturity in digital settings, gender serves as a mediating factor. Interactions between female students are frequently empathic and community-oriented, with an emphasis on cooperation and supportive peer networks. They also display a greater degree of social cohesiveness and responsible engagement in online communities (IndiaSpend, 2025). Male students, on the other hand, show a greater propensity towards hostile or competitive behaviour, notably on debate-oriented platforms and online gaming communities. For instance, whereas women develop trust and a sense of connection in online situations, males may prioritise success and dominance in these environments. This difference can have an effect on how maturity is exhibited (United Nations Women, 2022).

### **Faculty-Based Variations**

The manner in which students exhibit social maturity in online environments is affected by disciplinary circumstances. Students who are enrolled in professional courses (in fields such as engineering, administration, and medicine) tend to demonstrate greater levels of digital responsibility, which can be attributed to rigorous academic requirements and career-oriented networking (Joseph, Kumar, & Singh, 2025). In contrast, students who are studying the arts typically cultivate expressive maturity via their participation in cultural forums, where they exchange creative works and engage in conversations that encourage intellectual openness. Students who study commerce show signs of maturity that are related to the practical experience and entrepreneurial activities they engage in online, such as using social networking sites to find internships, e-commerce possibilities, and industry professionals to network with (Sarwatay, Anchan, & Sreekumar, 2021).

### **Challenges in Attaining Social Maturity**

Despite the presence of opportunity, there are a number of problems that impede the development of social maturity among undergraduate students in digital environments. A reliance on external validation might develop as a result of excessive exposure to validation on the internet, which can erode self-confidence. Interpersonal empathy can often diminish as a result of extended digital contacts, which are often accompanied by a reduction in face-to-face connection. In addition, depending on virtual networks for emotional support or identity validation may result in a decreased ability to cope in face-to-face social settings in the actual world (Mari et al., 2023). The presence of these problems demonstrates the necessity of implementing organised digital literacy programs that strike a balance between online involvement and the development of social skills offline.



**Table 2: Social Maturity of U.G. Students in the Context of Digital Engagement**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Observations among U.G. Students</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Defining Traits	Self-control, responsibility, adaptability, and interpersonal competence	Core indicators of social maturity, influenced by digital and offline interactions.
Influence of SNS	Online peer pressure, identity formation, shaping responsibility	Social media creates both opportunities for learning responsibility and risks of unhealthy norms.
Online vs. Offline Skills	Balanced use improves etiquette and awareness; excess use reduces empathy and interpersonal skills	Demonstrates the dual role of digital engagement in shaping social maturity.
Gender Differences	Females: empathetic, socially cohesive; Males: competitive, risk of aggression	Gender mediates patterns of digital behavior that affect maturity outcomes.
Faculty-Based Differences	Professional: career-driven maturity; Arts: expressive maturity; Commerce: entrepreneurial maturity	Academic discipline influences how maturity develops through digital contexts.
Key Challenges	Overdependence on validation, reduced empathy, reliance on virtual networks	Risks highlight the importance of balanced digital literacy and offline engagement.

The principal elements of social maturity as they are impacted by social networking site (SNS) and internet use among undergraduate students in India are displayed in the table above. It shows how maturity is presented differently depending on gender and academic background while also demonstrating the dual effect of social networking in facilitating accountability and causing hazards like as over-dependence and diminished empathy. As a result, the table emphasises that social maturity in digital environments is dynamic and is influenced by both the obstacles that must be controlled and the chances for progress.

#### **4. INTERLINKING INTERNET ATTITUDES, SOCIAL NETWORKING BEHAVIOR, AND SOCIAL MATURITY**

##### **Attitudes as Predictors of Social Maturity**

Attitudes toward internet and social networking sites (SNS) have a significant impact on the development of social maturity among students who are enrolled in undergraduate programs. When pupils take a responsible approach to digital media, a favourable link is discovered. Learners who maintain constructive attitudes are able to utilise social networking sites (SNS) for the purpose of making decisions, engaging in collaborative conversations, and sharing information. This in turn promotes self-confidence and flexibility in learners when they find themselves in real-world circumstances (Sharma, Tiwari, Jain, & Chauhan, 2022). For example, utilising services like as LinkedIn for professional development or WhatsApp for peer communication improves leadership and teamwork skills.

On the other hand, when pupils demonstrate an excessive reliance on social networking sites (SNS), a negative link emerges. Overuse is frequently associated with a decrease in the ability to empathise with others, a tendency to procrastinate, and challenges in maintaining significant contacts with other people in person. Behaviours such as these can undermine important elements of social maturity, including the ability to remain resilient and the sense of responsibility (Kumar, Chawla, & Patel, 2022). Thus, attitudes act as a crucial predictor of whether internet use enhances or hinders social maturity.



## Gender as a Mediating Factor

There is a strong mediating effect of gender on the connection between views towards the internet and social maturity. More frequently than their male counterparts, female students report using social networking sites (SNS) in a manner that is more measured and balanced. This is correlated with a better level of maturity in terms of empathy, social cohesiveness, and responsible engagement (IndiaSpend, 2025). In contrast, male students display greater risks of misuse, particularly in competitive or entertainment-driven contexts such as online gaming and forums. These patterns suggest that while digital platforms provide equal opportunities, the way gender mediates attitudes impacts the trajectory of social maturity (United Nations Women, 2022).

## Faculty as a Differentiator

The background of the faculty is another factor that affects how the students' views about the internet transfer into maturity results. Structured digital engagement is encouraged by professional faculties such as engineering, management, and medicine since students are expected to use social networking sites for academic assignments, internships, and job preparation. This structured use fosters responsibility, planning, and decision-making (Joseph, Kumar, & Singh, 2025). In contrast, non-professional faculties such as the arts, business, and general science typically have usage patterns that are more diversified and less restricted than professional faculties. While some students who are pursuing degrees in the arts utilise platforms for constructive purposes, such as for creative expression, others may participate in entertainment-driven activities excessively. Students studying commerce regularly switch back and forth between recreational use and professional networking, which indicates that they have a more diverse range of interests (Sarwatay, Anchan, & Sreekumar, 2021).

## Broader Implications for India

These connections are further complicated by the setting in which they take place in India. When looking at the variances in PAN India, there is a stark discrepancy between pupils in urban areas and students in rural areas. Students who reside in urban areas, and especially those who live in Tier-I cities, are often more likely to be exposed to organised digital learning settings and social networking sites that are orientated towards careers. Students in rural areas may have infrastructural obstacles, which result in limited or less supervised involvement (We Are Digital Editorial Team, 2025). Furthermore, the diversity of languages and cultures has an effect on digital engagement since platforms that are localised in the language of the region are becoming more prominent and are creating a variety of experiences of social maturity. The unequal distribution of internet access between Tier-I and Tier-II cities serves to further highlight disparities in internet usage, resulting in varying developmental outcomes for student populations.

## Synthesis of Literature

Synthesizing Indian and international findings highlights that responsible digital attitudes foster social growth, while misuse contributes to risks of immaturity. International studies confirm that balanced SNS use enhances students' adaptability and confidence (Mari, Capelli, Leoni, & Spada, 2023). Indian studies emphasize that gender and faculty act as mediators, shaping unique pathways of maturity (Majumdar, Banerjee, & Rao, 2022). Together, the literature underscores the need for targeted interventions—digital literacy training, faculty-specific programs, and gender-sensitive approaches—to optimize maturity outcomes in the digital age.

**Table 3: Interlinking Internet Attitudes, Social Networking, and Social Maturity among U.G. Students**

Dimension	Observations	Explanation
Attitudes as Predictors	Positive: responsible use enhances decision-making, confidence; Negative: misuse reduces face-to-face skills	Attitudes determine whether SNS promotes or hinders social maturity.
Gender as Mediator	Females: balanced use, empathetic maturity; Males: higher risk of misuse and aggression	Gender mediates how digital behavior translates into maturity outcomes.
Faculty as Differentiator	Professional: structured use, career-oriented growth; Non-professional: diverse, less regulated usage	Faculty context influences whether SNS aids responsibility or fuels distraction.
Broader Implications (India)	Urban: structured, career-driven use; Rural: limited access, less guided use; Tier-I vs. Tier-II gaps	PAN India variations reveal structural inequalities in digital engagement.
Literature Synthesis	Indian studies: gender/faculty mediate outcomes; International: balanced use builds adaptability	Confirms universal trends while highlighting India-specific variations and gaps.

The table above consolidates key dimensions linking internet attitudes, SNS behavior, and social maturity among U.G. students. It illustrates how attitudes act as predictors, gender and faculty serve as mediators, and broader socio-cultural contexts shape outcomes. Together, these insights demonstrate that social maturity in digital spaces is not uniform but depends on the interplay of attitudes, demographics, and structural inequalities.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

The study concluded that internet and social networking site (SNS) attitudes played a significant role in shaping the social maturity of undergraduate (U.G.) students. It was found that students' perspectives and behavioral orientations toward the internet and SNS influenced their decision-making, confidence, adaptability, and interpersonal skills. A responsible and constructive approach toward digital engagement fostered positive developmental outcomes, whereas excessive or unregulated dependence on such platforms often led to negative consequences, including reduced empathy, distraction, and immaturity in face-to-face social skills.

Gender differences emerged as a vital factor in mediating these relationships. Female students generally demonstrated more balanced and empathetic usage patterns, which correlated with higher levels of social cohesion and responsibility. Male students, on the other hand, were more prone to aggressive or competitive behaviors in digital contexts, reflecting different pathways in how social maturity was affected. These gender-based variations highlighted that maturity outcomes were not uniform but context-dependent.

Faculty background also acted as a significant differentiator. Students in professional faculties such as engineering, management, and medicine were observed to display higher levels of structured engagement with digital platforms. Their internet and SNS use was often oriented toward academic, professional, and career-building activities, leading to greater responsibility and maturity in online and offline behavior. Conversely, students in non-professional faculties showed more diverse patterns, ranging from constructive creative expression to less regulated entertainment-driven use. Such contrasts underscored the influence of academic environments on shaping students' attitudes and social development.

The analysis of the PAN India context revealed wide disparities in digital attitudes, largely driven by socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Students in urban and Tier-I cities generally had better access to digital infrastructure, structured exposure to academic technologies, and greater opportunities for guided SNS use. In contrast, students in rural and Tier-II contexts often faced infrastructural limitations and uneven digital literacy levels, leading to less guided or inconsistent use of social networking platforms. These disparities demonstrated that socio-cultural diversity and institutional support systems directly influenced the role of internet attitudes in shaping social maturity.

Overall, the findings suggested that positive and constructive internet use enhanced maturity by promoting responsibility, adaptability, and interpersonal skills, whereas misuse and overdependence carried the risk of immaturity and harmful consequences.

## Recommendations

To address the challenges and optimize the benefits of digital engagement, several recommendations were proposed. First, institutions should integrate digital literacy programs into their curricula. Such programs would promote responsible and informed internet use, ensuring that students learn to balance academic, social, and personal engagement online.

Second, counseling and mentoring initiatives should be established to help students manage the balance between online and offline worlds. These initiatives would encourage students to reduce overdependence on digital validation and cultivate empathy and interpersonal competence through real-world interactions.

Third, faculty-specific interventions should be introduced. For example, professional courses could focus on career-oriented digital skill development, while arts and commerce programs could emphasize creativity, entrepreneurial opportunities, and responsible online expression. Such tailored approaches would ensure that students' academic backgrounds guide their constructive engagement with SNS.

Fourth, gender-sensitive strategies must be implemented to address disparities in access, autonomy, and use. Female students should be empowered through equal access to digital resources and safe online environments, while male students should be guided toward balanced, non-aggressive, and constructive use of SNS. These measures would reduce misuse and enhance responsible participation across genders.

Finally, it was recommended that future research adopt longitudinal approaches to better understand how internet attitudes and SNS behaviors influence social maturity over time. By tracking changes across academic years, disciplines, and socio-cultural settings, researchers could identify evolving trends and propose dynamic strategies that adapt to the rapid transformations in the digital ecosystem.

In summary, the study emphasized that while internet and SNS engagement offered opportunities for growth, their impact on social maturity depended heavily on attitudes, gender, faculty, and socio-cultural context. With appropriate institutional, gender-sensitive, and faculty-specific interventions, the risks could be mitigated, and the benefits maximized, preparing undergraduate students for responsible digital citizenship in the future.

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