An Assessment of the Impact of New Media on Youths A Study on Santal Community of Angul District Odisha

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Abstract:

New Media is the digital form of any media like news, blogs, web sources, and social platforms whose ultimate aim is to render information. In recent times, the youth have been very susceptible to using the new media in numerous ways. The study aims to (i) assess the uses of new media in the day-to-day life of youths of the Santal community and (ii) examine the effect of the new media on social and cultural life among the youths in studied community. The cross-sectional study was employed and a mixed-method approach among the teenagers and young adults (13-30 Years) in two villages of Bikrampur Block of Angul district was used. Household census and schedule, face-to-face interviews, and focus group discussions was used for the study. The study has found that the usage of New Media has significantly increased among the youth since the outbreak of communicable diseases. It has also been found that the cultural and social lives of youth are being hampered due to excessive use.

Keywords: New Media, Youth, Social and Cultural Life

INTRODUCTION

New media refers to a broader term encompassing various forms of digital communication and technology-driven platforms that have emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It generally contrasts with traditional media. New Media content is primarily distributed in digital formats, accessible through computers, smartphones, tablets, and any other electronic devices (Castells, 2010). Unlike traditional media, new media allows users to actively engage with content, often offering options for feedback, commenting, and sharing and fostering a participatory culture where individuals contribute to the media landscape. Real-time communications are also a part of new media, including social media and messaging apps that enable real-time interactions, allowing users to connect and communicate instantly across the globe (Cohen and Weimann, 2000). New media blurs the lines between various forms of communication and entertainment, combining texts, audio, video, and multimedia elements within a single platform. Moreover, some of the examples of New Media include social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; video-sharing platforms like YouTube; online news websites; blogs; podcasts; and virtual reality (VR) experiences, as well as mobile apps for various purposes. It has also transformed the landscape of education, research, journalism, politics, and entertainment, opening up new opportunities and challenges in the digital age. New media platforms provide detailed analytics, allowing content

creators and businesses to track audience behavior, engagement, and preferences (Shahbaznezhad, 2021). However, there are some disadvantages of new media that put the people in great disappointment. With the abundance of content available on new media, users can be overwhelmed and cannot distinguish between reliable and unreliable ones. The ease of content creation leads to fake news, misinformation, and rumors potentially harming the public understanding. Overall, new media has revolutionized communication and information dissemination, offering numerous benefits. However, it also comes with challenges that need to be addressed to ensure responsible use and maximize its positive impact on society (Desai et al., 2022, and Raju, 2024).

The impact of new media on youths in India has been profound and far-reaching, shaping various aspects of their lives both positively and negatively. Social media platforms have revolutionized the communication among the youths, allowing them to connect with millions of friends across the globe. Online learning platforms, educational websites, and digital courses have expanded learning opportunities for youth, enabling them to access educational content beyond traditional classroom settings (Sumadevi, 2023). New media has played a crucial role in raising political awareness among the youths. But the impact of New Media also comes with challenges like digital addiction, online harassment, the spread of wrong information, unrealistic expectations, etc. (Rawat et al., 2019). To mitigate the negative impacts of New Media and maximize its potential benefits, it is essential for parents, educators, and policymakers to promote digital literacy, responsible usage, and safe online practices among the youths (Kuppuswamy, 2010).

The impact of new media on tribal youths can vary depending upon the factors such as access to technology through a wide range of information like education resources, health-related knowledge, opportunities for skill developments, preservation and sharing of their indigenous cultures, and giving voice to address social and environmental political issues affecting their lives, and numerous economic opportunities (Sharma, 2016). However, it's essential to be aware of potential challenges and negative impacts that new media can bring to tribal youths (Singhmar, 2023). To ensure that the impact of New Media on tribal youths is positive and empowering. It is essential to strike a balance between leveraging the benefits of new media while preserving and respecting the cultural heritage of tribal communities (Mondal, 2024).

Assessing the accessibility of New Media in the Santal belts of the study area involves several key factors (Tahmasebi, 2023). Firstly, infrastructure limitations, such as broadband networks and mobile connectivity, in rural areas may hinder internet access and affect the reach of New Media. Secondly, disparities in device ownership and affordability, particularly among low-income households, can impact access to smartphones, computers, and other digital devices essential for engaging with New Media platforms. Thirdly, the level of digital literacy among Santal youth influences their ability to navigate online resources effectively, with insufficient familiarity and skills posing barriers to access.

Additionally, the availability of content in the Santali language or reflecting the cultural identity of the Santal community can enhance. The study seeks to explore the impact of New Media on the youth of the Santal community in Angul district, Odisha. Despite its potential to transcend geographical barriers, foster global connectivity, and enhance educational and cultural experiences, New Media accessibility is constrained by socio-economic factors, including household income and education level. Additionally, geographic isolation and inadequate infrastructure further limit internet access and device ownership, restricting the engagement of Santal youth with digital resources (Greenhow & Lewin, 2015). This study aims to assess how these barriers affect the relevance and use of New Media among Santal youth and to

investigate the role of community-based initiatives in promoting digital literacy and inclusion. By understanding these dynamics, the study hopes to identify strategies for leveraging New Media to empower Santal youth while safeguarding their cultural identity (Choudhary & Bansal, 2022).

Few studies have examined the effects of new media on marginalized tribal groups, especially the Santal tribe, despite the fact that its growing presence in tribal communities has been extensively examined in urban and dominant caste contexts. With less focus on how digital media affects identity, communication patterns, and cultural practices among tribal youth, the majority of current research focuses on socioeconomic factors, health, education, and cultural preservation (Mitra & Majumdar, 2020). There is a lack of localized research that examines how new media usage differs across tribal groups, taking into account regional, socioeconomic, and cultural distinctions, despite the fact that national and international studies address the digital divide and its effects (Das, 2018). In particular, little is known about how new media shapes the lives of Santal youth in the Angul area of Odisha. Furthermore, a large portion of current research ignores intra-community variations and the distinct experiences of tribal children in accessing and using digital media, treating tribal groups as homogeneous (Roy, 2019). In the case of the Santal youth in Angul, this disparity is especially pertinent as they attempt to maintain their traditional identity while navigating the difficulties of modernity, education, and jobs.

New Media has several pros and cons:

The present New Media has revolutionized communication, offering numerous benefits, such as instant global connectivity, democratized access to information, and the empowerment of individuals and marginalized voices. It has facilitated the rapid dissemination of news and information, transformed traditional business models, and provided platforms for social and political activism. Additionally, New Media has enriched educational resources, expanded entertainment options, and fostered global cultural exchange (Bhimani et al., 2019).

However, along with these advantages, new media also presents several pros and cons. One of the major concerns is the proliferation of misinformation and fake news, which can distort public perception, undermine democratic processes, and contribute to social polarization. The ease of sharing information online has also led to privacy issues and data breaches, raising significant concerns, which results in cybersecurity issues. Moreover, the constant connectivity and accessibility of 'New Media' have contributed to digital addiction, mental health issues, and the erosion of face-to-face communication skills (Mwangi, 2023).

Furthermore, New Media has been criticized for creating echo chambers and filter bubbles, where individuals are exposed only to like-minded opinions, leading to increased polarization and decreased critical thinking (Miah, 2017). The monetization of user attention through targeted advertising has also raised ethical concerns about surveillance capitalism and the commodification of personal data. While the present New Media offers transformative benefits and opportunities for global communication, education, and empowerment, it also poses significant challenges that require thoughtful regulation, digital literacy, and responsible consumption to maximize its potential and mitigate its risks in our increasingly interconnected and digitalized society (Sahoo, 2024).

Santal youths encounter several challenges with the adoption of new media. These include the digital divide, information overload, cyberbullying, potential loss of traditional values, and privacy concerns associated with sharing personal information online. The social media is more addictive among youths. Overuse of it has been referred to as behavioral addiction, and one's inability to avoid being online to the

point where it affects the user's life, relationships, emotions, and' social life, etc. Overuse of social media, refraining from participating in real-life activities, and young people living mostly in the virtual than in real life (Singh, 2023).

Comparisons with Traditional Media

New media, such as social media and online platforms, offer instant global connectivity, democratized information access, and personalized interactive experiences (Singhmar, 2023). However, it also presents challenges like misinformation, privacy issues, and digital addiction. Traditional media, including newspapers, television, and radio, provides credibility, broad reach, and curated content. Its drawbacks include one-way communication, longer production cycles, and declining audience engagement. In summary, New Media excels in immediacy and interactivity but faces issues of credibility and privacy. Traditional media offers credibility and broad reach but struggles with adaptability and audience retention. A balanced approach leveraging the strengths of both is essential for informed and responsible media consumption in our digital age (Marwan, 2022).

The Santal Tribe of Odisha

The Santal tribe is one of the largest and most prominent indigenous communities in India. They primarily inhabit the regions of Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, and Assam. Santals are considered to be the largest homogeneous Scheduled Tribe in India. Santals are predominantly found in the areas of Angul, Sundergarh, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha. The Santal people have a rich cultural heritage and a unique way of life. They are known for their traditional practices, customs, and folklore, which have been passed down through generations. They are the third largest among the 62 tribes of Odisha. The Santal people speak the Odia language (regional language), but they speak their own dialect, Santali, and few know Hindi also. Santali belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family. Efforts have been made by the government to protect and support the rights of the Santal and to promote their cultural preservation and overall well-being. Thirty states and UTs report having Scheduled Tribes, and there are seven hundred five distinct ethnic groupings (Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013). Out of the 62 tribes seen in Odisha, 55.57 Santal tribes are found in Odisha. As per the Census of 2011, the total population of Odisha is 41,974,218. 55.57 Santal tribes, out of the 62 total tribes observed in Odisha, are located there. There are 41,974,218 people living in Odisha as of the 2011 Census. 34,970,562 individuals reside in rural coastal areas. Male population percentages are 21,212,136 (50.54%), and female population percentages are 20,762,082 (49.46%) (www.planningcommission.nic.in). There are 655,718 men and 618,103 women living in Angul out of a total population of 1,273,821 (Census of India, 2011). It has 1,930 settlements spread across 6,375 square kilometers. A total of 894,764 members of the Santal tribe live in Odisha.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study were to:

▪ Assess the uses of New Media in the day-to-day life of youths in Santal community, and
▪ Examine the effect of the new media on social and cultural life among the youths in studied community.

Literature Review

Sahoo (2024) The research highlights a positive link between social media use, perceived social support, and psychological well-being among college students, challenging the common belief that social media predominantly harms mental health. It emphasizes the importance of understanding gender differences to address disparities in protective factors and opportunities, particularly for females. The study's findings have theoretical and practical significance, suggesting the development of life skills modules to optimize social media usage, social support, and well-being. Additionally, the results offer insights for designing psychological interventions to enhance college students' mental health through improved social media habits.

Shaw (2024) Mobile phones have profoundly impacted all aspects of human life, including challenging prejudices against women. Despite living in areas with high socioeconomic challenges, primitive tribes have embraced mobile technology, recognizing its value and using it to improve their lives. Women, in particular, are actively utilizing mobile phones to explore various communication opportunities.

Mwangi (2023) This study explores the impact of technology on the spread of false information and its consequences on society, politics, and the economy. It highlights how social media facilitates the rapid dissemination of inaccurate content, shaping societal views and polarizing communities. False information undermines trust in institutions, influences political decisions, and has economic repercussions, such as driving clickbait and affecting markets. The study stresses the need for media literacy, critical thinking, and responsible online behavior to counteract these issues. It calls for collaboration among policymakers, technology companies, and individuals to ensure information credibility and mitigate the harm caused by false information.

Ray et al., (2022) India's demographic dividend is highlighted by a young population, with half under the age of 26. However, only 20% of rural youth are engaged in agriculture, signaling potential future challenges for the sector. This study, conducted in five agro-climatic zones of Odisha, examines the socio-economic situation of farm youth involved in agripreneurship. The results show that most farm youths are young, male, have higher secondary education, come from nuclear families with small landholdings, and earn medium-level incomes. They have limited mass media exposure but are active on social media. While they have access to agricultural training, they face significant constraints in gaining agripreneurial skills.

Talukdar and Mete (2021) The study examines how social media influences and transforms the traditional lifestyles, beliefs, values, and norms of tribes in West Bengal. While some tribes are gradually embracing modernization, others remain rooted in traditional ways. The study expresses hope that, with the continued impact of social media, these communities will increasingly adapt to modern trends while reflecting their unique cultural evolution.

Jain and Yadav (2019) The study examines the impact of social media on the younger generation, particularly in Jaipur city, highlighting its role in shaping relationships, worldview, and lifestyle. Popular platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter facilitate connection but also affect interpersonal relationships, leading to poor communication and fragmented connections. Social media influences social institutions such as marriage, family, and education, promoting liberal values and shifting educational paradigms. It also redefines political engagement, expression, and consumer behavior. Additionally, social media fosters a "selfie culture" and aids in identity formation. The findings align with cultivation theory, suggesting that constant media exposure alters perceptions and behaviors, making social media a powerful tool for change in youth values, attitudes, and social practices.

Miah (2017) Social media has significantly transformed the lives of tribal people, especially in agriculture,

by offering farmers online platforms to sell crops directly, eliminating middlemen. It has also seen success in healthcare but remains underutilized in rural politics. Improved technology and connectivity are needed to maximize the economic and social benefits of social networking services. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter offer mass outreach but require accessible technology to include marginalized populations. Social media must focus on fostering societal integration and responsibility rather than alienating users from its developmental potential. Examples like Gramvaani highlight how social media can drive development and redefine its role with a focus on social responsibility.

Sahoo (2016) The study emphasizes the significant role of communication in the socio-political and economic development of a country, highlighting that both modern and traditional forms of communication equally influence social progress. Communication helps improve socio-economic status, raise literacy rates, and enhance living standards. The findings indicate a shift from traditional knowledge and status to power and prestige facilitated by communication. It also shows that mass media, combined with community culture, increases awareness and unity within tribal communities, enabling them to participate in national systems and resolve problems effectively. Media life has brought marginalized tribal communities into the mainstream, promoting their involvement in the developmental process.

Harun and Danladi (2013) The study concludes that social media is widely used by youths, primarily to connect and maintain existing relationships. Youths spend a significant amount of time on these platforms, which expose them to cultural changes, affecting relationships, interactions, appearance, and attitudes.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Angul district of Odisha. The city of Angul district is the headquarters of Angul district, located in the center of the state of Odisha, and lies between 21^0 and 40' North latitude and 84^0 15'E and $85^{0\,23'}$East longitude. The study adopted a cross-sectional and descriptive method. A mixed-methods approach has been employed for the study. Two villages, namely Teherangpur and Munda-hamlet, of the Bikrampur Block of the Angul district, were selected for the study. These two villages were 7 km away from Talcher Town. The respondents were Santal teenagers and youths who were aged between 13 and 30 years. A total of 153 teenagers and youths were randomly selected after giving their consent for the study. Household census, schedule, interview, and focus group discussions have been implemented to collect valuable information from the respondents. The data has been analyzed after being fed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Descriptive statistics were performed to analyze different aspects of the study according to the objectives.

After feeding the data into Microsoft Excel, various data analysis methods were employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives. Beyond descriptive statistics, Excel facilitated data cleaning, sorting, filtering, and creating pivot tables to identify patterns and relationships within the data. The choice of Excel was due to its accessibility, ease of use, and powerful data visualization capabilities through charts and graphs, which are crucial for presenting findings effectively. While Excel is suitable for basic statistical analysis, other software like SPSS or R might have been considered for more advanced statistical techniques, offering greater flexibility and specialized tools for complex data analysis.
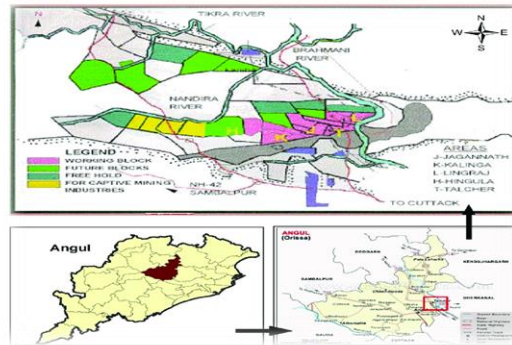
Findings

Table-1: Distribution of age, sex, and socio-economic status among the youths.

Age Group (Years)	Male		Female		Total	
	Number (n)	Percent (%)	Number (n)	Percent (%)	Number (n)	Percent (%)
13-16	11	14.47	14	18.19	25	16.34
17-20	21	27.64	23	29.87	44	28.75
21-25	25	32.89	21	27.27	46	30.07
26-30	19	25	19	24.67	38	24.84
Total	76	100	77	100	153	100
Educational Status						
Secondary	25	32.89	32	41.55	57	37.26
Higher Secondary	20	26.31	21	27.28	41	26.79
Graduation	26	34.22	16	20.78	42	27.46
Post-Graduation	05	06.58	08	10.39	13	08.49
Total	76	100	77	100	153	100
Family Size						
Three	19	25	19	24.68	38	24.85
Four	29	38.15	25	32.47	54	35.29
More than Four	28	36.85	33	42.85	61	39.86
Total	76	100	77	100	153	100
Family Income						
Below 50,000	32	42.10	53	68.84	85	55.56
50,000-1,00,000	23	30.26	15	19.48	38	24.84
Above 1,00,000	21	27.64	9	11.68	30	19.60
Total	76	100	77	100	153	100
Device Usage						
Laptop	09	11.85	10	12.98	19	12.41
Mobile	56	73.68	51	66.23	107	69.94
Both	11	14.47	16	20.77	27	17.65

Total	76	100	77	100	153	100

The present study has been conducted among the Santal youths (aged between 13 and 30 years) of Teherangpur, and Munda hutting village of Bikrampur block and yields various observations regarding age, sex, and socio-economic status (Table-1). The youths are categorized in to various age groups, and it was found that highest youths are in 21-25 age group (30.07%) while the lowest youths were found in 13-16 age group (16.34%). Male youths are found to be more in 21-25 age group (32.89%) whereas female youths are found to be more in 17-20 age group (29.87%). Again, it has been found that a greater number of youths were in secondary level (37.26%) followed by graduation (27.46%) and higher secondary level (26.79%). It has also found that male youths were found to be more in graduation level (34.22%) and more females youths were found in secondary level (41.55%). Considering the family size more youths were residing in more than four category that is (39.86%) followed by four membered family (35.29%), and three membered family (24.85%). However, it was observed that more male youths were residing in four membered family (38.15%) followed by more than four membered family (36.85%), and three membered family (25.00%). Similarly female youths were found to be more in more than four membered family (42.85%) followed by four membered family (32.47%) and three membered family (24.68%). When it comes to family income maximum number of youths were in below 50,000 category (55.56%) followed by 50,000-100,000 income range (24.84%) and above 100,000 income range (19.60%). The same observations were found in the case of male and female youths. Highest number of male and female youths were found in below 50,000 income range (42.10%, and 68.84%) and lowest number of male and female youths were found in above 100,000 income range (27.64%, and 11.68%). When it comes to device usage to access the content, it has been found that the prevalence of mobile usage was highest (69.94%) followed by both mobile and laptop (17.65%) and laptop only (12.41%). The same kind of device usage has been witnessed among the male and female youths in mobile usage category (73.68%, and 66.23%) followed by both mobile and laptop usage (14.47%, and 20.77%) and laptop only (11.85%, and 12.98%).

Table-2: Distribution of New Media usage for various purposes among the youths.

Purposes	Age Groups (Years)							
	13-16		17-20		21-25		26-30	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Health	02 (2.63%)	03 (3.89%)	00 (0%)	04 (5.19%)	00 (0%)	06 (7.79%)	00 (0%)	00 (0%)
News	13 (17.10%)	14 (18.18%)	03 (3.95%)	08 (10.38%)	03 (3.95%)	04 (5.19%)	07 (9.21%)	03 (3.89%)
Entertainment	15 (19.74%)	12 (15.58%)	12 (15.79%)	12 (15.59%)	07 (9.21%)	00 (0%)	04 (5.26%)	00 (0%)
Skill Development	13 (17.10%)	15 (19.49%)	25 (32.89%)	20 (25.97%)	19 (25.00%)	20 (25.98%)	15 (19.74%)	13 (16.88%)
Social Media	19 (25.00%)	19 (24.68%)	23 (30.26%)	21 (27.28%)	26 (34.21%)	23 (29.88%)	28 (36.84%)	31 (40.25%)
Study	14 (18.43%)	14 (18.18%)	13 (17.11%)	12 (15.59%)	21 (27.63%)	24 (31.16%)	22 (28.95%)	30 (38.96%)
Total	**76 (100)**	**77 (100)**	**76 (100)**	**77 (100)**	**76 (100)**	**77 (100)**	**76 (100)**	**77 (100)**

Table 2 represents the usage of new media for various of purposes among the Santal youths. The study has found that among 13-16 age groups social media has been given more priority among male and female youths (25.00%, and 24.68%) and health has given least priority (2.63%, and 3.89%). In 17-20 age groups skill development among male youths (32.98%) and social media among the female youths (27.28%) has given more priority while health has given least priority among male and female youths (0%, and 5.19%) respectively. Similarly in 21-25 age group social media has given most priority among the male and female youths (34.21%, and 29.88%) followed by study (27.63%, and 31.16%) and skill development (25.00%, and 25.98%). Likewise, in 27-30 age groups the social media has given most priority among the male and female youths (36.84%, and 41.56%) followed by study (28.95%, and 38.96%) and skill development (19.74%, and 16.88%).

Discussion

The landscape of New Media is constantly evolving. It has a prominent impact on the entire human being, especially among the youth. New media provides easy access to a wide range of health-related information, empowering youths to educate themselves about various health topics, including nutrition, mental health, sexual health, and general well-being. But surprisingly our study has observed that there is very poor utilization of health content among the Santal youths, which agrees with some of the studies conducted in different counterparts of India (Nayak and Alam, 2022). News and entertainment content provided by new media has immense potential to shape youth's beliefs and values by presenting different ideas and perspectives on social, political, and cultural issues. The study has found very few amounts of youths were utilizing the news and entertainment, which is a negative sign as news and entertainment contribute to the socialization process. Similar studies have been found in tribal pockets of India (Singh. et al., 2017). As young people engage with new media platforms, they learn how to navigate digital interfaces, educational resources, workshops, and entrepreneurial products and services. So New Media plays a significant role in skill development among the youths of our country, even youths from remote locations. Our study has reported a considerable proportion of youths across all the age groups were involved in accessing skill development contents from new media, which agrees with some studies carried out in India (Chattopadhyay and Mohanty, 2022). Particularly the internet and social media provide easy access to a vast amount of information. Social media revolutionized how young people communicate and stay connected with friends, family, and peers regardless of geographic distances. Social media allows young people to express themselves creatively through posts, photos, videos, and art. However, there are some negative impacts of social media, such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, cyberbullying, online harassment, sleep disruption, and polarization. Our study has found that an ample amount of youths across all the age groups are using social media, which may have positive and negative issues for the young Santal youths. Some studies conducted in different countries support the observations of our study (Shelat and DeShano, 2014); however, some studies disagree with it (Singh et al., 2017). New media allows for flexible learning schedules and personalized study approaches. New media has brought so many learning platforms, apps, tools, virtual simulations, and collaborative learning experiences to the youth. Our study has also observed that much of the youth were engaged with learning by utilizing New Media platforms, which agrees with some studies found in the Indian subcontinent (Rawath et al. 2019). Considering the cultural and social dimensions of youth life, New Media has transformed the way the youth thinks and acts. It has both positive and negative impacts depending upon the mindset among the youths. Here the role of parents is more crucial to encourage the youths to have a productive sentiment towards social and

cultural life being involved in digital platforms. Our study has found that so many Santal youths have already forgotten their culture and values, being maintained, and are following foreign culture and lifestyles, which supports numerous studies conducted in different states of India (Mir et al., 2023). The adoption of new media by Santal youth reflects a delicate balance between modernity and tradition. Platforms like social media and instant messaging provide spaces for self-expression and connection to broader cultural narratives, yet they also pose challenges to preserving traditional Santal values. While new media enables cultural exchange and self-expression, it can also undermine indigenous traditions as younger generations increasingly adopt modern lifestyles and values (Mitra and Majumdar, 2020). For example, the use of dominant languages such as Hindi or English on digital platforms often replaces native Santal dialects, raising concerns about linguistic erosion. Similarly, communal storytelling, a cornerstone of Santal culture, may diminish as digital media becomes a primary source of entertainment and information. However, new media can also support cultural preservation by allowing Santal youth to document and share their heritage with global audiences, fostering a blended or hybrid cultural identity (Roy, 2019).

Differences in research outcomes may arise due to regional variations, levels of digital literacy, or methodological differences. Urbanized Santal communities often show greater benefits from new media, while rural areas may face challenges like a pronounced digital divide (Das, 2018). Moreover, generational attitudes toward technology differ: younger Santals are more inclined to adopt digital tools, while elders may resist them, fearing cultural alienation.

Scope

The research delves into several key themes. First, it explores how New Media provides Santal youth with global connectivity and access to a wealth of educational resources, overcoming geographical constraints. It also examines the role of New Media in facilitating cultural exchange and activism, allowing the Santal community to share their rich heritage and engage with a broader audience. Additionally, the study investigates how New Media has transformed traditional business models, educational resources, and entertainment options within the Santal community. It addresses the challenges and risks associated with New Media, including the spread of misinformation, privacy issues, and potential digital addiction, and evaluates their impact on mental health. Finally, the research highlights the importance of digital literacy and responsible consumption in mitigating these risks and empowering Santal youth.

The study explores a number of important topics. It first looks at how New Media overcomes regional limitations to give Santal adolescents worldwide connectivity and access to a multitude of educational materials. In addition, it looks at how new media promotes activism and cross-cultural contact, giving the Santal community a platform to communicate their rich history and interact with a wider audience. The study also looks into how traditional business structures, instructional materials, and entertainment options have changed in the Santal community as a result of new media. It examines the dangers and difficulties posed by new media, such as the dissemination of false information, privacy concerns, and the possibility of digital addiction and assesses how they affect mental health.

Conclusion

New media usage among youth has been on the rise and is likely to continue growing as technology advances. The rapid proliferation of smartphones, social media platforms, and internet access has fundamentally changed how young people interact, consume information, and communicate. The study

has found that most of the Santal youths engage with content based on skill development, social media, and study purposes; however, very little usage prevalence was on content like news, entertainment, and health. While New Media offers numerous opportunities for learning and self-expression, there are also potential risks that need to be addressed to ensure a positive and safe digital experience for young people. It is essential for the younger generation to remain vigilant and aware of the impact of digital media usage.

Recommendations for the future research

To address the cultural and social challenges posed by new media, policymakers should prioritize community-based interventions that balance technological integration with cultural preservation. Some recommendations include:

- **Artificial intelligence (AI) and Machine learning (ML):** Technology is playing a supreme role in helping and guiding society in the proper direction.
- **Cultural Content Creation:** Supporting initiatives that promote Santal folklore, language, and traditions on digital platforms can reinforce cultural pride and continuity.
- **Digital Literacy Programs:** Tailored workshops can empower Santal youth to use new media responsibly while appreciating their cultural heritage.
- **Societal Benefits:** New media fosters global connectivity, enriches education, and bridges geographical barriers for Santal youth.
- **Transformation Potential of New Media:** It empowers cultural sharing, activism, and broader world engagement.
- **Platform for Cultural Expression:** Offers a space to share heritage, preserve traditions, and connect globally.
- **Need for Careful Examination:** Ensures cultural preservation, cohesion, and counters misinformation and digital addiction.
- **Emphasis on Digital Literacy:** Highlights the need for promoting responsible and informed media usage.
- **Preservation of Cultural Identity:** Emphasize digital literacy and community-led efforts to maintain and enrich Santal traditions.

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