

A STUDY ON FACEBOOK USAGE AND GRATIFICATION BY YOUTHS OF TRIPURA

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Abstract

India is one of the few countries that have more youths than any other countries in the world. But the youths of India are increasing getting hooked up day and night on the internet. Researchers are of the opinion that excessive indulgence in the internet may lead to a new kind of addiction. Literatures says that social networking sites (SNS) is one the few sites visited most of the time by the youths when they are online. The present research paper is an attempt to dissect what the youths of Tripura do when they are using social media and what gratification do they derive from using it.

Keywords: Social Media, Youth, Addiction, Academic Performance, Tripura.

Introduction

Facebook is the largest social networking site (SNS) in terms of its global reach. Though founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg for a limited area use, it has become a global phenomenon by degrees and there are currently more than 2.23 billion monthly active users of Facebook (Richter, 2018)¹. The popularity of social media as a platform of communication among the youths of India is on the rise especially with the coming of smart phones. Social Skinny report mentions that, around 50% of youths in the age group 18 to 24 years go online in Facebook whenever they get time. The first thing they do when they get up in the morning is to log on to the Facebook². There are more than 1.74 billion mobile active users of Facebook in India alone up to December, 2016³. Facebook offers certain usage and gratification to the youths for which they remain hooked up on to Facebook. Its users derive psychological satisfaction, belongingness; inter connectedness with friends, relatives and drives away boredom. Another aspect at its popularity is that as many ‘likes’ are received in the user’s posts in Facebook, determines the popularity and sometimes existence of the user too. Fear of missing out may be the one of the important reasons for being frequently on line on Facebook (Prazybylski et. al., 2013)⁴.

However, increasing attraction to social media by the youths is a matter of concern by policy makers. Like scholars are beginning to associate the excessive indulgence to social media as a new kind of addiction. The term “internet addiction” was proposed by Dr. Ivan Goldberg in 1995. In the mid 90’s growing internet usage led researchers’ attention towards curiosity as some university students were suffering from health consequences due to lack of sleep and addiction towards internet (Wallace, 2014).⁵ Any documents or literature of the American Psychiatric Association, does not mention Internet addiction as a psychiatric disorder yet. To describe the phenomenon, different terminologies have been used by the researchers. As for example, 'dysfunctional Internet use', 'Internet addiction', 'compulsive Internet use', 'Internet dependency', 'problematic Internet use', and 'pathological Internet use' and like (Kuss and Griffiths, 2012). Some researchers have used Young’s (2008) Internet Addiction Test (IAT) to understand the addiction level. In IAT, there is 20- item; 5- point Likert scale that is used to measure the severity of self-reported compulsive use of the internet.⁶

“According to Young’s criteria, total IAT scores 20-39 represent average users with complete control of their internet use, scores 40-69 represent over-users with frequent problems caused by their internet use, and scores 70-100 represent internet addicts with significant problems caused by their internet use” Goel et.al (2013).

However, the issue of internet addiction is sometimes overlapping with the IT Professionals, researchers, academicians towards internet usage who by nature of their professional requirements have to be on the Net very often. Previously many researchers worked on the internet addiction but for the first time *Jamal J. Al- Menayes* specified Facebook addiction separately. Though Facebook needs internet connection but Facebook addiction differs from internet addiction.⁷ After drugs and alcohol addiction, if the world is facing any new type of addiction disorder, then that is Facebook addiction. This is a kind of Internet addiction, but social networking site influences such that people goes mad behind it. It’s like people being immersed in virtual life and forgetting about the physical world around them”⁸ (Das & Sahoo, 2011, p. 225). *Aishwarya S. Dahiwal*, a college goer in Maharashtra in India committed suicide. In her suicide note, she wrote:

*I don’t want to live in a house where there are such restrictions. Using Facebook is not a crime. It is a normal thing. But my parents think it’s a big issue and that’s their problem. That’s why I am committing suicide.*⁹

The way of communication in SNS, among Indian youth, is most alarming. Most of Indian youth use SNS at night secretly, they interact with the opposite sex and are found frustrated in the absence of SNS. Even sometimes, they ignore their scheduled work due to excessive addiction of SNS¹⁰. On 8 August 2014, another suicide was committed in Kerala, India. A 40 – year – old lawyer hanged himself, before that he announced on Facebook about this killer decision. However, unfortunately and ironically nobody took it seriously and this post was flooded with ‘like’s. SNS, among Indian youth, is most alerting. Most of Indian youths are using the Facebook at night secretly. Majority of them interact with the opposite sex and are found frustrated in the absence of Facebook. Even sometimes, they ignore their scheduled academic work due to excessive indulgence in the Facebook. Keeping this issue in mind, Uday Foundation that works

for the welfare for children in Delhi, has opened ‘Centre for Children in Internet and Technology Distress (CCITD)’ for Internet distressed.¹¹

Research Objective:

Building on previous research literature, where researchers like *Young* (1999), and others have measured various dimensions of internet addiction, the present research project would endeavour to adopt and carry forward the works of *Al-Menayes* (2015) and attempt to address the dimensions of social media addiction among the educated youths of Tripura. The intriguing broad objectives of the study would seek answers to, for instance, whether addiction to new media will be manifested in single factor or multiple of factors. The second research question would try to dig deeper by addressing the correlates of social media addiction in terms of patterns of usage and gratification with the social media. The last question would address the effects of social media addiction on academic performance. To put in other words, the research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What activities do the youth of Tripura play in Facebook?

RQ2: How far the educated youths of Tripura are emotionally or psychologically engaged with Facebook?

RQ3: How far the educated youths of Tripura are addicted to Facebook?

Theoretical framework:

This study can be related to the work of Uses and Gratification theory of *Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch* (1974). This theory says that media users are active and their use of media is goal oriented. Users have various needs to satisfy through media. Users take initiatives to link their need gratification to a specific media.

The works of *Al-Menayes* (2015) on ‘Dimensions of social media addiction among university students in Kuwait’ highlights a correlation between time spent by social media users and their addiction. The study also finds gratification factor of social media towards users and finds the addiction level of the users.

Literature Review

Nitu et.al (2017) conducted a study on ‘Prevalence of Internet Addiction among College Students’ in Ranchi area. It was a cross sectional study among male and female Under Graduate students. The researcher took the stratified random survey method to understand the prevalence, level and impact of internet addiction among sample. Here the research showed that the addiction of internet was increasing badly and this habit was affecting their mental and physical health too. Due to this kind of addiction the face to face communication among the sample was decreasing and they were wasting their time. *Goel, Subramanyam & Kamath* (2013) undertook a cross sectional study on prevalence of internet addiction and its association with Psychopathology in Indian adolescents. Researchers used a semi structured proforma and the Internet Addiction Test (IAT: *Young*, 1998) which was self-administrated by the students. Researchers found that twenty percent of college goers were possible addict to internet and rests were the moderate in using internet and 0.7% as addict. The addicted group usually was active on internet in evening and night time. Addicted users had used internet in different purpose than moderate users. Addicted users were very much interested in chatting, social networking sites, downloading media files. Moderate users were also taking keen interest in social networking sites but they also use internet for academic purpose. This addiction created anxiety and depression in the possible addicts and addicts groups. *Gorrah, Fuzoolla et.al* (2018) observed in their study Prevalence and Characteristics of Internet Addiction among University Students in Mauritius that more than five percent students were severe addicted to internet. This addicted students used internet for searching content, communicating and downloading media contents. This study showed there is a positive correlation in mean daily time uses and internet addiction. *Swaminath et.al* (2008) had observed in the study ‘Internet addiction disorder: Fact or Fad? Nosing into Nosology’ explained the term ‘internet addiction’, according to the researcher a person who is addicted to internet use internet at least thirty-eight per week. *Swaminath* found that computer professionals, businessmen, online lecturers, students of e-learning etc. was using internet more than forty eight hours per week. So it was difficult to classify ‘internet addiction’. In this study, it had been cleared that excessive gaming, sexual preoccupations, and E-mail/text messaging were the main component of internet disorder. This disorder was responsible for wastage of time, withdrawal of feeling, cause of anger – tension- depression, negative repercussion, poor achievement, social isolation and fatigue. With this, researchers have declared

that the excessive internet addiction is nothing but a fad illness. *Gosh et. al* (2017) adopted a cross sectional survey among under- graduate students Datta Meghe Institute of Medical Sciences (DMIMS) of Wardha City to observe the engagement between psychopathology and internet addiction. They used a semi structured proforma and an Internet Addiction Test. They found a significance association between psychopathology and internet addiction. Researchers found that male students were more active according to their login status. Even their emotional attachments resulted addiction towards internet and psychological distress.

Methodology

For the present research, primarily questionnaire survey based approach has been adopted to examine the basic questions related to pattern of communication through SNS, especially Facebook by adopting a written permission from the originators of Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS). To carry out the study, the researchers adopted a stratified random survey with close ended questionnaire among the youths of State Tripura who are currently studying in different general degree colleges of the State. A total of 4048 samples were administered the questionnaire. It is attempted to capture the information of cross-sections of the society in terms ‘sex’. In the analysis, these variables are treated as ‘independent variables’. The pattern of communication is proposed to be absorbed in terms of a cluster of variables which includes the activities, time spent, pleasure, psychological effect relating to Facebook.

Geographical Setting

Tripura is the third smallest state that covers 10, 491 km² in India. To the north, west and south Tripura is bordered by Bangladesh. Two Indian states of Assam and Mizoram are to the east of Tripura. According to census (2011), Tripura is one of the most literate states in India with a literacy rate of 87.75%. It has a population of 3,671,032 with 1,871,867 males and 1,799,165 females. Tripura ranks 6th in the country as per Human Development Index report (2006).¹²

Researchers had total four thousand forty-eight respondents from eight districts (West Tripura, South Tripura, North Tripura, Dhalai, Unakoti, Gomati, Sepahijala & Khowai) of the State Tripura. Among the respondent 52.5% are male respondent and 47% are female respondent. Rest 0.5% is belonging to other sex category (Table- 1).

Table: 1: Age and gender wise distribution of the youths

Age Group in Years	Male User (%)	Female User (%)	Other Gender User (%)
Under 18	13.4	20.4	19.0
18-24	79.1	75.0	57.1
25-31	4.6	3.0	4.8
32- 38	0.4	0.3	19.0
39 – 45	0.3	0.1	0
Above 45	2.2	1.2	0
Total: n=	100	100	100

Among all sex, the most active users of social media belong to the age group of 18 to 24 years (which is of more than 70%). So the youth are the most active group among all age group as was found in previous studies of other researchers.

The respondents of the present study mostly were rural dweller. 62.8% of male users used to live in rural are followed by the female users (56.1%). The respondents who belonged to other gender, had a different reflection in the issue of the residence. Most of them (42.9%) lived in a semi urban society. This statistic showed that the use of Facebook were not limited in urban area only. This picture is quite similar to the study of Subathra et. al (2013). Though the number of rural users were increasing day by day and even they have heavy in size than the urban users (table 2).

Table: 2: Family residence of the respondent

Sex of the Respondents	Residence	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	Rural Area	1334	62.8
	Urban Area	693	32.6
	Semi Urban	97	4.6
	Others	1	.0
	Total	2125	100.0
Female	Rural Area	1067	56.1
	Urban Area	758	39.9
	Semi Urban	77	4.0
	Total	1902	100.0

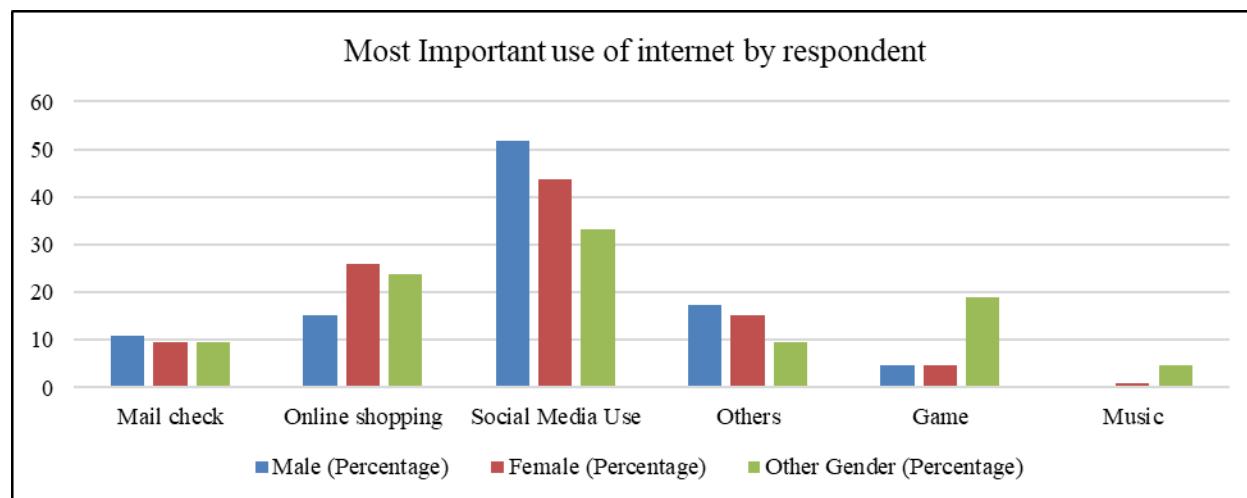
Other Gender	Rural Area	6	28.6
	Urban Area	6	28.6
	Semi Urban	9	42.9
	Total	21	100.0

Data Analysis:

Internet is the platform of all social networks. Facebook is one of the branches of those social networks. Netizens use internet for different purposes, such as checking – sending email, online shopping, online banking, online business, watching cinema, reading newspapers, listening music, online game, podcasting, writing blog, running a vlog, social networks, online learning and many more.

When researchers came to the question of usage of internet to the users, respondents from every gender answered the same. To them internet is necessary because of social media usage followed by ‘online shopping’ as shown in the chart 1. Interestingly, only 10% of the respondents thought that checking mail in an important activity using internet.

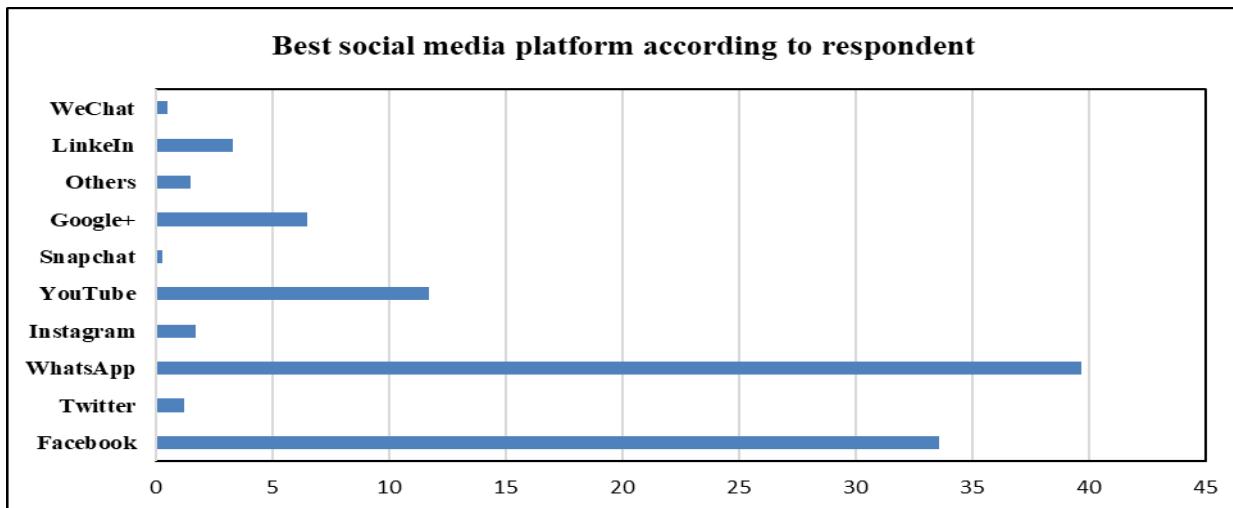
Figure: 1



Researchers offered different types of social media like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Google+, LinkedIn and others as the platform of social media to the respondents. Some respondents also used WeChat to communicate friends. Here we found a twist which showed that WhatsApp was the first choice of users among others option. During literature review we found that Facebook leads among the active users of social media. But in this study, Facebook (33.6%) was little behind of WhatsApp (39.7%) and You Tube occupied

the third position (11.7%) as the user's choice (Figure – 2). Twitter did not have much impact on the users. However, it can be surmised that WhatsApp is more popular than any other social networking platform among the youths of Tripura. WhatsApp's inherent feature of 'easy sharing technology' inbuilt in the software has rendered it to be more popular. Till the study was in progress Facebook had a great potential for online business and advertisement as well. Perhaps, news was shown that WhatsApp is also going to introduce advertisements at the status sharing space. That means, this study had shown the reason behind this kind of announcement by WhatsApp. Though Google+ has introduced so many features for communication but failed to get popularity in comparison with other social networks.

Figure: 2



Most of the respondents identified themselves as the light users (46.3%) of Facebook whereas only 10.3% users are found as heavy users of Facebook. The percentage of average users of Facebook was 36.8. Surprisingly 23.9% users answered that they did not log on Facebook on daily basis whereas 22.3% of users came online only for once a day. But 18.2% of users confessed that they always stayed online in Facebook. Among the respondents, 40.8% have informed that their friend strength in Facebook is below five hundred and 24.7% have told that their friend strength is up to thousand in number. With this, most of the users are using Facebook not more than three years. From this data, it can be said that the youth became active in Facebook when they became at the age of 18. After the availability of smartphone in market, the access of social media became easier and more portable. In this study, researchers found that

77.2% of Facebook users accessed Facebook through. Researchers designed some questions to identify the addiction.

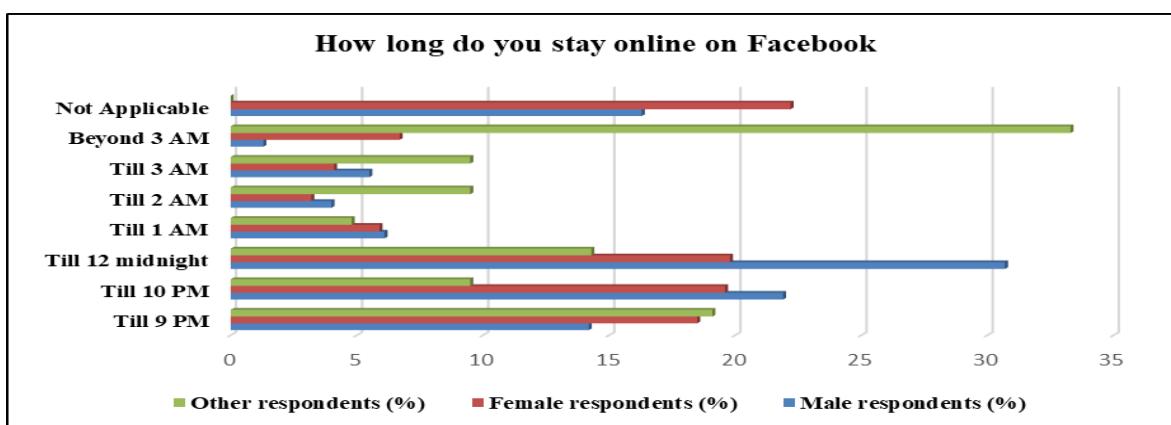
Facebook use: Planned or unplanned

Most of the female users (62.4%) use Facebook without any proper planning or they have no certain object for using Facebook followed by male users (48%). This study said that 45.2 percent of male users had some planning before using Facebook. Others were not very sure about their planning of use. Both male (39.3%) and female (34.3%) users sometimes used Facebook with proper planning. 32.19 percent of female respondents very rarely made plan for the use of Facebook.

Facebook usage time and duration:

More or less every section of respondents was very active in Facebook at night. 61.3% male preferred the night time to use Facebook followed by 54.4% of female users. There are very few active users were found in the early morning time and at noon. In the question of duration of use, respondents are divided in several parts. No clear picture had been derived. Overall, it can be said that Facebook has a good amount of active users from others category, till mid night and beyond 3 am. In comparison to male users, female users very rarely (40.2%) wished to have more extra time to use Facebook followed by male (28.1%). Respondents from other category sometimes urged to have some more time in Facebook followed by male (29%) and female (24.2%) respondents respectively.

Figure: 3



It was already found that there was a large section of users did not use Facebook with proper purpose. Study showed that users were sometimes spending more time on Facebook than initially intended. The feature of activities and friend's timeline attracted the users to spend more time in Facebook. 38.5 % of the male respondents said that they sometimes forgot the time that they intended to spend. This also was happened in case of female users (34.6%) and other participants (28.6%). Other participants also said that very often (28.6%) they did it.

Activities on the Facebook

Most of the male (36.6%) and female (32.5%) users liked to post personal information in Facebook. Nearly one forth responded they used to share and post contents those had social aspect too. Political post and academic posts are very rare among male (9.3% & 6.4%) and female respondents (5.9 % & 9%). The respondents belonged to other category had a different view. Their choice was not enlisted in the option. So most of them opted for other kind of activates.

Though different political parties are using Facebook as a tool of communication and propaganda, the respondents are less interested to post or share political issues. In the study it had been found that respondents were not active in using Facebook for academic purpose.

Table: 2. Distribution of youths and their 'most practiced segment in the Facebook'.

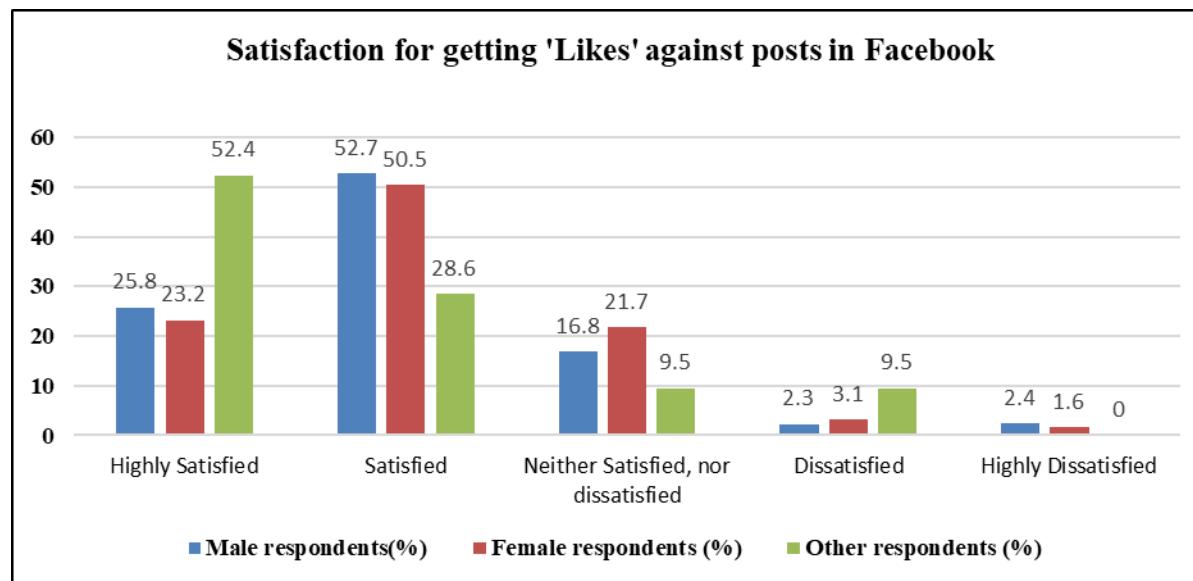
Segment	Male respondents (%)	Female respondents (%)	Other respondents (%)
Personal Posts	36.6	32.5	4.8
Political Posts	9.3	5.9	14.3
Social Posts	27.3	24.0	23.8
Academic Posts	6.4	9.0	4.8
Other	12.4	12.1	42.8
Not Applicable	8.0	16.5	9.5
Total: n=	100	100	100

Facebook & 'like' button

'Like' is a button that allows Facebook users to show their liking, support and acknowledgement on specific comments, uploaded pictures, videos, status update, commercial ad by any company without any written comment. *Brandtzaeg and Haugstveit* (2017) highlighted five kinds of liking – socially responsible liking, emotional liking, informational liking, social performative liking and low cost liking.¹³ In the present study, both male and female respondents are quite satisfied (52.7% & 50.5% respectively) by receiving more likes in Facebook whereas other respondents are highly satisfied (52.4%). This reflects the theory of gratification. The dissatisfaction level is 2.4% (maximum) very tiny.

To answer the question that how often Facebook 'Likes' encourages you're their involvement, the respondents voted most for 'sometimes' (male: 35%, female: 34.8% and other representatives: 23.8%). That means getting 'like' satisfy the users but it is not the only thing or most important area of encouragement of attachment towards Facebook.

Figure: 4



Facebook & online game

A social game will be called as social game unless it will be played with two other social media users. The number of participants may be two hundred. Games on social media enable users to meet new friends and old friends as well who are already in that network (*Boyd and Ellison, 2007*). It is not a big issue that the user logs on or not. The situation is same as in a Massively – Multiplayer Online game. The game world persists whether the user logs on or not, which is the same as in a Massively–Multiplayer Online game (*Yee, 2006; Schmid, 2008*)¹⁴.

In this study it is found that respondents are not so much active or attracted to the games in Facebook. About 25% of male users said sometimes they play online games in Facebook. Same opinion reflected among female users too, e.g. 22.9%. About 28.7 percent of other respondents opined that they sometimes found them engaged in Facebook. About 42.9 percent of women respondent voted for ‘very rarely’ option followed by male (35%). It can be inferred from this study that the games did not poses the entreating features in comparison to Facebook’s self-features. Another thing to notice that the over attention towards game might be the cause o wastage of time and study too. But less active users on Facebook means Facebook at least did not effect in academic advancement of psychological engagement

Table: 3. Distribution of youths who use ‘Facebook for playing Online Games’.

Scale	Male respondents (%)	Female respondents (%)	Other respondents (%)
Very Rarely	35.0	41.9	19.2
Rarely	15.8	14.9	19.2
Sometimes	25.0	22.9	19.0
Often	16.6	13.7	13.9
Very Often	7.6	6.6	28.7
Total: n=	100	100	100

Facebook and gratification

When it came at the question of getting pleasure of using Facebook, the responses were divided mainly in four categories. About 29.5% of male participants reported that sometimes they wanted to get pleasure from Facebook and to fulfill this wish they had to use more and more Facebook followed by female participants (28.5%) and others (23.8%). Many female participants (33.6%) are not so much pleasure seeker in Facebook; they very rarely felt to seek pleasure from Facebook.

From the pleasure seeking attitude, the respondents were asked whether they did fell any more urge to use Facebook. In response, about 32.4% of male users replied that they sometime felt urge to use Facebook more and more for getting pleasure followed by female respondents (28%) and others (23.8%). There are few numbers of respondents who felt this urge often or very often.

Table: 4. Distribution of youths who ‘Use Facebook more and more in order to get the same pleasure from it’.

Scale	Male respondents (%)	Female respondents (%)	Other respondents (%)
Very Rarely	24.0	33.6	19.0
Rarely	21.8	24.0	38.1
Sometimes	29.5	28.5	23.8
Often	18.4	8.5	9.5
Very Often	6.3	5.4	9.6
Total: n=	100	100	100

Facebook & psychology:

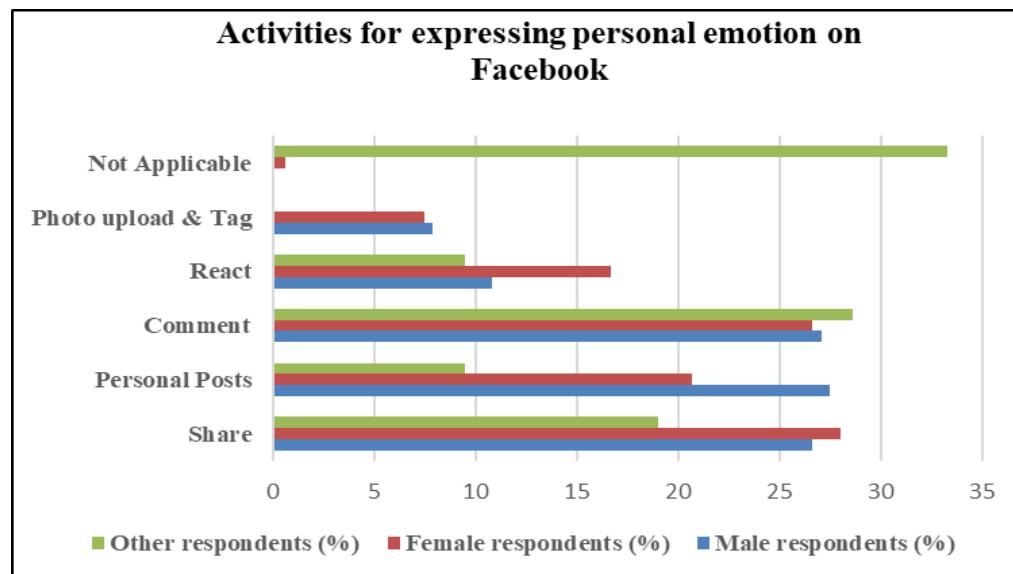
Sometimes nearly one third users were getting engaged with their Facebook activities in their daily life, though 31% male and female both respondents said that they used Facebook to forget their personal problem whereas 42.9% of respondents from other category replied that they rarely used Facebook to forget the personal problems. About 32.1 % female respondents said that they very rarely they felt so.

On an average thirty percent of the users felt that sometimes Facebook worked as a healer to reduce feelings on guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression. Likewise, about thirty four percent of female respondents felt this very rarely.

Table: 5. Distribution of youths who are ‘Thinking about what has happened on Facebook recently’.

Scale	Male respondents (%)	Female respondents (%)	Other respondents (%)
Very Rarely	19.8	27.8	23.8
Rarely	18.9	17.0	10.3
Sometimes	38.3	36.0	33.3
Often	17.9	14.6	4.8
Very Often	5.1	4.5	28.6
Total: n=	100	100	100

To share personal emotion in Facebook Most of the respondents used to share posts of others or quotations, they created personal content, commented on other’s posts. Very little amount of respondents expressed their emotion through uploading a photograph or reacting on different posts. To others, expressing emotion was not applicable on Facebook.

Figure: 5

Conclusion:

Previous studies have reported that youths are mostly the active users of social networking sites and Facebook tops the list, which is not corroborates the present study. But, one interesting fact emerged that WhatsApp is gaining popularity among the youths of the state Tripura as well and in near future, it might top the list of social networking sites. Male users were more purposive than females in using Facebook. Most of the users were active at midnight and interested in personal and social posts on Facebook. Political post did not give them any gratification. Political propaganda might not entertain them. The users had a balance in spending time on Facebook. Sometimes they felt an urge to spend more time on Facebook but it is not a regular phenomenon. The study clearly revealed that to the Facebook users of Tripura were not so much fond of getting ‘like’s on Facebook. That means the Social Presence Theory Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) is not much effective to them¹⁵. Entertainment through Games on Facebook was not popular among the educated youths of the State. With respect to the question of gratification, overall response is medium as they told sometimes they used Facebook as a source of pleasure and satisfaction. Facebook did not have much effect on the thinking orientation, expression and emotion of the youth of the state Tripura. From the activities played by the users, it was not reflected that there exists any unusual tendency like social media network addiction disorder (SMAD) that was introduced by a U.S psychologist for those who were uncontrollably addicted to Social Media.¹⁶

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