

## A Study of Social Media Usage in Relation to Economic Background of Individual

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### ABSTRACT

Social media is a congregation of internet-based module that enables the creation and exchange of information that is usually generated and created by its users. Social media is different from traditional forms of media in ways of reach, frequency, urgency and feasibility. Through this medium, not only youth gets to connect with their friends, but this is also a vehicle to connect leaders with followers. However, youth remain its most active users. Out of total active users using social networking sites, 57% are youth which belongs between 18-29 years (Lenhart, 2010). However, the time spent every day on these by these youth varies greatly (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). According to Sheldon (2008). The purpose of this paper is to check if economic background makes any difference on the social media usage. A sample of 740 was collected from two cities for this purpose. Social Networking Sites Usage Questionnaire (SNSs) was used for this purpose. With the help of Anova, Welch and Brown-Forsythe test and Post-hoc tests the influence of income on social media usage was accessed.

**Keywords:** *Social Media, ANOVA, Post-hoc*

Social media is a congregation of internet-based module that enables the creation and exchange of information that is usually generated and created by its users. Researches have found that social media like Facebook may act as a separate medium in which to develop and maintain partnerships that provides an alternative social outlet which could have a positive effect (Grieve, Wittenveen, Talan; 2013) or negative affect (Figueira & Oliviera, 2015). It was also found that it is a pathway to emotionally detached communication. It is a lazy way to be in relationship and impacts the ability to be alone. Majority of these users of social networking sites are youth, so this study would be targeting this segment of the population and economic impact on social media usage.

The virtual world of social media interactions has taken one step further by Second Life. It is an online social community with 1 million users, where people create a virtual representation of themselves and interact with each other based on those representations. Though this is somewhat similar to role-playing in online games but its founder (Linden lab, 2003) emphasizes this not to be a game rather a real creation. Here people interact, socialize, and take part in individual and group activities. It also, like real-world provides business

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opportunities to shop, trade and create properties with its own currency and this currency is exchangeable in the real world. They even form relationships here and get married; that is why it has been called second Life. This level of social engagement might be helpful to those who are otherwise socially excluded in their societies. This kind of involvement in such virtual world environments would depend on the level of engagement of individuals on these platforms.

### **Social Media and Youth:**

Social media is different from traditional forms of media in ways of reach, frequency, urgency and feasibility. The purpose of these social networking platforms is to bring like-minded people together where they discuss, appreciate and making them a part of each other's community (Mayfield, 2008). Through this medium, not only youth gets to connect with their friends, but this is also a vehicle to connect leaders with followers. However, youth remain its most active users. Out of total active users using social networking sites, 57% are youth which belongs between 18-29 years (Lenhart, 2010). However, the time spent every day on these by these youth varies greatly (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). According to Sheldon (2008), most of the users spend around 30 minutes per day on socializing on these sites, mostly during night time. College students check into these sites multiple times a day. According to Quan-Hasse and Young (2010), as many as 82% of college students log into these sites multiple times a day. Although the purpose of their logging in differs according to age, elderly people log into to stay in touch with their old pals, people from hometown, family and belonging to their professional set up, while school students are its more frequent users and use this for recreational activities (Pempek, 2009).

### **Social Media and Income:**

The relationship between wealth and social media usage is nuanced and varies by context, platform, and how "usage" is measured (e.g., time spent, type of engagement). Wealthier individuals and those in advanced economies generally have greater access to digital devices and high-speed internet, enabling more consistent social media use. A 2018 research found that people in advanced economies (median 54%) are more likely to use the internet for news daily compared to those in emerging or developing economies (23%). Studies also show that lower-income groups, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods, tend to spend more time on social media, particularly on platforms like Facebook and TikTok. A 2021 study in a European country found that low-income areas had higher mobile traffic for social media and video streaming compared to wealthier areas, which focused more on news and email. Wealthier Individuals: Higher-income groups are more likely to use platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn, which are associated with professional networking or curated lifestyles. A 2015 study noted that Facebook usage is highest among lower-income teens, while Instagram and Snapchat dominate among wealthier ones. Globally, the average time spent on social media is similar across economic levels (2 hours 21 minutes daily), but the purpose differs. Wealthier users often engage for information or networking, while poorer users may use it for entertainment or escape.

## **METHODOLOGY**

**Objective:** To check if economic background makes any difference on the social media usage.

**Hypothesis:** There will be difference of social media usage between users coming from high-income groups and those coming from low-income groups.

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**Sample:** A total of 740 samples were collected across two different cities. One was Tier 3 city, and the other was tier 1 city (Department of Expenditure, Govt. of India for Home Rent Allowances purposes). From Tier 3 city, a sample of 360 was collected, and from Tier 1 city, a sample of 380 was collected.

**Questionnaire Used:** Social Networking Sites Usage Questionnaire (SNSs): The questionnaire has been developed under the aegis of Chinese Academy of Sciences by Shi, Luo, Yang, Liu, and Cai (2014). The questionnaire contains 13 questions covering 3 dimensions covering individual's Basic usage (Q:1,2,3), Interactive usage (Q: 5,6,10,11,12,13) and Self-display usage (Q: 4,7,8,9). The range of response is 7. There are no reverse items.

### RESULT

Income was measured on three levels. One being less than Rs 20,000, second being Rs.20,000-40,000 and third being more than Rs.40,000. The test of ANOVA for different income brackets revealed the following results.

**Table 1. ANOVA for three levels of Income on different dimensions of Social Media**

	< Rs.20,000 (n=195)		20,000-40,000 (n=195)		>Rs.40,000 (n=353)		F(2,745)	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Basic usage	10.30	3.46	10.86	3.26	12.03	3.39	18.54***	<.001
Interactive usage	18.32	5.60	19.05	6.24	21.30	6.87	-	-
Self-display	11.54	3.42	10.86	3.85	11.36	3.59	1.92	.147
Total SNS Score	42.16	9.72	40.78	10.51	44.68	11.19	14.80***	<.001

Note. \* $p < 0.05$ , significant (two tailed), \*\* $p < 0.01$ , significant (two tailed), \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , significant (two tailed)

Welch and Brown-Forsythe test, which is a test of equality of means for unequal variances showed a significant difference between means on Interactive usage.

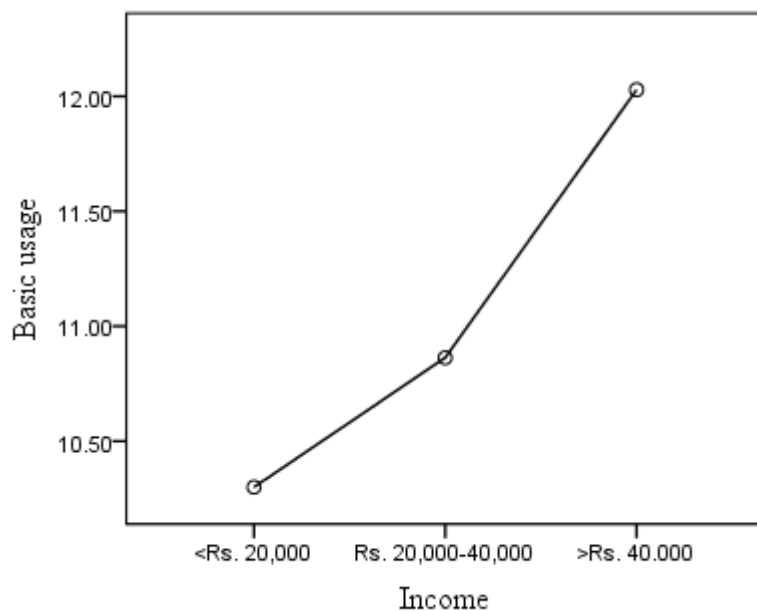
**Table 2. Welch and Brown-Forsythe test for three levels of income on Interactive usage dimension of Social Media**

	Welch (2,745)	p	Brown-Forsythe (2,745)	p
Interactive usage	16.62***	<.001	17.31***	<.001

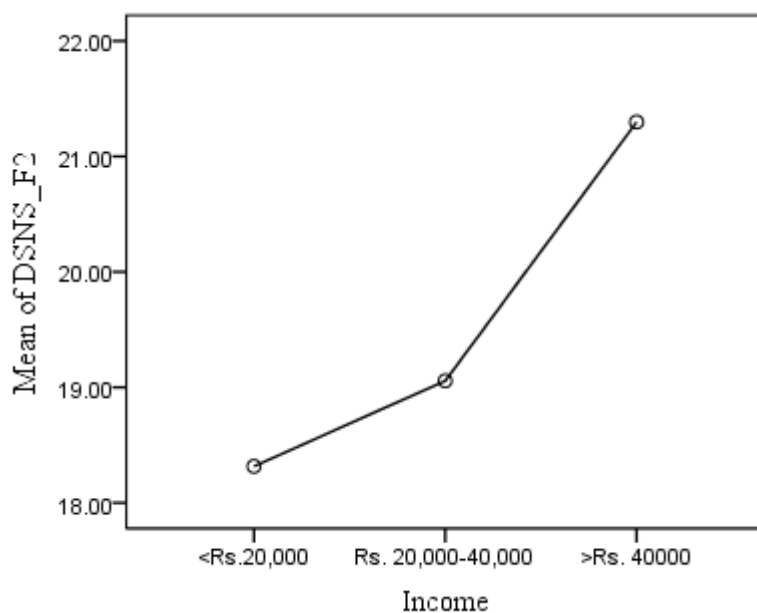
Note. \* $p < 0.05$ , significant (two tailed), \*\* $p < 0.01$ , significant (two tailed), \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , significant (two tailed)

These tests, ANOVA, Welch and Brown-Forsythe clearly show that there was difference on basic usage ( $F(2,745) = 18.54$ ;  $p < .001$ ), interactive usage ( $F(2,745) = 16.62$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and total social media score ( $F(2,745) = 14.80$ ;  $p < .001$ ) based on income groups. There was no difference on Self-display as income changes ( $F(2,745) = 1.92$ ;  $p = .147$ ). The mean plot for different levels of income on Basic usage Interactive usage and Total SNS score are as follows:

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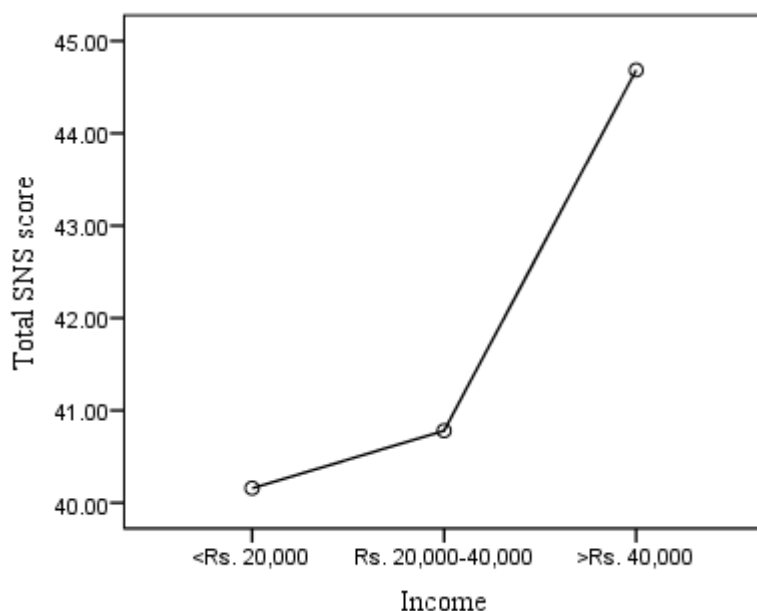


*Figure 1. Mean plot of Basic usage for different Income groups*



*Figure 2. Mean plot of Interactive usage for different Income groups*

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**Figure 3. Mean plot of Total social media scores for different Income groups**

The pattern on the graph clearly indicates that as income increases Basic usage increases, meaning people use social media more frequently as income increases. Interactive usage also increases, meaning people start to talk more on social media as income increases. Income was not having any change on Self-display. All income groups had the same tendency of Self-display. Hence overall social media score increases as income increases.

To analyse further, the cause of this significant difference in means between Basic usage, Interactive usage and SNS total Post-hoc was applied. Most of the post hoc tests perform fine when the data has a little deviation from normality while they do not perform very good when sample sizes are different, and variances of samples are different. Lavene's test of variability showed non significant results for three groups of dependent variable i.e. Basic usage ( $p = .712$ ), Self-display ( $p = .592$ ) and overall social media score ( $p = .110$ ). Meaning, the groups had same variances. Levene's test showed significant value for Interactive usage ( $p = .002$ ), meaning the groups of interactive usage have different variance. Hence, post hoc tests applicable for equal variances were chosen for dimensions of Basic usage and SNS total, while post hoc applicable for unequal variance was chosen for Interactive usage.

With equal variance, when group sizes are same, normally REGWQ and Tukey post hoc tests are considered good tests to compare means but here these tests cannot be performed as three groups of income do not have same sample sizes. Two tests are recommended when group sizes are different, Gabriel's test and Hochberg GT2. Gabriel's test is used when sample sizes are slightly different while Hochberg GT2 post hoc test is designed for large differences in sample size. Though it does not perform well when the sample has unequal variances, but here the two groups have equal variance, as shown by Levene's test, hence Hochberg GT2 was considered appropriate for this analysis of Basic usage and total SNS. With unequal variances, SPSS recommends 4 test, which are, Tamhane's T2, Dunnett's T3, Dunnett's C and Games-Howell. Out of these Games-Howell test was used for calculating mean differences for interactive usage as this has more power and also performs well with unequal sample sizes.

**Table 3 Post hoc comparison of Income levels on different dimensions of social media using Hochberg GT2 and Games-Howell tests**

	L vs M <i>p(t)</i>	L vs H <i>p(t)</i>	M vs H <i>p(t)</i>	Post hoc summary	$\eta^2$
Basic usage <sup>a</sup>	.265(1.66)	<.001(5.70)***	<.001(3.97)***	L=M ; L<H ; H>M	.04
Interactive <sup>b</sup>	.430(1.24)	<.001(5.52)***	<.001(3.90)***	L=M ; L<H ; H>M	.04
Total SNS <sup>a</sup>	.916(.610)	<.001(5.10)***	<.001(4.10)***	L=M ; L>H ; H>M	.04

*Note.* L= Low income; M = Medium income ; H = High income;  $\eta$  = Eta square ; a = Hochberg GT2; b = Games-Howell test; \* $p < 0.05$ , significant (two tailed), \*\* $p < 0.01$ , significant (two tailed), \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , significant (two tailed)

The results for post hoc revealed that there was no significant change in the basic usage pattern of social media as income changes from low to medium ( $t = 1.66$ ;  $p = .265$ ). But the results showed a significant difference of effect on basic usage as income changes from medium to high levels ( $t = 3.97$ ;  $p = <.001$ ). The same pattern was seen for interactive usage. There was no change seen in interactive usage as income changed from low to medium ( $t = 1.24$ ;  $p = .430$ ), but there was significant change observed on interaction when income changed from medium to high levels ( $t = 3.90$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The overall use of social media also showed the same trend. As income levels changed from low to medium, there was no change seen in social media usage ( $t = .610$ ;  $p = .916$ ), but there was a significant difference observed when income moved up from medium level to high level ( $t = 4.10$ ;  $p = <.001$ ). Hence, it can be concluded that high-income individuals used more social media.

Further, the effect size ( $\eta^2$ ) was found by dividing the sum of squares (between) from Sum of squares (total). Income was found to have significant effect on Basic usage ( $\eta^2 = .04$ ), Interactive usage ( $\eta^2 = .04$ ), and an overall social media use ( $\eta^2 = .04$ ). According to Cohen (1988) and Kirk (1996), the values of .01, .06 and .14 are considered small, medium and large effects respectively. So, there was a considerable effect of income on Basic usage, interaction on social media and overall social media usage.

Further, whether income can predict social media use could be tested by regression analysis, but this data does not have exact incomes, so it is to be found in further research. For now, the hypothesis stands accepted that income has an impact on social media usage pattern.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Income was found to have an effect on basic usage ( $F(2,745) = 18.54$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and interactive usage ( $F(2,745) = 16.62$ ;  $p < .001$ ) of social media. Post hoc tests for the same revealed that there was no difference seen in any of basic usage or interactive usage as income increases from low (< 20,000 Rs.) to medium (20,000-40,000 Rs.) level of income, but there was significant change seen as income increased from medium to high level (> 40,000 Rs.) levels of income. Income was also found to have a decent *effect size* on interactions ( $\eta^2 = .04$ ) and usage of social media ( $\eta^2 = .04$ ). Meaning, as income increases, people use more social media and become more open in conversations.

It is found here that as income increases social media usage increases. This result can have many implications related to self and subjective well being of an individual.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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