



Social Media Usage Patterns Among Youth in India and Iraq: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Worldwide, and especially among young people, the communication environment has been profoundly altered by the exponential growth of digital technologies. a look at how young people in two culturally different but rapidly developing countries, Iraq and India, use social media. Finding out what factors—social, cultural, psychological, and infrastructure-related—influence the social media habits of young people (15–24 years old) and how often and what kinds of activities they engage in is the main goal. The research team used a mixed-methods strategy, collecting quantitative data from students in urban and semi-urban locations through structured surveys and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews and secondary literature review. Findings show significant differences in platform preferences, duration of use, and motivations for engagement. Iraqi youth, influenced by political and social contexts, show substantial interaction on TikTok and Telegram, while Indian youth show higher engagement with visual platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram. Other important elements that shape user behaviour include cultural attitudes, gender conventions, internet accessibility, and socio-political instability.

Keywords: Social Media Usage, Youth Behavior, India and Iraq, Comparative Study, Digital Communication etc.

Introduction

Social contact, especially among young people, has been transformed by the widespread availability of digital devices and mobile internet access. When it comes to sharing knowledge, forming one's identity, having fun, getting involved in politics, and communicating with others, social media platforms are now indispensable. Here, the most prolific social media users are young people, who are described by the UN as those from the ages of 15 to 24, and who frequently both reflect and shape the larger digital culture. While the cultural and political climates of Iraq and India couldn't be more different, both countries are seeing exponential growth in their digital ecosystems. Platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube have seen tremendous development in India because to the





country's large youth population and rising smartphone penetration. New statistics show that young Indians utilise social media for a wide range of purposes, including activism, education, and business, in addition to their recreational use. On the flip side, with the improvement of internet infrastructure, there has been a dramatic increase in digital involvement in Iraq in the past several years, especially among urban young. In the wake of the Iraq War, many young people have turned to social media and video sharing sites like TikTok, Facebook, and Telegram as a means of communicating with one another and expressing their political views. Despite these commonalities in digital adoption, cultural values, educational attainment, gender norms, political stability, and digital literacy are only a few of the elements that cause substantial differences in the two nations' social media use patterns and reasons. Iraqi youth may be more prone to political speech and social solidarity, especially in the face of national turmoil or policy shifts, as opposed to their Indian counterparts, who may utilise social media mostly for amusement and career development.

Factors Influencing Social Media Usage Among Youth in India and Iraq

There is a complicated interaction between socio-cultural, psychological, economic, and technological elements that determine how young people use social media. Although there is a high rate of youth digital adoption in both Iraq and India, the reasons why and the factors that drive this adoption are very different because of the unique national circumstances of each country.

1. Socio-Cultural Context

Social conventions, cultural beliefs, and familial dynamics have a significant impact on Indians' participation in social media. Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp are particularly important for young people because of the social approval and pressure from their peers to have a big online presence. There is a clear gender disparity in the amount of time spent online and the types of content shared between the sexes because of conservative cultural expectations, especially those that dictate traditional gender roles.

2. Technological Access and Infrastructure

When it comes to access and usage habits, technological penetration is king. Even in semi-urban and rural parts of India, people have access to social media because to the fast growth of inexpensive cellphones and data connections (e.g., through providers like Jio). Disparities persist, though, according to gender, location, and income.

3. Psychological and Emotional Drivers

For young people in both nations, social media is a way to express themselves, find a sense of belonging, and get what they want quickly. A lot of young people in India suffer from "FOMO" (Fear of Missing Out), worry about how others see them online (via likes and comments), and feel an intense want to compare themselves to their classmates. Screen usage has increased and there have been some indications of digital addiction as a result.





4. Educational and Economic Factors

Social media usage is impacted by people's access to education and economic resources. The younger generation of Indian college students makes heavy use of online resources for academic networking, skill development (e.g., YouTube lessons), and job searches. Although they may have access, those from lower-income families often utilise it for leisure or informal education rather than serious research.

5. Political Climate and Freedom of Expression

How young Iraqis use social media is heavily impacted by the country's political atmosphere. Protest planning, awareness raising, and dissenting speech are commonplace on platforms but are either less common or more strictly restricted in India. Iraqi youth are active participants in online political groups, campaigns, and hashtags.

Objective:

1. To compare the prevalence and patterns of social media usage among youth in India and Iraq.
2. To identify the factors that influence social media usage habits among youth in India and Iraq.

Hypotheses

Following hypotheses may be formulated.

1. There are significant differences in social media usage between Indian and Iraqi youth.
2. Social media usage habits among Indian and Iraqi youth are influenced by cultural factors, such as collectivism.

Review of literature

(Abdullah et al. 2024) studied “Social Media Addiction Among High School Students in Iraqi Kurdistan Region” In the last several years, there has been a meteoric rise in the usage of social media, especially among the younger demographic. Our goal is to survey high school students in the Kurdistan area of Iraq to find out how many of them are addicted to social media. The study used a cross-sectional methodology and surveyed 384 high school students via in-person interviews to gather information on their demographics, social media habits, and potential addiction. “The researchers used the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMA) to gauge the extent of social media addiction. We used SPSS, version 23, to analyse the data that we gathered. Findings: An overwhelming majority of students (78.2%) made use of more than one social networking site. Almost 70% of students admitted to checking their social media accounts right before turning in for the night. The percentage of high school pupils who were addicted to social media was around 17.4%. Factors that were significantly associated with social media addiction were being 18 years old or older ($p=0.004$), utilising numerous platforms ($p=0.007$), especially four or more, and using social media before bed ($p<0.001$). Nonetheless, when it came to social media addiction, gender and grade did not stand out as major determinants. Results show that compared to pupils in many other nations, Iraqi high school students have a high rate of social media addiction. Significant correlations exist with advanced age,





multi-platform usage, and social media use in the hours leading up to sleep. The significance of keeping tabs on how digital tools are being used is highlighted by these results. To fully understand the results of the awareness effort and the steps taken to fix the problem, more research is needed.

(Sivakumar, Jayasingh, and Shaik 2023) studied Social Media Influence on Students' Knowledge Sharing and Learning: An Empirical Study The rise of social media has opened up new vistas for education, information exchange, and advertising, among other things. Examining the influence of social media on knowledge sharing among college and university students and how successful it is as an educational tool was the goal of this study. In order to explain how social networking aspects (like file sharing and student involvement) and individual motives (like reputation) affect information sharing, the research drew on social cognitive theory and connectivist theory. Students' motivation and performance may be enhanced via the use of social media, according to the study's findings. Based on the results, it seems that social media is a great way to get students involved and spread the word. The essay goes on to discuss the limitations, ramifications, and potential avenues for further study regarding the use of social media in the classroom. Educational institutions and teachers seeking to integrate social media into their pedagogical practices may find this research to be an invaluable resource.

(Taha et al. 2025) studied Assessment of the effect of social media use on medical students' academic performance: cross-sectional study from Jordan In today's society, keeping up with the rapid changes brought about by the 21st century requires the use of social media. Insufficient research has examined how medical students' use of social media affects their academic performance. Objective: In this research, we look at how much time medical students spend on social media, what kinds of information they see, how often they join online study groups, and how much of an impact social media interactions between students and teachers have on their grades. Methods This research offered proof on the pattern and impact of social media use on the academic achievement of Jordanian medical students. To help medical students make better decisions when using social media, it provided data that was responsive to context. The need of using suitable online educational platforms to actively involve medical students in pertinent learning activities was also emphasised.

(Baglari et al. 2020) studied Pattern of social media use among youth: implication for social media literacy” The usage of social media has skyrocketed in recent years, and with good reason: it has made communicating with other people a breeze. People from many walks of life may share their stories, statistics, videos, and other material on social media. Techniques and materials: A total of 300 young adults (ranging in age from 18 to 25) had their social media habits examined. The group setting was used to administer background data sheets, namely the Social Media Exploration Sheet. The outcomes are: The data showed that the majority of Facebook users started using the platform between the ages of 12 and 18, with 38.3% using Instagram for the first time at that age and 54.0 using WhatsApp for





the next 16 years. For Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook, the least time spent was 25 minutes and the maximum time spent was 120 minutes. Women disproportionately used social media. Forty percent said they were open about who they were on social media. As a result of social media usage, a significant portion of the population reported disruptions to their academic and everyday routines (99.7%). 75% of people said they exchanged information, videos, photographs, or other content using social media, and 62.3% said it helped them communicate with others. To sum up, it may be used to develop a psychoeducational model that can be utilised to intervene in the management of social media usage.

(Al-Obaiddi 2024) studied “Use of social media by dental students: A comparative study” In today's classrooms, using many strategies, including social media (SM), is essential. Specifically, the variety of postings made public on the website and the convenience of usage have a direct impact on the attitudes and behaviour of students who use social media for schoolwork. A lot of dental schools and teachers utilise social media to spread the word about their classes, make class more engaging, encourage students to think critically, and connect with them. In the training and ongoing development of healthcare workers, SM is crucial. As SM has the potential to be a tool for professional and personal growth, medical publications have lately highlighted the social and health advantages of SM-knowledge for health professionals. Numerous research examining the online activities of both students and professionals in the medical field have shown that social media (SM) presents a number of hazards associated with the actions and practices of healthcare providers. m Multiple American studies have shown that medical students lack clarity on the morality, legality, and professional consequences of their online actions and pursuits.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative, comparative research design to analyze social media usage patterns among youth aged 20 to 40 years in India and Iraq. A total of 600 respondents—300 from each country—will be selected through random sampling. Data will be collected using a structured online questionnaire covering aspects such as frequency, platform preference, purpose of use, and perceived impact. The questionnaire will be pilot-tested for reliability and clarity. Data will be analyzed using SPSS through descriptive statistics, to identify significant differences and patterns. Ethical standards, including informed consent and confidentiality, will be strictly maintained.

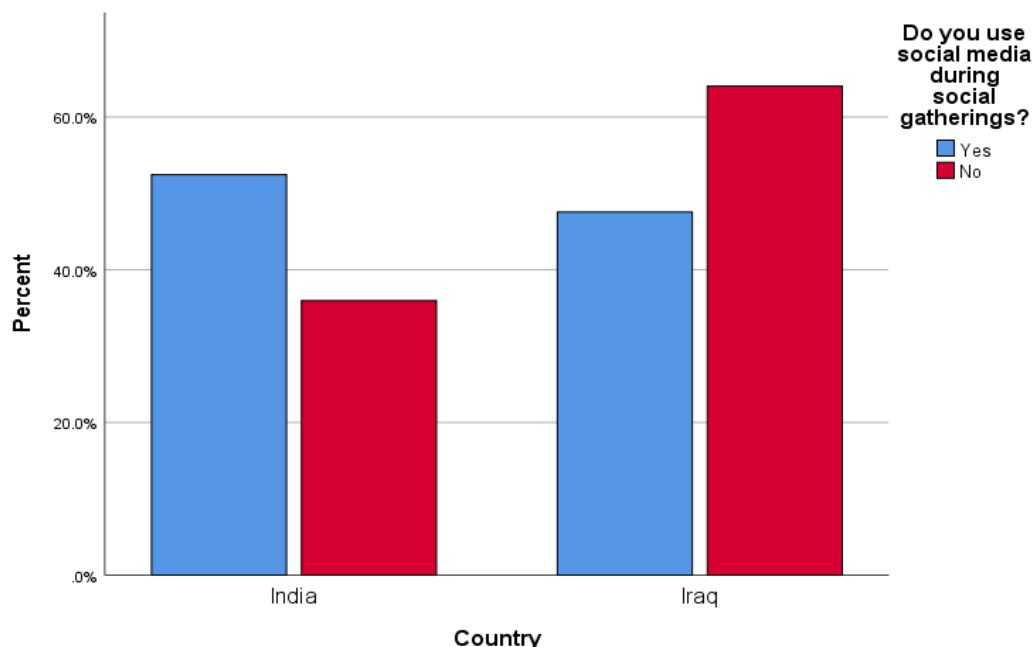
Data Analysis

Do you use social media during social gatherings?						
Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
India	Valid	Yes	268	89.3	89.3	89.3
		No	32	10.7	10.7	100.0
		Total	300	100.0	100.0	



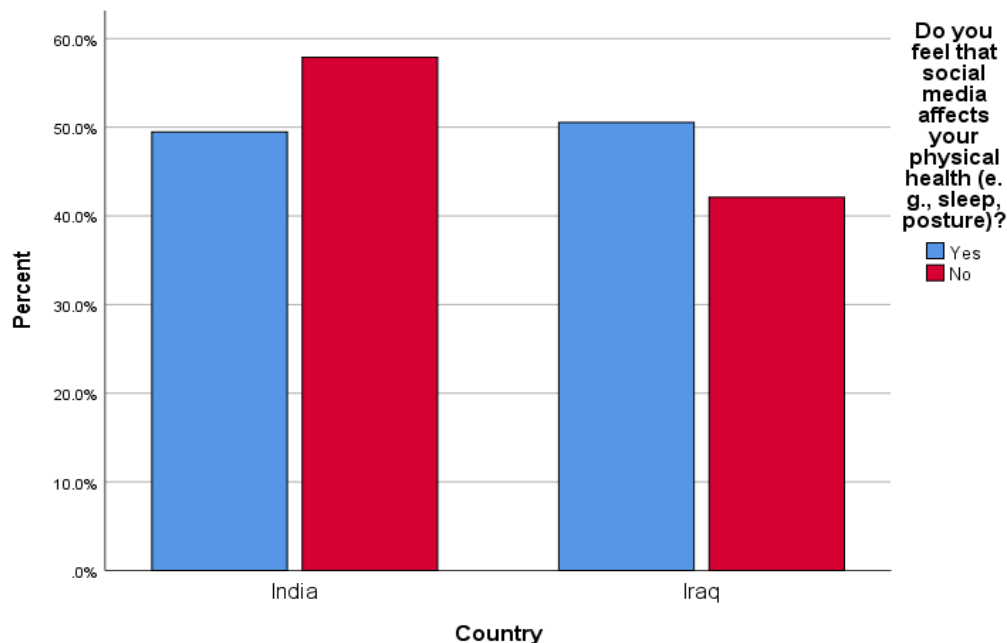


Iraq	Valid	Yes	243	81.0	81.0	81.0
		No	57	19.0	19.0	100.0
		Total	300	100.0	100.0	



A significant portion of respondents in both India and Iraq use social media during social gatherings. In India, 89.3% of individuals reported using social media in such settings, while only 10.7% do not. In Iraq, 81% of respondents use social media during social gatherings, with 19% choosing not to. This indicates widespread use of social media in social contexts, with India showing a slightly higher engagement compared to Iraq.

Do you feel that social media affects your physical health (e.g., sleep, posture)?						
Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
India	Valid	Yes	278	92.7	92.7	92.7
		No	22	7.3	7.3	100.0
		Total	300	100.0	100.0	
Iraq	Valid	Yes	284	94.7	94.7	94.7
		No	16	5.3	5.3	100.0
		Total	300	100.0	100.0	



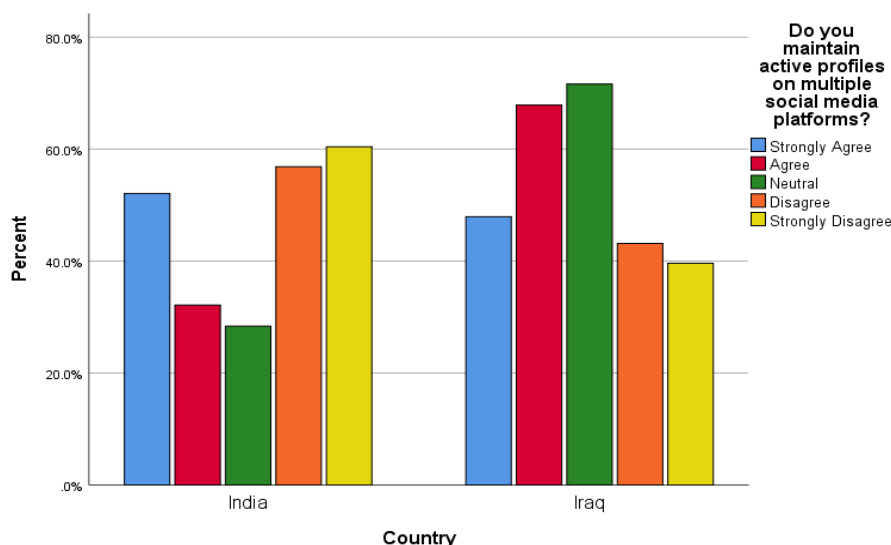
A large majority of respondents in both India and Iraq feel that social media affects their physical health, such as sleep and posture. In India, 92.7% of individuals reported that social media has an impact on their physical health, while 7.3% disagreed. In Iraq, this perception is even stronger, with 94.7% acknowledging the effect of social media on their physical health, and only 5.3% not feeling its impact. This highlights a widespread recognition of the potential negative effects of social media on physical well-being in both countries, with Iraq showing a slightly higher percentage of individuals affected.

Do you maintain active profiles on multiple social media platforms?						
Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
India	Valid	Strongly Agree	50	16.7	16.7	16.7
		Agree	27	9.0	9.0	25.7
		Neutral	21	7.0	7.0	32.7
		Disagree	112	37.3	37.3	70.0
		Strongly Disagree	90	30.0	30.0	100.0
		Total	300	100.0	100.0	
Iraq	Valid	Strongly Agree	46	15.3	15.3	15.3
		Agree	57	19.0	19.0	34.3
		Neutral	53	17.7	17.7	52.0
		Disagree	85	28.3	28.3	80.3





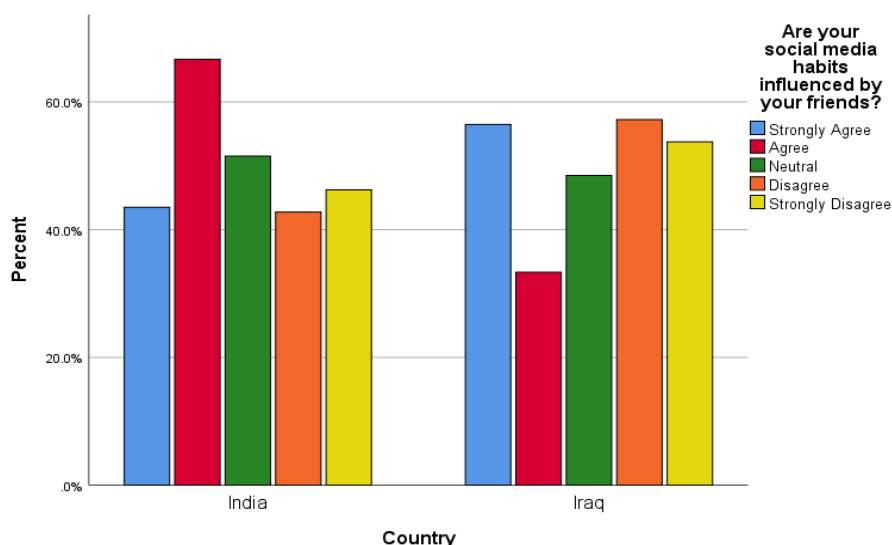
		Strongly Disagree	59	19.7	19.7	100.0
		Total	300	100.0	100.0	



In both India and Iraq, most respondents do not maintain active profiles on multiple social media platforms. In India, 67.3% of individuals disagree or strongly disagree with having active profiles on multiple platforms, while only 25.7% agree or strongly agree. In Iraq, 48% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree, with 34.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing. This indicates that while some individuals in both countries manage profiles across various platforms, the majority do not actively engage with multiple social media sites.

Are your social media habits influenced by your friends?						
Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
India	Valid	Strongly Agree	47	15.7	15.7	15.7
		Agree	94	31.3	31.3	47.0
		Neutral	17	5.7	5.7	52.7
		Disagree	62	20.7	20.7	73.3
		Strongly Disagree	80	26.7	26.7	100.0
		Total	300	100.0	100.0	
Iraq	Valid	Strongly Agree	61	20.3	20.3	20.3
		Agree	47	15.7	15.7	36.0
		Neutral	16	5.3	5.3	41.3
		Disagree	83	27.7	27.7	69.0
		Strongly Disagree	93	31.0	31.0	100.0
		Total	300	100.0	100.0	





In both India and Iraq, a substantial number of respondents feel that their social media habits are influenced by their friends, though this varies between the two countries. In India, 47% of individuals agree or strongly agree that their friends influence their social media behavior, while 47.4% disagree or strongly disagree. In Iraq, 36% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this, but a larger 58.7% disagree or strongly disagree. This indicates that while friends have an impact on social media habits for some individuals in both countries, a significant portion remains unaffected by peer influence, with Iraq showing a higher level of independence from peer influence.

Discussion and Findings

The study reveals high social media usage among youth in both India and Iraq, with 89.3% of Indian and 81% of Iraqi respondents using it during social gatherings. Physical health impacts like sleep disturbance are widely acknowledged, with over 92% in both countries reporting negative effects. While multi-platform use is limited, Indian youth are more selective, with 67.3% not maintaining multiple profiles, compared to 48% in Iraq. Peer influence is stronger in India (47%) than Iraq (36%), reflecting cultural differences in social conformity. Platform preferences also vary—Indian youth favor WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube for socializing and education, while Iraqi youth use TikTok, Telegram, and Facebook for political expression and solidarity. Access and infrastructure are better in India, but Iraqi youth show higher political engagement online.

The findings confirm that social media habits differ significantly between the two countries and are shaped by cultural norms, peer influence, political context, and technological access.

Conclusion

The study highlights distinct patterns of social media usage among youth in India and Iraq. While both groups are active users, their motivations and behaviors differ. Indian youth primarily use platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp for social interaction, education, and career growth, influenced by technological accessibility and peer culture. In contrast, Iraqi youth often turn to





platforms like TikTok and Telegram for political expression and identity assertion, shaped by socio-political instability. Despite differences, common challenges such as digital addiction, physical health concerns, misinformation, and cyberbullying persist in both contexts. The findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive digital literacy programs, youth-focused policies, and collaborative efforts by educators, governments, and tech developers to ensure safe and empowering digital spaces. Future research should examine long-term impacts, rural-urban divides, and mental health connections to better support youth in the evolving digital landscape.

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