



## **Monitoring of Social Media Use by Middle School Students in Aizawl**

**Gospel Lalawmpuii\***  
**Lalremruati Khiangte†**

### **Abstract**

*Social media has become an essential part of today's culture, especially for the younger generation. As social media makes life easier and comfortable, the use of social media by school students seems to increase. This study explored on how parents and teachers played their role in monitoring the social media use by middle school students. A structured questionnaire was distributed to the students and an in-depth interview was conducted among the parents and teachers. This study identified and analyzed the different social media used by the middle school students; it also investigated how parents and teachers monitor middle school students' use of social media and their attitude towards using of social media. The study revealed that most of the middle school students use social media for educational purpose since classes have been taken online due to the pandemic. From the responses, most of the students have mainly accessed social media through mobile phones. Teachers claimed that they do not monitor or invigilate their students' use of social media. On the other hand, few parents monitor their kids but most of them still do not pay attention towards their children's use of social media.*

**Keywords:** *Social Media, Middle School, Students, Monitoring.*

### **Introduction**

Social media is an essential part of life for almost everyone; to communicate their ideas and thoughts with one another. According to Ellison and Boyd (2013), the definition of social media is the services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system. Though the term 'social media' has been categorized into many platforms, social media in this research is defined particularly as to Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube because majority of middle school students are engaging with the mentioned social media.

---

\*Research Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, Mizoram University, Aizawl – 796004, Mizoram, India. Email: lalawmpuiizadeng94@gmail.com

†Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Mizoram University, Aizawl – 796004, Mizoram, India. Email: gkhiangte@gmail.com

## **Types of Social Media**

### ***Instagram***

The largest growing social media platform which was launched on 6th October 2010. Instagram soon became the number one photography app shortly after the launched, gathering 100,000 users in one week, increasing to 1 million in two months and its growth was prompt. According to Kevin Systrom, the app itself took only eight weeks to build but was a result of over a year of work behind it. It now has over 600 million active users and is still increasing quickly.

### ***WhatsApp***

In 2009, WhatsApp was created by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, computer programmers and also former employees of Yahoo!. It is a messaging app that allows the users to share media, text or chat including voice messages and video calls, with individuals or groups. The name “Whatsapp” was given because it sounded like ‘what's up’. In June 2009, the app was released with a messaging component, with 250,000 active users. It was originally free but switched to a paid service to avoid growing too fast. In 2014 February, Facebook bought WhatsApp Inc. for \$19.3 billion. As of February 2017, WhatsApp has over 1.2 billion users globally.

### ***Facebook***

This is the largest social media on the Internet, both in terms of total numbers of users and name recognition. Facebook came into existence on February 4, 2004, it has 12 years managed to collect more than 1.59 billion monthly active users and this automatically makes it one of the best mediums for connecting people from all over the World with your business. It is predictable that more than one million small and medium size businesses use that platform to advertise their businesses.

### ***Youtube***

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005, three previous Paypal workers established ‘Youtube’ the biggest and the most well-known video-based online networking site. Later it was purchased by Google in November 2006 for \$1.1.65 billion. Youtube has more than 1 billion site guests for every month and is the second most well-known Internet searcher behind Google.

### ***Middle School Students***

Middle school students in this research are classified as 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade/class consisting of students aged between 11 to 14 years according to the school system in India. Dowell (2009) stated that middle school marks the transition from elementary learning to a more comprehensive way of understanding and applying new concepts and theories. Bower (2006) also stated that middle school students are most conducive to learning but at the same time who are early adolescents and are beginning risky behaviors on social media.

## **Review of Literature**

Wartella and Jennings (2000) stated that early research regarding each innovation has inclined to focus on matters of access and the quantity of time children were spending with the new medium, while use of the technology turn out to be more dominant. It has been observed from the study that the increased level of time spend on the new technology devices by the children has lean to both the promise of greatly enhanced learning and the matter regarding to increased threat or harm. They also mentioned the need to help inform and withstand the creation of more appropriate content for children. Altheide (2004) observed how user's awareness and expectation can be monitored and used by diverse audiences for meaningful purposes. The study revealed that the control narrative is involved in numerous attempts and logics to monitor and regulate Internet use. The study also stated that the control narrative is more explicit as fear and control are reflexively joined to virtual communication.

Wang et al, (2005) mentioned the challenges faced by the parents who want their children to use the online material at the same time who wants to protect them from inappropriate content. It has been observed that fathers, younger parents, parents with younger teens and parents who actively use the Internet with their children, participated more in monitoring their children. They also mentioned the need to study family rules from both parents' and children's viewpoints for parental monitoring of children's Internet use. Jordan (2008) pointed out the need to limit the children excessive exposure to media which can cause both good and bad consequences. Jordan stated that the effort in limiting children's exposure to inappropriate content has improved parents' ability to supervise their children's media use. Chang (2010) revealed how the Internet makes it easier for the bad users to harass and offend others. Chang even mentioned that as children and teenagers create a large percentage of internet users, they are the focus of many current statutory efforts to improve online safety. Chang also states the need to educate children on how to use the Internet world in a safe and ethical manner.

Davies and Gentile (2012) in their work 'Responses to children's media use in families with or without siblings: A family development perspective' provided an insight on the relations to media habits and effects on family phases with and without siblings. They observed five differences of the family media use such as resistance to media effects, alternative activities to screen media, consistency in applying media rules, media use, and parental monitoring. They also stated the spacing in families with siblings and families with larger age gaps in siblings and also added families in earlier phases have more effective media habits. They also observed that the media effect is greater in families with children.

Gentile et al, (2012) observed how parents can reduce the negative impact of media exposure on children. The study observed that parents gave much higher estimated time than the children in monitoring and that monitoring was moderated by child age, child sex, parent marital status, parent education, and parent income. Raul et al, (2012) observed the characteristics of Internet usage and parental conciliation in online persecution. The study examined that the use of internet has been increased bizarrely in the last decade among the children in Spain. 92.6 % of children in Spain are using computer in between the age of 10-

16 years, and among them 78.0 % have an access to the Internet. According to their study, the usual age of first Internet access is 10-11 years. It has also been stated that regardless of the positive Internet features, cyberspace disclosed young people to many online risk activities: loss of privacy, access to inappropriate content, child grooming, and violent and intimidating interactions.

Masood et al, (2016) revealed that the young children's usage of personal computers, mobile phones, and other social media related apps has increased rapidly. From the study, it has been observed that more than 31,000 children from private and public schools participated in the online survey and the results showed that minors are utilizing social networks mainly for keeping in touch with family and friends, and to find information. Most of the minors reported that their parents were aware of their online social networking activities (82.2 %). The study also revealed that about 38.7 % minors claim that their parents were in their friend group on online social networking. Martin (2018) stated that most middle school students are now using different kinds of social media which required log in accounts, usernames and passwords. Martin also stated that due to the widespread availability of smartphones, 24% of youth between ages 13-17 go online almost all the time. The study stated that most popular social media tool that the middle school students use is Instagram, which was reported by 432 (72.85%) students.

Douglas et al, (2012) analyzed that families with school-age children have diverse parenting challenges. The study also mentioned that there are two distinctive parenting tasks of middle childhood; nurturing self-management and a sense of accountability, and also pointed out that children in this age group spend increasingly more time with peers, so parents face the challenge of helping children interact in extra familial settings. Therefore, the study suggested the need for the parents to see a gradual relaxation of rules and parental monitoring of media use by the children. Thus, media use decisions ought to be more child centered and peer influenced.

O'Keeffe and Pearson (2011) explained that using of social media among adolescents becomes a risk more often than most adults. The study revealed the importance of parents to be aware of the nature of social media sites, as not all of the content are healthy environments for children and adolescents. The researchers also mentioned the need of parents to monitor their children for potential problems and prevent them from exposure to inappropriate content. All the literature reviewed found the importance to study monitoring of social media use by middle school students in Aizawl.

### **Need for the Study**

Middle school students these days usually use social media platforms and at this stage students started to use social media for exploration and for different purposes. This is when it is truly essential to begin monitoring the students' use of social media. Even though the students do not use social media for inappropriate content, it does not mean that they cannot by chance come across them, since not all youngsters are educated on the dangers and risk of using the social media. Brown (2014) also stated that as students started using social media at

very young ages, and there is an intense worry for their safety. Thus, it would be important to help understand the habit of social media use among middle school students. It is of utmost importance to understand the problems that may be faced by the students while using the social media and their exact online behavior in order to assess existing problems among the students. It is also important to examine the role of parents in the students' social media use behavior since these are still young children and need to be sheltered from so many online abuses and inappropriate content that may pose dangerous for them. The study will focus on how parents and teachers play a role in monitoring social media use among middle school students in Aizawl.

### Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- a. To identify various kinds of social media use by the middle school students
- b. To study the ways middle school students use social media
- c. To analyze the influence of social media use on middle school students
- d. To study the role of parents and teachers in monitoring middle school students use of social media

### Methodology

For this research, the study employed data triangulation design using both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. The quantitative method was conducted using survey method. A structured questionnaire was distributed among the selected school students through their respective class teachers using online survey administration software. The qualitative method was conducted using Interview method. An in-depth interview was conducted among the parents and teachers from each selected school. Ten parents each and ten teachers each from three zones were interviewed randomly.

### Sample for the Study

Samples were divided into three zones namely Aizawl East, West and South zone based on the Sub- Divisional Educational Officer (SDEO) in Aizawl. From each zone, one school each were selected based on the largest number of the enrolled students according to the Annual Publication (2017- 2018) prepared by the Statistical Cell, Directorate of School Education.

Table 1: List of selected samples from middle schools in each zone

SN	Name of School	No. of Students	Percent from total population	Sample for study
1	Holy Heart School	394	25%	78
2	Gospel Centenary School	547	34%	105
3	Mary Mount M/S	659	41%	127
Total no. of Students = 1600			Total Samples = 310	

*Source: Survey Data*

Table 2: List of samples for in-depth interview

SN	Name of School	Zone	Teacher	Parents
1	Holy Heart School	EAST	10	10
2	Gospel Centenary School	WEST	10	10
3	Mary Mount M/S	SOUTH	10	10

Source: Survey Data

## Findings

### *Findings from Survey*

According to the questionnaire survey 47.4% of the respondents were boys and 52.6% of the respondents were girls. As the usual age of middle school students in India is between the ages of 10-14 years, an option was given accordingly. 26% of them are 12 years old, 24.7% of them are 13 years old, and 16.5% of them are 14 years. 15.2% of them are 11 years old and 12.5 % are 10 years old and 5.10% are others. Based on the School System in India, class V-VIII is considered as middle school, 24.6% are class-V students, 24.6% are class-VI students, and 24.3% of them are class-VII students and the other 26. 5% are class-VIII students. Among the respondents 38.8% claim to have their own device and 61.2% of them accessed social media using their parent's gadgets. 80.6% of them accessed social media through phone, 7.3% of them through desktop, 6.4% of them used laptops and 5.7% of them used tablets.

The findings showed that YouTube is the most watched social media sites where 45% of the respondents claimed to watch YouTube, 26.8% of them accessed Instagram and 24.3% accessed Whatsapp and 3.9% of the respondents used Facebook. When the respondents were asked their purpose on using social media, 41.1% of the respondents use it for entertainment, 17.9% for playing games online, 16.1% for socializing, 13.4% of them used for educational purpose and the remaining 11.5% of them used for information. 78.1% of the respondents claimed that they are addicted to social media and 21.9% of them said that they are not. 59.9% of the respondents claimed that social media changed their way of dressing and on the other hand 40.1% of them do not agree to it. 68.4% of the respondents also claimed that social media influenced their way of talking and 31.6% of them do not agree to it.

### *Findings from Interview*

#### *Monitoring of Social Media Use*

The study found that majority of the parents do not use any monitoring software on their children while using social media and few of the parents use monitoring devices and software on their children's social media. From the result is clear that there are fewer parents who monitor their children's social media use. Most of the reasons given by parents with their lack of monitoring are that they do not have the technical knowledge of social media and that most of the time they are too busy with other work to concentrate on their children's social media use. Most of the parents also stated that the pandemic has enabled their children to use social media since online classes are being conducted for them and that this made it

difficult to restrict or monitor their use. Most of the teachers expressed that schools do not allow them to carry mobile phones or any devices in their schools; however, they do not have the right to monitor their social media use while at home. Some teachers stated that they would guide the students on how to use social media effectively in terms of educational purposes and would tell them of the negative effects of social media as well.

#### *Negative Impact of Social Media among the Middle School Students*

Most of the parents have stated that their children rely much more on mobile phones than books while assignments were given simply because it was much easier to copy paste the answers than to comprehend and generate their own ideas. Some of the parents also raised their concern over their children not getting proper sleep, their absentmindedness, their overuse of social media or mobile phones for playing games online and their lack of concentration level when it came to studies. There could be a high risk of absentmindedness for the middle school students with their own surroundings and as much being exposed to the outside world by the media; it can also be a dangerous tool creating a relationship gap between them and their loved ones.

#### *Positive Impact of Social Media among the Middle School Students*

The study found that social media allows the students to communicate with others and build social networks among their peer group. This network provides them tremendous support emotionally to those who experience exclusion in the society as they are at their most sensitive stage of life. The internet also act as a platform of self-expression, to be able to show their creativity, exposing them to current events and new ideas and interact across geographic barriers which is a huge help in avoiding depression, social anxiety and other mental health conditions. Most of the parents and teachers expressed that social media has helped shaped many young minds in creating their own identities and creativity. They agreed that the students have gained more information from social media apart from their school books. Some teachers mentioned that students are more expressive today than they were years ago citing that social media may have something to do with it.

### **Conclusion**

Social Media is a powerful tool in influencing, entertaining and educating the masses of this generation that could transform the entire world into just a “global village”. It is therefore, very much required to set up the boundaries for each user especially young school students as they are at a higher risk of being easily influenced or manipulated by all its disadvantages, being at the most sensitive cycle of life. While the internet has given mankind-growth, development and a much easier life, it is also important that we analyze the impacts and influences it has on individuals and the society. The study found that all the student respondents admitted to accessing social media either through their own devices or through their parents’ devices. The top reason for the majority of the middle school students using social media is entertainment while only few said they used it for educational purposes. The study has found that majority of the parents do not use any monitoring tool on their children’s devices citing technological incompetence as the main reason. Teachers try their best to educate students in the way they use social media but they do not have any system of monitoring in schools. This study has highlighted the importance of giving awareness on

media literacy and the importance of the role of guidance that parent and teachers need to play to protect the children from the misuse and harmful effects of social media.

\*\*\*\*\*

## References

- Altheide, D. (2004). The Control Narrative of the Internet. *Symbolic Interaction, Vol 27, No 2 (Spring)*, 223-245. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/si.2004.27.2.223>
- Chang, C. (2010). Internet Safety Survey: Who will protect the Children. *Berkeley Technology Law Journal Vol.25, No. 1 Annual Review of Law and Technology* , 501-527. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24118648>
- Douglas, A & Gentile, A. (2012). Do You See What I See? Parent and Children Reports of Parental Monitoring of Media. *Family Relations, Vol. 61, No. 3*, 470-487. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41495223>
- Dowell, E., Burgess, A & Cavanaugh, D. (2009). Clustering of Internet risk behaviors in a middle school student population. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19840232/>
- Wartella, E & Jennings, N. (2000). Children and Computers: New TEchnology- Old Concerns. *The Future of Children, Vol. 10, No. 2*, 31-43. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1602688?read-now>
- Martin, F., Wang, C., Petty, T., Wang, W & Wilkins, P. (2018). Middle School Students' Social Media Use. *Educational Technology and Society*, 213- 224. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26273881>
- Gentile, J. J. (2012). Response to Children's Media Use in Families With and Without Siblings: A family Development Perspective . *Family Relations, Vol 61, No 3*, 410-425. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41495219>
- O'Keeffe, G & Pearson, K. (2011). The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents, and Families. *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 800-804. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42857102>
- Davies, J, &Gentile, A. (2012). Responses to Children's Media Use in Families with and Without Siblings: A Family Development Perspective. *Family Relations, Vol. 61, No. 3, july*, 410-425. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41495219>



- Jordan, A. B. (2008). Children's Media policy. *The Future of Children, Vol. 18, No. 1, Children and Electronic Media (Spring, 2008)*, 235-253. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20053126>
- Kakkar, G. (2018). What are the different types of social media. Retrieved from <https://www.digitalvidya.com/blog/types-of-social-media/>
- Badri, M., Alnuaimi, A., Rashedi, A., Yang, G & Temsah, K. (2016, December 10). School Children's Use of Diggital Devices, social media and parental knowledge and involvement- the case of Abu Dhabi. *Education and Information Technologies*, 26. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10639-016-9557-y>
- Niculovic, M., Zivcovic, D., Manasijevic, D & Strbac, N.(2012). Monitoring the effect of Internet use on Students behavior case study: Technical Faculty Bor, University of Belgrade. *Educational Technology Research and Development, Vol. 60, No. 3*, 547-559. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41488598>
- Navarro, R. (2012). The role of Internet use and parental mediation on cyberbullying victimization among Spanish Children from rural public school. *Springer*, 725-745. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23581519>
- Wang, R., Bianchi, S& Raley, S. (2005). Teenagers' Internet Use and Family Rules: A research Note. *Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 67, No. 5*, 1249-1258. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3600310>
- The school system in India. (n.d.). Retrieved April 22, 2020, from Angloinfo India: <https://www.angloinfo.com/how-to/india/family/schooling-education/school-system>