

Information Sharing Behaviour of Generation Z (Gen Z) Students through Social Networking Sites: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the information sharing behaviour of Gen Z students in use of social networking sites (SNSs). Social network sites have become a necessity for survival in today's interconnected world by transforming personal and professional lives to connect, communicate, and share information. This study employed a quantitative method, where the questionnaire was shared with the respondents through Google Forms via emails. The study comprised Generation Z Students among UG and PG students to understand their level of awareness of SNSs. The study found that both UG (52.28 %) and PG (47.71 %) students were aware of SNSs, and the majority of the students used smartphones (41.56%) to access these sites. Similarly, most respondents (31.36%) used SNSs for more than one hour daily. In addition, they used more than 2-3 forms of SNSs for varying purposes such as entertainment (13%), discussion, sharing of ideas/events (6.67%), communicating with new friends (4.58%), and interacting with teachers and friends for academic communication purpose (11.83%), job searching purpose (11.42%), etc. Furthermore, the study found that the most commonly used SNSs were WhatsApp (16.19%), YouTube (15.77%), and Instagram (15.01%). Notably, among the challenges Gen Z students face regularly include shifting the focus of using academic/research information to other purposes, unwanted advertisements (16.83%), data security (15.61%), privacy concerns (15.17%), and lack of concentration on their studies (25.05%). The study concluded that despite positive and negative perceptions, most Gen Z students were satisfied with using SNSs.

KEYWORDS: Generation Z (Gen Z), Social networking sites, Information sharing behaviour, Students, Smartphones.

INTRODUCTION

As we can see, Generation Z is frequently in the news because of several factors. This generation is more unique than previous generations. Generation Z, births between 1997 and 2012. According to Kakkad (2026), social norms, cultural expectations, and economic stability strongly influence generations; similarly, digital technological advancement conditions seriously affect Gen Z. Vogels et al. (2022) opined that Gen Z has a digitally dominant world, their birth and technological development at a time, 95% of this generation has access to smartphones, and

97% of them use the Internet daily. They spend more time on social media, like to share information, and share their day-to-day activities on digital platforms with their friends or people with similar interests, so social media platforms have become a part of their lives (Dadic et al., 2022). Gen Z uses social networking sites not only for entertainment but also for research, learning, and academic purposes. This study focuses on how Gen Z uses academic social networking sites. We can easily observe a large number of Generation Z students that are born between 1997-2007, are now studying undergraduate and postgraduate courses; hence, we selected them for this study.

Networking sites have become an integral part of people's lives in the current generation. We use them daily for various reasons, such as relying on them for mass communication, expressing thoughts, sharing knowledge, education, learning new skills, and entertainment. People use social networks for more activities and purposes (Lakshmanamoorthy & Marichamy, 2015, p.17). These platforms have significantly impacted students' lives and influenced their academic progress and personal growth. As role models, students leverage social networking sites to enhance their learning experiences and achieve academic success. The primary function of social networking sites (SNSs), including Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google+, is information sharing. Social networking sites have revolutionized information sharing, enabling students to easily access, share, and exchange knowledge, resources, and ideas, thereby fostering a collaborative and interconnected learning environment.

This study investigated the usage patterns of social networking sites among students who belong to Generation Z (Gen-Z), including the frequency and purpose of use, to understand the impact on their academic performance and learning outcomes.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dadic et al. (2022) studied on generation Z behaviour, in this study they analysed generation z's beliefs, communication, and education. They opined "The everyday life of members of Generation Z is increasingly shaped by social networks. They spend most of the day online. Their world is digitally "downloaded". They live in a world of "tagga" (tagging), like (liking), share (sharing) and so they communicate. Since they have profiles on various social networks, their communication has changed". This shows how much this generation depends on technology and social media networking sites.

Dwidienawati et al. (2025) explored that influencing internal and external factors on generation z. They determined technology and social support as external factors that show addiction of social media and digital environment and also, they are attached with social support.

Murthy et al. (2023) investigated the use of social networking sites among Chamarajanagara University Library patrons. The study found that an overwhelming majority of the participants were familiar with YouTube. The primary motivations for using networking sites were the self-promotion of knowledge and acquisition of useful information. However, a significant portion of users have encountered privacy and data security concerns while utilizing these platforms.

Lokesh and Naik (2016) studied the use and awareness of social networking tools among research scholars at Mangalore University. The study revealed that the majority of participants used the Internet daily, primarily by

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utilizing social networking sites for communication and academic research. Most participants perceived social networking sites as advantageous, with an overwhelming majority having a Facebook profile.

Jachak and Kumari (2022) examined the impact of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on postgraduate students at Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University. The study revealed that 100% of students spend a significant amount of time on SNSs, with the vast majority accessing them through smartphones. WhatsApp and YouTube are the most popular platforms for sharing information and for gaining knowledge. However, the majority of students faced issues with poor internet connectivity.

Manzo and Kannan (2020) investigated the use of social networking sites (SNSs) by students at Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic. The study found that the majority of students used WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter for easy communication with friends and family, sharing information, and academic activities. However, students perceived SNSs as time-consuming and expressed concerns about the high cost of data subscriptions.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To examine the extent of the use of social networking sites among Gen Z students.
- ✓ To investigate the purposes for which Gen Z students use social networking sites.
- ✓ To identify the access tools and applications used by Gen Z students to access social networking sites.
- ✓ To study the devices used and locations preferred by Gen Z students for accessing SNSs.
- ✓ To determine the average time of usage of SNSs by Gen Z students.
- ✓ To identify the problems and risks faced by Gen Z students while using SNSs.
- ✓ To determine the benefits of social networking sites among Gen Z students.
- ✓ To Measure the level of satisfaction of the use of SNSs by Gen Z students.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is confined to the examination of information-sharing practices among Generation Z students. This research specifically targets undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) students, as Generation Z is not a homogeneous group based solely on age. Individuals born in the Early Gen Z cohort (1997–2003) are currently young professionals or postgraduate students, while those born in the Core Gen Z cohort (2004–2008) are predominantly undergraduate students. The remaining individuals, born in the Late Gen Z cohort (2009–2012), are school students. This study focuses exclusively on PG and UG students due to their active engagement with social networking sites. The objective of this research is to analyze the patterns and preferences of information sharing among these students, with the findings potentially illuminating how Gen Z students utilize social media platforms for information exchange and knowledge dissemination.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology involved data collection through an online survey. A questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and distributed to the students via email. This study included Generation Z students pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate programs at selected higher education institutions in Bangalore. Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel, following the receipt of student responses. This process involved calculating percentages and totals and generating tables. This was done to facilitate a clearer understanding of the collected data,

enabling a more intuitive comprehension of the research outcomes for both researchers and potential readers of this study. The Paperpal tool was also used for the paraphrasing process.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 Gender wise distribution of respondents

| Sl. No. | Gender | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Male | 110 | 55.83 |
| 2 | Female | 87 | 44.16 |
| | Total | 197 | 100.00 |

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of Gender among the students for information sharing. Out of 197 (100%) respondents 110 (55.83%) are Male and 87 (44.16%) are Female.

Table 2 Level of Education of respondents

| Sl. No. | Education | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|--------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Undergraduate (UG) | 103 | 52.28 |
| 2 | Postgraduate (PG) | 94 | 47.71 |
| | Total | 197 | 100.00 |

Table 2 presents the educational levels of the respondents. Among the 197 participants, 103 (52.28%) were undergraduate (UG) students and 94 (47.71%) were postgraduate (PG) students.

Table 3 Various categories of social network sites (SNSs)

| SL No. | Social Network site (SNS) Tools | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------|---------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | WhatsApp | 192 | 16.19 |
| 2 | YouTube | 187 | 15.77 |
| 3 | Instagram | 178 | 15.01 |
| 4 | Telegram | 142 | 11.97 |
| 5 | Facebook | 133 | 11.21 |
| 6 | Google Meet | 96 | 8.09 |
| 7 | Twitter | 73 | 6.16 |
| 8 | LinkedIn | 55 | 4.64 |
| 9 | Any other SNSs | 37 | 3.12 |
| 10 | Google plus | 30 | 2.53 |
| 11 | Blogs | 25 | 2.11 |
| 12 | Google Classroom | 20 | 1.69 |
| 13 | Threads | 18 | 1.52 |
| | Total | 1186 | 100.00 |

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Table 3 shows that both UG and PG students used different kinds of multiple SNSs. WhatsApp 192 (16.19%) was the most used site among students for information sharing. Other highly used sites were YouTube 187 (15.77%), Instagram 178 (15.01%), Telegram 142 (11.97%), Facebook 133 (11.21%), Google Meet 96 (8.09%), Twitter 73 (6.61%), LinkedIn 55 (4.64%), Any other SNSs 37 (3.12%), Google Plus 30 (2.53%), blogs 25 (2.11%), Google Classroom 20 (1.69%), and Threads 18 (1.52%). All these sites and other sites are used by students for information sharing in the Gen-Z community.

Table 4 Devices used to access the SNSs

| Sl. No. | Device used | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|--------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Smart phone | 197 | 41.56 |
| 2 | Laptop | 152 | 32.07 |
| 3 | Ipad | 80 | 16.88 |
| 4 | Personal Computers | 45 | 9.49 |
| | Total | 474 | 100.00 |

Students choose different devices to engage with social networking sites for various reasons. As shown in Table 4, smartphones were the most widely used devices among students, with 197 users (41.56%). Laptops were used by 152 students (32.07%), while iPads and personal computers were used by 80 (16.88%) and 45 students (9.49%), respectively.

Table 5 Purposes of using social Network sites

| Sl. No. | Purpose of Use of SNSs | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|--|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Entertainment purpose | 156 | 13.00 |
| 2 | Academic communication with Teachers and friends | 142 | 11.83 |
| 3 | Searching for jobs | 137 | 11.42 |
| 4 | Instant Message (Chatting) | 134 | 11.17 |
| 5 | Keep up to date | 134 | 11.17 |
| 6 | Promoting own knowledge | 131 | 10.92 |
| 7 | For sharing ideas/news/events | 124 | 10.33 |
| 8 | To discuss new ideas with others | 80 | 6.67 |
| 9 | Finding old/new friends | 55 | 4.58 |
| 10 | To develop new skills | 48 | 4.00 |
| 11 | Any other purpose | 30 | 2.50 |
| 12 | For finding and meeting new people | 29 | 2.42 |
| | Total | 1200 | 100.00 |

Table 5 illustrates the purposes of SNSs, based on the collected data; the majority of students utilized SNSs for entertainment purposes, 156 (13%) among Gen-Z, followed by academic communication with teachers and friends,

142 (11.83%). Additionally, 137 (11.42%) students employed SNSs for job searching purposes, while 134 (11.17%) used them for instant messaging and staying up to date. Furthermore, 134 (11.17%) students utilized SNSs to promote their own knowledge, 124 (10.33%) for sharing ideas, news, and events, 124 (10.33%) for discussing new ideas with others, 80 (6.67%) for finding old and new friends, 55 (4.58%) for developing new skills, 48 (4%) for finding and meeting new people, and 29 (2.42%) for various other purposes.

Table 6 Places of Accessing SNSs

| Sl. No. | Places | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Hostel | 150 | 30.99 |
| 2 | Any other places | 130 | 26.86 |
| 3 | Home | 98 | 20.25 |
| 4 | Campus | 86 | 17.77 |
| 5 | Digital Library | 20 | 4.13 |
| 6 | Cyber Centre | 0 | 0.00 |
| | Total | 484 | 100.00 |

Table 6 presents the locations where students access Social Networking Sites (SNSs) for information sharing. The majority of students reside in hostels, as evidenced by 150 (30.99%) students accessing SNSs primarily from this location. Off-campus locations account for 130 (26.86%) students' access, while 98 (20.25%) students accessed SNSs from home. Within the campus, 86 (17.77%) students accessed SNSs, and 20 (4.13%) students utilized computers in the Digital Library. Currently, no students (0%) accessed SNSs from cyber centers.

Table 7 Benefits of using social networking sites

| Sl. No. | Benefits | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|---|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | It helps in learning. | 165 | 20.68 |
| 2 | Encourages information searching | 136 | 17.04 |
| 3 | it helps in prepare seminars and assignments | 132 | 16.54 |
| 4 | Increase self-esteem and well being | 126 | 15.79 |
| 5 | It promotes reading and writing web skills. | 123 | 15.41 |
| 6 | It encourages virtual meetings with classmates and teachers | 116 | 14.54 |
| | Total | 798 | 100.00 |

Table 7 presents the benefits of using SNSs. The use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) offers numerous advantages to students. Table 7 illustrates the benefits Gen-Z students experienced through SNSs. The respondents indicated that SNSs facilitated learning 165 (32.82%), supported their information-searching process 136 (17.04%), and assisted in the preparation of seminars and assignments 132 (16.54%). Additionally, SNSs contributed to increased self-esteem and well-being 126 (15.79%), promoted the development of reading and writing web skills 123 (15.41%), and encouraged virtual meetings with classmates and teachers 116 (14.54%).

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Table 8 Risks and problems faced while accessing SNSs

| Sl. No. | Risks and problems faced while accessing SNSs | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|---|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Unwanted advertisements | 152 | 16.83 |
| 2 | Data security | 141 | 15.61 |
| 3 | Privacy concerns | 137 | 15.17 |
| 4 | Fear of misusing personal information | 127 | 14.06 |
| 5 | Unwanted attention from others | 124 | 13.73 |
| 6 | Cyber-bullying | 112 | 12.40 |
| 7 | Lack of academic/research information | 110 | 12.18 |
| | Total | 903 | 100.00 |

Table 8 indicates the various risks and problems students face while accessing SNSs. Students encounter unwanted advertisements 152 (16.83%), which is a common issue on most SNSs platforms. Data security 141 (15.61%) and privacy concerns 137 (15.17 %) were also significant risks faced by students. including fear of misuse of personal information 127 (14.06%) and unwanted attention from others 124 (13.73%). Cyber-bullying 112 (12.40%) and lack of academic/research information 110 (12.18%) are additional major problems and risks that students encounter.

Table 9 Time spent on Social Network sites

| SL No. | Time | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | 1-2 hour | 148 | 31.36 |
| 2 | 2-3 hour | 120 | 25.42 |
| 3 | More than 3 hours | 108 | 22.88 |
| 4 | Less than 1 hour | 96 | 20.34 |
| | Total | 472 | 100.00 |

Table 9 presents the average time students spent on Social Networking Sites (SNSs). Of the students surveyed, 148 (31.36%) spent 1-2 hours on SNSs for information sharing, 120 (25.42%) spent 2-3 hours, 108 (22.88%) spent more than 3 hours, and 96 (20.34%) spent less than 1 hour on SNSs.

Table 10 Impact of Social Network sites on Students Academic performance

| Sl. No. | Impact | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Affecting academic performance | 154 | 29.00 |
| 2 | Unable to concentrate on study | 133 | 25.05 |
| 3 | Stay up and lack sleep | 124 | 23.35 |
| 4 | Addiction to SNSs | 120 | 22.60 |
| | Total | 531 | 100.00 |

Table 10 shows the impact of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) on the academic performance of Generation Z students. The data indicated that SNS usage affected students' academic performance in 154 (29%) cases. Additionally, 133 (25.05%) students reported difficulty concentrating on their studies, whereas 124 (23.35%) experienced sleep disturbances. Finally, 120 students (22.60 %) exhibited signs of SNS addiction.

Table 11 Level of satisfaction from using SNSs

| Sl. No. | Particulars | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 | Satisfied | 157 | 34.35 |
| 2 | Partially satisfied | 120 | 26.26 |
| 3 | Highly satisfied | 110 | 24.07 |
| 4 | Not satisfied | 70 | 15.32 |
| | Total | 457 | 100.00 |

An analysis of Gen Z students satisfaction with the utilization of social networking sites (SNSs) for information sharing. As shown in Table 11, the findings revealed that a substantial proportion of students 157 (34.35%) expressed satisfaction with SNSs. Furthermore, 120 (26.26%) students reported partial satisfaction and 110 (24.07%) indicated a high level of satisfaction. Conversely, a small fraction of 70 (15.32%) were dissatisfied with their SNS usage experience.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ In the gender-wise distribution of the survey, 197 (100%) respondents participated, comprising 110 (55.83%) male and 87 (44.16%) female respondents. The results indicated that the response rate of male students was higher than that of female students.
- ❖ Regarding level of educational qualification, 103 (52.28 %) undergraduate (UG) students responded more frequently than postgraduate (PG) students 94 (47.71%). This disparity can be attributed to the higher population of undergraduate students, resulting in a higher response rate.
- ❖ Among the various categories of social network site (SNSs) tools, WhatsApp 192 (16.19%) emerged as the most commonly used social networking site (SNS) tool, followed by YouTube 187 (15.77%) and Instagram 178 (15.01%) as the second and third most used tools, respectively. The newly launched Threads 18 (1.52%) was the least-utilized social networking site among Gen-Z students. For academic purposes, Google Meet, Google Plus, Google Classroom, and LinkedIn demonstrated average usage. This study recommends that Generation Z students increase their utilization of academic-related social networking sites for optimal use of SNSs.
- ❖ In this study, the majority of the Gen-Z students used smartphones 197 (41.56%) to access Social Network sites. Smartphones are easily available and accessible tools because of their cost and availability, and most students use them for instant information sharing.
- ❖ Regarding the purposes of using Social Network sites, entertainment 156 (13%) and academic communication 142 (11.83%) were identified as the primary motivations. Additional purposes include job searching, chatting, reconnecting with acquaintances and knowledge promotion.

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- ❖ Students responded accessing SNSs for information sharing from various locations, including hostels 150 (30.99%), homes 98 (20.25%), campuses 86 (17.77%), digital libraries 20 (4.13%), and other unspecified locations 130 (26.86%).
- ❖ Students identified many benefits of using SNSs, here students responded that SNSs are helping in their learning 165 (20.68%), Information searching 136 (17.04%), to prepare assignments and seminars 132 (16.54%), etc.
- ❖ Along with the many benefits and uses, SNSs have some Risks and Problems faced by Gen-Z students while accessing them. Students rated the following problems highly: receiving Unwanted Advertisements 152 (16.83%), which creates problems in focus issues, concentration, etc.; Data Security 141 (15.61%); Privacy concerns 137 (15.17%); fear of misuse of personal information 127 (14.06%); etc..
- ❖ Students are spending an average of 1-2 hours 148 (31.36%) on SNSs.
- ❖ SNSs are impacting Gen-Z students academic performance also students stated respondent it affects their performance in studies 154 (29%) stated that they are unable to concentrate on their studies 133 (25.05%). Some were also addicted to SNSs 120 (22.60%).
- ❖ Finally, 157 (34.35 %) students responded that they were satisfied with using SNSs for information sharing.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of social networking sites (SNSs) among Generation Z students for information sharing at higher education institutions in Bengaluru and aimed to determine the extent to which students of this institution, including undergraduate and postgraduate students, utilize SNSs for information sharing. Among the various categories of SNS tools, WhatsApp (16.19%) was the most commonly used platform, while academic-related sites such as Google Classroom, Google Plus, and LinkedIn had average usage. The study suggests that Generation Z students increase their use of academic-related sites to enhance their studies and promote responsible use of SNS tools. The majority of students accessed SNSs via smartphones (41.56%), as these devices are readily accessible and widely available. Entertainment (13%) is the primary motivation for Gen-Z students to use SNSs; however, the study recommends that students and readers utilize SNSs to improve their curricular activities, career development and personal growth. Most students accessed SNSs in hostels (30.99%), and this study suggests that students spend more time accessing SNSs in libraries. Gen Z students reported significant benefits to their learning (20.68%) through SNSs, although they also faced problems and risks related primarily to unwanted advertisements (16.83%). Students spent an average of 1-2 hours (31.36%) on SNSs, which may have impacted their academic performance (29%). This study advises Generation Z students to be aware of these impacts and attempt to mitigate them. In conclusion, students expressed satisfaction with the use of SNSs for information sharing, acknowledging both positive and negative aspects. This study recommends that readers and Generation Z students use SNSs responsibly, avoid addiction, and share information extensively, recognizing the potential of SNSs to cause significant changes in individuals and society.

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