

The Impact of Social Media Usage on the Physical and Mental Health of Government School Students in the Ramhlun Areas of Aizawl, Mizoram

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Abstract

The present study examines the impact of social media usage on the physical and mental health of government school students in the Ramhlun areas of Aizawl, Mizoram. The research was conducted among students from government elementary (Class V-VIII) and secondary (Classes IX-X) schools, employing a descriptive survey design. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect data on patterns of mobile phone ownership, social media use, duration of online engagement, and self-reported indicators of physical and psychological well-being. The findings reveal that prolonged and unregulated use of social media platforms is associated with symptoms such as eye strain, irregular sleep patterns, decreased physical activity, and reduced academic focus due to multitasking. Moreover, excessive engagement with online content correlates with increased levels of anxiety, mood fluctuations, and social withdrawal among adolescents. However, moderate and purposeful use of social media was also found to facilitate peer interaction, knowledge sharing, and access to educational resources. The study highlights the dual nature of social media as both a beneficial and potentially harmful influence on students' overall health. It underscores the need for awareness programs, digital literacy education, and parental guidance to promote balanced and responsible use of social media among young learners in Mizoram.

KEYWORDS: social media, adolescent health, government school students, physical well-being, mental health, academic performance, digital literacy, aizawl, mizoram

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the past decade, social media has become an inseparable part of young people's lives. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp allow users to connect, learn, and express themselves freely. However, the growing dependency on these platforms has raised concerns regarding their impact on physical health, mental well-being, and academic outcomes. Among adolescents, constant exposure to digital media can alter behavior, reduce attention spans, and contribute to physical issues such as eye strain, poor posture, and inadequate sleep (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

In Mizoram, particularly in the Ramhlun areas of Aizawl, smartphone penetration has increased rapidly even among school-aged children. Government school students—many from middle or lower socioeconomic backgrounds—are increasingly gaining access to personal or family devices. This shift has created new challenges for educators and parents

who struggle to regulate screen time and guide responsible usage. While national studies have examined social media's general impact on youth, there remains a lack of localized research addressing specific communities such as Ramhlun. The unique cultural and educational environment of Mizoram makes it vital to study how social media affects the daily lives of its students.

This research explores both the positive and negative dimensions of social media use. While it can serve as a source of knowledge, creativity, and social connection, it also poses risks to students' health, self-esteem, and learning focus. By understanding these influences, the study aims to guide early preventive strategies and promote a balanced digital lifestyle among government school students.

1.2 Research objective

- (a) To examine the patterns and frequency of social media usage among government school students in the Ramhlun areas of Aizawl, Mizoram.
- (b) To assess the impact of social media usage on the physical health of the selected students, including aspects such as sleep, activity level, and posture.
- (c) To analyze the relationship between social media engagement and indicators of mental health, including anxiety, mood, and social interaction.
- (d) To identify awareness levels among students regarding the positive and negative consequences of social media use.
- (e) To suggest practical measures for promoting balanced and healthy social media practices among young learners.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The influence of social media on young people has been widely debated across educational and health disciplines. Earlier studies have identified both constructive and adverse outcomes of digital engagement among adolescents. Research from various regions highlights that social media can enhance communication skills, academic collaboration, and global awareness when used purposefully. However, excessive use has been linked to reduced physical activity, poor sleep quality, and the development of anxiety or depressive tendencies. In the Indian context, recent findings suggest that students from urban and semi-urban areas are increasingly vulnerable to digital addiction due to easier access to mobile devices and internet connectivity. Despite this, limited scholarly attention has been given to government school students, particularly in smaller communities such as those in Aizawl's Ramhlun areas. The lack of region-specific data underscores the necessity of exploring how social media habits affect the physical and mental well-being of these students, who may face unique social and educational challenges compared to their private school counterparts.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a descriptive survey design to examine the impact of social media usage on the physical and mental health of government school students in the Ramhlun areas

of Aizawl, Mizoram. The population of the study comprised students enrolled in government elementary and secondary schools within the selected locality. The study was conducted in the locality of Ramhlun Vengthar, Ramhlun South, Ramhlun North, Ramhlun Sports Complex and Ramhlun Venglai. These areas were chosen due to its high concentration of government schools and rapid digital adoption among students. A sample of 343 students was selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across age groups and school levels.

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative and qualitative data related to social media habits, physical health indicators, and psychological well-being. The instrument included both closed- and open-ended questions to capture students' experiences and perceptions comprehensively. Data collection was conducted with prior permission from school authorities and with ethical consideration for student confidentiality and consent.

Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and frequency to identify patterns and trends. The findings were interpreted to draw meaningful insights into how social media engagement influences students' physical activity, mental state, and overall lifestyle.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The present study analyzed the impact of social media usage on the physical and mental health of government school students in the Ramhlun areas of Aizawl, Mizoram. A total of 343 students participated in the survey, comprising 234 elementary students (Classes V–VIII) and 109 secondary students (Classes IX–X). The results highlight that social media has become a significant part of students' daily routines, influencing their lifestyle, health, and academic focus.

Overall, nearly 80% of the students owned mobile phones, indicating widespread access to digital technology even at the elementary level. The main purpose of social media use among both groups was entertainment, with YouTube being most popular among elementary students (99 users) and Instagram leading among secondary students (55 users). This suggests that younger students prefer video-based platforms, while older students are drawn to more interactive and visual communication spaces.

In terms of usage timing, a considerable number of students—especially in secondary schools—reported using social media late at night. Among elementary students, 83 used it at night and 82 in the evening, while 52 secondary students also admitted to late-night usage. The daily duration of use was moderate among younger students (1–3 hours for most) but significantly higher among older students (3–5 hours daily). This indicates that social media involvement intensifies with age and autonomy.

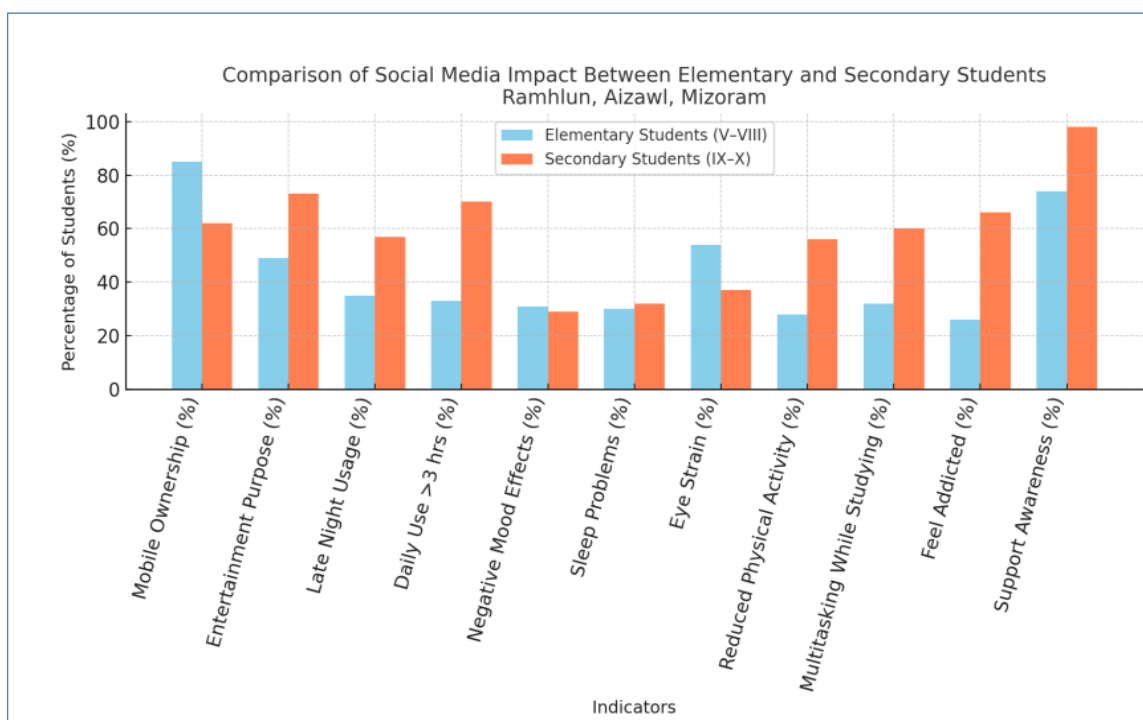
The psychological impact of social media use was evident in both groups. Among elementary students, 72 reported negative mood effects, while 68 felt no change. Similarly, among secondary students, 31 experienced mixed emotions, and 26 felt negative effects. Sleep problems were reported by 43 elementary and 29 secondary students, and more than one-third of all participants experienced eye strain or headaches due to screen exposure. These findings

show a clear relationship between prolonged screen time and health-related issues such as fatigue and reduced concentration.

Physical activity levels also declined among frequent users. A total of 51 secondary and 66 elementary students reported reduced outdoor or physical engagement. Additionally, multitasking during study hours was common — 74 elementary and 55 secondary students used social media while studying. Such habits suggest a potential decline in academic focus and discipline.

A growing concern was the indication of social media dependency. 60 elementary and 31 secondary students found it difficult to avoid social media for a week, while many others felt “somewhat addicted.” Despite these challenges, awareness levels were encouraging. 173 elementary and 89 secondary students supported awareness programs on responsible social media use, with many suggesting screen time limitation and counseling as effective solutions.

In summary, the analysis indicates that both elementary and secondary students in Ramhlun are active social media users, with older students exhibiting stronger patterns of dependency and late-night use. Physical and psychological effects—such as sleep disturbance, eye strain, and reduced activity—were common across groups. However, students also displayed a readiness to adopt healthier habits, signaling an opportunity for schools and parents to implement digital literacy initiatives and awareness programs to promote balanced online behavior.



5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of 343 government school students from the Ramhlun areas of Aizawl shows that social media use is widespread among both elementary and secondary levels. Mobile phone ownership was high in both groups (85% among elementary, 62% among secondary).

The main purpose of use was entertainment, with YouTube preferred by younger students and Instagram by older ones.

Secondary students showed higher engagement, with 57% using social media late at night and 70% spending more than three hours daily. This group also reported more frequent multitasking, reduced physical activity, and signs of addiction. In contrast, elementary students displayed fewer late-night habits but faced notable eye strain and sleep problems, indicating early exposure risks.

Despite these challenges, both groups expressed strong awareness of healthy digital practices, with over 70% supporting awareness campaigns and screen-time control. Overall, the findings suggest that while social media enhances connectivity, excessive use affects students' physical health, concentration, and emotional balance, highlighting the need for digital literacy and monitoring.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media has a significant presence in the daily lives of students in the Ramhlun areas of Aizawl, Mizoram. It affects not only their physical and mental well-being but also their social interactions and academic focus. While elementary students show early signs of exposure-related issues, secondary students are more prone to dependency and irregular habits such as late-night scrolling.

The balance between digital benefits and health risks depends largely on awareness and regulation. Students who understand the consequences of overuse tend to manage screen time better. Therefore, coordinated efforts by schools, parents, and policymakers are essential to establish guidelines for responsible social media use. Integrating digital literacy into the curriculum can help young users develop self-discipline, critical thinking, and healthy engagement with online content.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends the implementation of the followings:

1. **Digital Awareness Programs:** Schools should organize regular workshops on digital health, online safety, and responsible media use.
2. **Parental Guidance:** Parents should monitor children's screen time and encourage offline activities.
3. **Curricular Integration:** Digital literacy should be included in the school curriculum at both elementary and secondary levels.
4. **Health Monitoring:** Schools should collaborate with healthcare professionals to track eye health, sleep quality, and posture among students.
5. **Balanced Usage:** Encourage scheduled breaks and outdoor activities to maintain physical well-being.

6. Community Initiatives: Awareness campaigns involving local leaders can promote safe and balanced technology habits.

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