

YANGON UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
MASTER OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES PROGRAMME

A STUDY ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN
HPA-AN TOWNSHIP

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EMDevS – 50 (18th BATCH)

OCTOBER, 2024

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HPA-AN TOWNSHIP

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of
Development Studies (MDevS) Degree.**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of social media on youth in Hpa-An Township, Kayin State, focusing on psychological, social, educational, personal and professional impacts. Data were collected from 160 respondents who are 18-30 years by using a structured questionnaire, and analyzed using a descriptive method. The findings indicate that while social media improves communication, provides access to educational resources and supports professional development, it also introduces challenges such as cyberbullying. It is also found that respondents need to manage excessive time spent on social media. It is suggested that it would be better if the respective departments such as Information and Public Relations Department could provide digital literacy and appropriate use of social media to minimize the negative impacts of social media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Dr. Daw Tin Tin Htwe, Rector of Yangon University of Economics for granting me the invaluable opportunity to pursue this course, which has significantly contributed to my academic and personal development.

Secondly, I am truly grateful to Professor Dr. Khin Thida Nyein and Professor Dr. Cho Cho Thein, Pro Rectors of Yangon University of Economics, for their leadership and continuous support throughout our academic journey at the University.

Thirdly, Professor Dr. Naw Htee Mue Loe Htoo, Head of the Department of Economics at Yangon University of Economics, along with the programme director of the MDevS Programme. Her guidance and insights have been essential to the successful completion of my thesis.

Fourthly, I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Daw Phyu Win Ei, whose unwavering support and expert guidance were pivotal in the completion of this paper. Her insightful recommendations and dedication to reviewing my work, even amidst her busy schedule, were invaluable. Her patience, thoughtful advice, and exceptional supervision were crucial, and this achievement would not have been possible without her steadfast support.

Lastly, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to my classmates in EMDevS 18th batch, my best friends, colleagues, and my family members, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and assistance have been invaluable throughout this journey, particularly during challenging times.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|---|
| 4G LTE | Fourth Generations Long-Term Evolution |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| EMDevS | Executive Master of Development Studies |
| GAD | General Administration Department |
| GSMA | Global System for Mobile Communications Association |
| MCRB | Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business |
| MPT | Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| SWOT | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Social media has rapidly evolved to become a central aspect of modern communication, with over 5.1 billion users globally by 2024, representing 64% of the global population. Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have transformed many aspects of life, from professional networking to personal communication, making them essential in today's digital age (Statcounter Global Stats, 2024). In Myanmar, social media adoption has mirrored global trends, with an estimated 47.2% of the population actively using social media by 2024. Facebook dominates the social media landscape in Myanmar, followed by platforms like YouTube and Telegram (DataReportal, 2024). This trend is particularly noticeable in Hpa-An Township, Kayin State, where platforms like Facebook and Telegram are highly popular.

The growing social media usage has transformed the way individuals access information, engage in learning, and acquire new skills, significantly influencing education and human capital development. In earlier times, people relied on traditional forms of media such as newspapers to stay informed, but the advent of smartphones and digital platforms like Facebook and YouTube has expanded the scope of media consumption. Social media now plays a crucial role in both formal and informal education, enhancing communication and learning opportunities. By providing platforms for individuals to acquire knowledge and develop skills, social media has become a central component of personal and professional growth in modern society (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Smith & Anderson, 2020).

Although social media is widely used in Hpa-An, Kayin State, there remains limited understanding of how these platforms impact youth in areas with distinct socio-cultural dynamics and historical conflicts (Ridout et al., 2019). Young people in Kayin State, including Hpa-An, increasingly use social media platforms such as Facebook and Telegram for communication, access to educational resources, and opportunities for professional development (DataReportal, 2024). These platforms not only provide opportunities for communication and professional development but also foster entrepreneurship and community engagement, which are critical for advancing the

socio-economic growth of the region. While existing research offers insights into the general effects of social media on youth, such as mental health, social interactions, and identity development, these studies often overlook the unique socio-cultural context of Hpa-An, leaving a significant gap in understanding its specific impacts in this region. Understanding the social, emotional, mental, personal, and professional impacts of social media on youth is important not only for their individual development but also for building the country's human capital and contributing to the community's socio-economic development. Youth represent the future workforce, and addressing this research gap is critical for harnessing their potential to contribute to socioeconomic development in Myanmar.

Social media has also emerged as a key driver of socio-economic development by fostering communication, networking, and access to opportunities, particularly among youth. Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram provide avenues for economic opportunities, skill development, and entrepreneurship, supporting both personal and community development. This aligns with Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social networks in promoting economic prosperity and community resilience (Putnam, 2000), as well as Human Development Theory, which highlights the role of technology in expanding individuals' capabilities and improving quality of life (Sen, 1999). In Kayin State, social media has become an essential tool for youth to engage in local economic activities, contributing to human capital development and socio-economic growth.

This study is guided by four theoretical frameworks: Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1934), Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), and Use and Gratification Theory (Katz, 1959). Social Learning Theory explains how youth in Hpa-An may adopt behaviors observed on social media. Symbolic Interactionism highlights how online interactions shape self-concept and identity. Social Comparison Theory emphasizes how idealized images on social media impact self-esteem and mental health. Use and Gratification Theory explains how youth actively seek media platforms to meet their personal, educational, and professional needs.

Conducting a study in Hpa-An Township is important for understanding both opportunities and potential challenges related to social media use among youth in this community. By examining the social media usage patterns and their impacts on personal

and professional development, this study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform targeted interventions and strategies. The findings will offer educators evidence-based recommendations to enhance the positive aspects of social media, while addressing its potential drawbacks. Furthermore, this study aims to fill a knowledge gap by exploring how social media influences the personal and professional lives of youth in Hpa-An Township, contributing to a deeper understanding of how these platforms shape human capital development and socio-economic growth.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study has three main objectives and they are as follows: to explore the usage of specific social media platforms by youth, to examine the impact of social media on the psychological, social, educational, personal, and professional development of youth, and to explore the influence of social media on the personal and professional lives of the youth in Hpa-An Township.

1.3 Method of Study

This study used a descriptive analysis approach that includes both primary and secondary data sources to achieve its research objectives. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires using convenience sampling. The data was collected from 160 youth aged 18-30 from Hpa-An Township. This study conducted data collection and analysis using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This method allowed for the efficient collecting of data from people who were available and willing to participate.

Secondary data were collected from various sources, including Hpa-An GAD, academic journals, websites, and previous studies, to provide context and supplement the primary data. These sources were combined to support a study of social media usage and its impact on young people in Hpa-An Township.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study only focused on youth aged 18-30 and was conducted in Hpa-An Township, Kayin State. It examined three key areas: social media usage patterns, the perceived impact of these platforms, and the resulting changes in the personal and professional lives of the youth. Data were collected over a three-month period (May-July 2024) from 160 respondents using structured questionnaires and a convenience sampling method. The findings represented in this study are only the perceptions and experiences of these 160 youth respondents who lives in Hpa-An Township.

1.5 Organization of the Study

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction that includes the rationale of the study, the objectives of the study, the research methodology, the scope and limitations of the study, and the organization of the study. Chapter two includes literature reviews and theories related to social media. Chapter three provides an overview of social media use in Myanmar. Chapter four presents the results of the survey analysis on social media usage and its impacts on the youth in Hpa-an Township, Kayin State, and chapter five concludes with findings and suggestions based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media and Human and Social Development

Social media has played an important role in personal development by fundamentally transforming how people receive health and educational information. Platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, compared to traditional educational resources, provide accessible, interactive learning opportunities which reach beyond geographic boundaries. For example, it has increased global access to education by allowing users to easily access lectures, tutorials, and skill-building resources (Burgess & Green, 2018).

Public health has benefited from social media, particularly during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. Critical information was rapidly shared on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which helped organize public health responses and combat misinformation. These platforms have also made mental health support networks possible, providing users with groups and resources to effectively deal with personal issues (Anderson, 2020).

Social media is vital in personal development because it promotes talent sharing, mentorship opportunities, and effective networking. LinkedIn, for example, enables users to connect with experts, mentors, and peers in their field, widening their professional networks and improving their job prospects (Kietzmann et al., 2011). This professional networking is especially beneficial for people whose enterprises rely heavily on relationships and personal branding.

Additionally, social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn, have made it easier to learn continuously through peer discussions, seminars, and professional forums. This made it possible for people to learn new skills, improve their job opportunities, and stay updated on business trends. The results highlight how important social media is for skill development and group learning during times of loneliness (Khan et al, 2021).

2.1.1 Social Media and Social Capital

Social media has a huge impact on social capital because it promotes collaboration, knowledge sharing, and community engagement. Social capital is defined as the networks of connections between individuals that enable societies to function efficiently, and social media plays a significant role in building and maintaining these networks. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have enabled users to connect with friends, family, and communities beyond geographical boundaries, hence improving personal and professional interactions (Boyd and Ellison, 2008).

Social media platforms have been important in mobilizing community action and disseminating public health messages during emergencies, including natural disasters and health emergencies. For instance, social media platforms like Instagram were used to share information about safety procedures, vaccination campaigns, and support groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to offering a platform for cooperative problem-solving and mutual support, this broad information sharing allowed communities to unite behind important societal problems (Anderson, 2020).

In order to address social issues, social media also promotes cooperation amongst a range of groups, including governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector. This connection is essential for volunteer recruiting, fundraising, and community development projects. Consequently, social media serves as a driving force for social change by enabling people and organizations to work together to solve shared problems, increasing the social capital of societies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.1.2 Social Media and Socioeconomic Development

Social media has emerged as an important factor of socioeconomic development, influencing economic growth, entrepreneurship, job creation, financial inclusion, and social welfare.

Economic growth and entrepreneurship: Social media platforms have changed the way businesses operate, providing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with low-cost marketing tools for reaching a global audience. Businesses may extend their exposure, attract consumers, and increase revenue by using targeted advertising, content creation, and contact with clients directly. Furthermore, social media

encourages entrepreneurship by providing platforms for prospective entrepreneurs to exchange ideas and connect with potential partners, and receive financial assistance through various online fundraising methods (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Anderson, 2020).

Job Creation and Professional Opportunities: As social media has grown, new job positions and sectors have emerged, including social media management, digital marketing, content generation, and influencer marketing. Platforms such as LinkedIn facilitate job search and recruiting procedures by connecting job seekers with potential employers and assisting businesses in effectively finding the right persons (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

Access to Information, Education, and Financial Services: Social media helps develop human capital by making educational resources and financial services easier to access. Educational content on social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook enables people to expand their knowledge and skills, increasing their job opportunities.

Social Welfare and Community Development: Social media facilitates social welfare activities by providing platforms for awareness campaigns, fundraising, and community mobilization. NGOs and community groups use these platforms to interact with potential donors, promote their objectives, and improve the quality of life in communities with limited resources. Additionally, social media empowers customers by providing information about products and services, influencing consumer behavior, and improving market efficiency (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

2.2 Definition of Social Media

Social media refers to various kinds of websites and online platforms. Users can create, share, and engage with content on these platforms. They also provide a virtual environment in which users can communicate with one another. Facebook and LinkedIn are social networking sites, Twitter is an example of microblogging, while Instagram and TikTok are multimedia sharing platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media provides numerous communication channels. Users can share text, photos, and videos. They can interact immediately or whenever it is easily accessible to them. These platforms serve multiple purposes. People use them to communicate with friends, build professional networks, and promote products. For example, younger

people choose Instagram and TikTok to share visual content. Professionals, on the other hand, use LinkedIn to network to improve their career (Statista, 2022).

Key Functions of Social Media

- Social media helps improve communication and socialization.
- Users can share status updates and stay connected with family friends and coworkers.
- These platforms enable users to create and share various types of material with their networks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
- Businesses use this option that promote their brands, advertise products and services, and connect with customers directly (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Its global aspect includes changes in international communication patterns that bring individuals together across borders, stimulate cultural exchanges, and make knowledge available (Kemp, 2020). The study focuses on how these platforms continue to be major aspects of people's life due to their utility, which influences social tastes, buying habits, and even politics.

2.3 History and Evolution of Social Media

The concept of social media started in the 1960s, with the development of early network communication technology. However, it was not until the late 1990s that social media became popularity, thanks to platforms such as Six Degrees. This platform enabled users build profiles and add friends, a new concept for social networking sites (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

In the early 2000s, key platforms such as Friendster, MySpace, and LinkedIn emerged, and each addressing a different set of user demands. MySpace, which began in 2003, quickly became one of the most popular websites in the world. It was well-known for its adjustable layout and music sharing abilities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). One significant event in the history of social media was the 2004 launch of Facebook. It was initially restricted to Harvard University students, but it quickly expanded to other academic institutions and then the general public, growing to become the biggest social networking site in the world. The increasing use of smartphones during the late 2000s and 2010s had an important impact on the evolution of social media. Mobile technology transformed how people utilized social media, making it more accessible and enjoyable through mobile apps (Kemp, 2020).

Facebook's mobile app, which was released shortly after the main website, allowed users to stay in touch, share news, and communicate with friends while they were traveling. Facebook had 1 billion active users by 2012, because of mostly to the increasing use of smartphones (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Instagram, which launched in 2010 and was bought by Facebook in 2012, has capitalized on the growing trend of mobile picture sharing. Its user-friendly layout and creative editing tools immediately gained an extensive following, especially among younger users. As of 2024, Instagram has over 2 billion monthly active users, demonstrating its significant growth and ongoing appeal in the social media ecosystem (DataReportal, 2024).

YouTube has become the most popular platform for video content since Google purchased it in 2006. The advent of the YouTube mobile app made it easier for users to publish and watch videos on their phones, considerably increasing the number of people who use it. By 2023, YouTube had more than 2.5 billion monthly subscribers, demonstrating its position as a dominant platform for video content consumption. Twitter and Snapchat continue to be important platforms for introducing new communication patterns, such as brief and temporary communications. These platforms were widely adopted because they enabled new, real-time opportunities for users to communicate and share information (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

TikTok, founded in 2016, shows the growth of social media via mobile technology. Its popularity, generated by short videos and a user-tailored algorithm, resulted in over four billion downloads and an expected \$16.1 billion in revenue by 2023, or a 67% growth year on year. TikTok has 1.5 billion monthly active users in 2023 and is expected to reach 1.8 billion by the end of 2024, having a huge influence on global social media dynamics, particularly in China, where over 750 million people use the app every day (Business of App, 2023).

Prior to the development of social media, television and traditional phone handsets were the primary means of communicating information. Television provided organized news broadcasts, while phone handsets allowed for personal connections but limited the ability to share news on a larger scale. The introduction of mobile phones and social media platforms transformed the landscape of news sharing by enabling real-time updates and quick access to information (Komp, 2020).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are now essential for news sharing. Users on these social media platforms can discuss current

events, share breaking news, and follow news organizations. This update has improved news access and interaction, allowing consumers to stay better informed about local and global topics. The ability to receive news on-demand through mobile devices has shown to be very beneficial in providing timely information that may impact decisions and behaviors (Burgess & Green, 2018).

2.4 Social Media Theories

To properly understand social media platforms and their impacts, it is important to engage with existing theoretical frameworks that lay the groundwork for studying how social media impacts young people's perceptions, interactions, and well-being. The following sections discuss key theories that are relevant to this study.

2.4.1 Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1934)

Symbolic Interactionism, based on Mead's (1934) work, examines how people form their identities through social interactions. This theory emphasizes the importance of symbols including words, visuals, and gestures in shaping communication and self-concept. Social media platforms offer as a modern space for these symbolic interactions, with young people posting images, sharing memes, and communicating via emoji. For example, a young person may upload a carefully manipulated image on social media to represent a specific identity, such as being adventurous or socially active. The feedback they receive in the form of likes and comments supports or criticizes their self-image, directing how they continue to express themselves online. With these interactions, social media allows for constant identity exploration and adaptation.

2.4.2 Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954)

Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954) proposes that people evaluate their own abilities, achievements, and self-worth by comparing themselves to others. Social media worsens this trend by frequently exposing users to idealized versions of life. For example, a young person may feel inadequate after viewing posts from classmates who appear to be more successful, fit, or socially active. This may result in lower self-esteem when they compare their own life unfavorably. However, in some cases, these comparisons could motivate self-improvement. A young adult who sees

friends achieving in academic or personal successes on platforms such as Facebook or LinkedIn may be inspired to work harder toward their own goals, using these comparisons to motivate rather than demotivate.

2.4.3 Use and Gratification Theory (Katz, 1959; Blumler & McQuail, 1969)

The Uses and Gratification Theory, developed by Katz (1959) and expanded by Blumler and McQuail (1969), examines why people actively choose certain media to fulfill specific needs. Social media, in particular, offers various kinds of satisfactions for young people, including entertainment, social engagement, and identity expression. Platforms such as TikTok, for example, can be utilized for fun and creativity as young people create and watch short, amusing films. Meanwhile, Instagram could satisfy the need for social contact and recognition by allowing users to submit personal photographs and receive response from friends. Similarly, LinkedIn may serve a professional need by allowing young people to network and showcase their skill sets.

2.4.4 Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977)

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) states that people acquire behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses by observing others. This observational learning occurs when people pay attention to action of others, retain what they see, and then imitate those actions. Social media is a perfect space for such learning because youth constantly observe the activities of their classmates, influencers, and celebrities. For example, a young person could imitate an influencer's fashion choices or lifestyle habits on Instagram, encouraging those behaviors with likes and comments from their peers. As a result, social media changes behavior while also reinforcing societal norms and trends through wide exposure and peer acceptance.

2.5 Review on Previous Studies

Chou and Edge (2012) conducted a study titled "Social Media Use and Its Effects on Personal Accomplishment," which aimed to examine the impact of social media on people's perceptions of their lives and achievements. They used a quantitative survey method to collect information from participants on their social media use and feelings of personal accomplishment. According to the findings, frequent Facebook users generally regarded their peers to be living better lives, which worsened feelings of inferiority and depression. The researchers stressed the importance of critical evaluation of social media information to prevent hurtful comparisons and maintain a positive outlook, especially in heavily used social media situations.

Smith and Duggan (2013) performed a research titled "Impact of Social Media on College Student Engagement," which focused on how platforms such as Facebook affect academic performance and social connections. Using a mixed-methods approach that included surveys and interviews, the study found that while social media can stimulate cooperation and build peer relationships, overuse can distract from academic responsibilities, resulting in poor performance. The researchers highlighted the importance of effective social media management in order to balance its benefits with academic responsibilities.

Michikyan et al. (2014) explored how emerging adults showcase their real, ideal, and misleading selves on Facebook in their study titled "Can You Guess Who I Am?" Real, Ideal, and False Self-Presentation on Facebook among Emerging Adults." The main objective was to examine young adults' identity exploration on social media and the consequences of their self-presentation. Using a quantitative survey method, the study examined how young adults experiment with various parts of their identity on social media, frequently displaying idealized versions that do not adequately reflect their genuine self. According to the study, this behavior can have both beneficial and negative consequences on self-esteem and social interactions, depending on how well online identities match with reality.

Fardouly et al. (2015) investigated the impact of social comparisons on young women's mood and body image on social media, specifically focusing on the consequences of being exposed to idealized images on sites such as Facebook. Women between the ages of 18 and 25 were surveyed quantitatively to gauge their body image problems after being exposed to idealized images on social media sites such as

Facebook. The results showed that unfavorable comparisons with idealized images often caused individuals to feel depressed and physically dissatisfied.

Vannucci et al. (2017) conducted a study titled "Social Media Use and Mental Health Outcomes among Young Adults," which aimed to examine the link between social media use and mental health issues. Using a quantitative survey method, the study examined how social media use connected with mental health outcomes, notably anxiety and depression, among young adults. The findings found that higher levels of social media usage were connected with increased anxiety, particularly among people who are not active. This highlights the need of self-control in social media use, particularly in situations where these platforms serve as important channels for connection and expression.

Soe Hay Mar Oo (2019) studied the "Impact of Social Media on Female Students at Yangon University of Economics". The objective was to assess the economic, educational, and social effects of social media on female students, with a specific emphasis on Facebook. The study used a survey method to collect information from female students about how platforms such as Facebook and YouTube influence their academic, social, and professional growth. The study revealed that social media improved access to learning resources and promoted professional growth through education resources and networking opportunities. However, it also presented issues such as distractions, poor academic performance, cyberbullying, and fewer interactions with people in person. While social media can maintain relationships and expand networks, excessive use resulted in social isolation. The study highlighted the importance of managing social media use to maximize advantages while minimizing risks.

Satheeshkumar et al. (2019) studied the "Dual Nature of Social Media's Impact on Youth," with the aim of identifying both the positive and negative aspects of social media use. Using a mixed-methods approach, they found that, while social media can improve communication skills and learning possibilities, excessive use is associated with worse academic performance and higher mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. The research suggested that educational institutions and parents monitor and manage young people's internet activity to encourage balanced usage.

Sushma Rawath and Dr. R. Satheeshkumar (2019) performed a study titled "A Study on the Impact of Social Media on Youth" with the goal of examining the usage

patterns and impact of social media on youth. The study surveyed 50 people aged 18 to 30, examining their daily social media usage and both the benefits and risks they faced. According to the findings, social media helped people have access to learning materials (20% of respondents), maintain social relationships (20%), and entertainment (28%). However, considerable negative consequences were also mentioned, including cyber theft (40%) and health issues (22%). The study indicated that, while social media is a useful tool for communication and job opportunities, it also poses threats to privacy and excessive use.

Ridout et al. (2019) conducted a study titled "Mobile Myanmar: The Impact of Social Media on Young People Living in Conflict-Affected Regions of Myanmar," which focused on social media's dual impact on mental health. The study, which included surveys and interviews with young people in Kayin State, aimed to explore how social media platforms such as Facebook impacted mental health of youth living in areas of instability such as Kayin State. Their study revealed that, while social media was widely used to maintain relationships and access educational resources, it also exposed young people to serious risks such as hate speech, fake news, and online harassment. These negative experiences lead to increased stress, anxiety, and negative thinking among young people.

Ahmad et al. (2020) studied the "Role of Social Media in Promoting Human Development," with a focus on communities with limited access to traditional educational resources. The researchers conducted qualitative study, including interviews with young people from communities with limited services, in order to assess how platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook assist skill acquisition and professional networking. The findings showed that these platforms open up access to educational and professional opportunities, enabling young people to learn new skills, connect with potential employers, and engage in global knowledge exchanges. The study suggested that social media can play an important role in vocational training and professional development.

Nyan Pyae Phyo (2020) conducted a study titled "A Study on the Benefits and Risks of Using the Internet and Social Media Among Young People (Case Study: Undergraduate Students from Yangon University of Economics)." The objective was to examine both the advantages and risks related to youth's use of social media and the internet, with a focus on a sample of undergraduate students from the Ywa Tha Gyi

Campus. The study used a structured questionnaire and survey to collect information about students' habits, experiences, and opinions. According to the findings, students benefited from platforms such as Facebook and YouTube in many ways, including enhanced learning, communication, and entertainment. However, the study highlighted serious risks such as cyberbullying, exposure to dangerous content, privacy problems, and feelings of isolation and depression. Although many students were aware of the risks, they lacked awareness of internet safety laws. The study emphasized the need of user responsibility in reducing risks and maximizing the advantages of social media use.

CHAPTER III

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN MYANMAR

3.1 Social Media in Myanmar

The social media landscape in Myanmar has changed significantly since the telecommunications sector was opened to competition in 2013. Prior to this period, internet connection was both limited and excessively expensive, with only a small proportion of the population routinely using online platforms. However, the emergence of new telecommunications providers, along with government changes, caused an unprecedented increase in mobile and internet services, indicating the turning point in the country's digital development. As seen in Table 3.1, Myanmar will have more than 64.28 million active mobile connections, representing 117.4% of the total population by 2024. This indicates that many individuals own more than one mobile device (DataReportal, 2024). This rise in connectivity resulted in an increase in internet access, with 24.11 million users registered in January 2024, representing a 44% internet penetration rate.

This change in digital accessibility has enabled Myanmar's population to interact with the global community in previously unprecedented ways, significantly changing communication practices, information sharing, and the sociopolitical dynamics of the country. The widespread use of mobile internet has increased the usage of social media, which is now the primary medium of communication, education, and entertainment throughout the country.

Table: 3.1 Overview of Mobile and Internet Connectivity in Myanmar (Jan 2024)

| Sr. | Description | Total Amount | Yearly Growth (+) | Percentage of Total Population |
|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | Total Population | 54.78 Million | 0.7 % | 100% |
| 2. | Cellular Mobile Connections | 64.28 Million | 0.09 % | 117.40% |
| 3. | Internet Users | 24.11 Million | 0.7 % | 44.00% |
| 4. | Social Media Users | 18.50 Million | 27.6 % | 33.80% |

Source: DataReportal, (2024)

3.2 Social Media Growth and Penetration

The growth of social media in Myanmar can be directly linked to the increasing penetration of mobile internet services. From 2015 to 2024, social media users have increased exponentially. By January 2024, there were 18.50 million social media users, reflecting an annual growth of 27.6%, or an addition of 4 million new users within a year (DataReportal, 2024). This represents 33.8% of the total population, signaling the importance of social media as a central element in the country's digital engagement.

The majority of social media users in Myanmar access these platforms through mobile devices, as affordable smartphones and data packages have made it easier for individuals to stay connected. The growth of social media is not limited to urban areas; rural regions have also seen increasing engagement, although infrastructural limitations still pose challenges in these areas. Platforms like Facebook, which remains the most dominant social media platform in Myanmar, have extended their reach, enabling users to connect with local and global communities.

3.3 Most Popular Social Media Platforms in Myanmar

Social media landscape in Myanmar is dominated by a few significant platforms, with Facebook being the most widely used. As of 2024, 76.7% of Myanmar's internet users are engaged on Facebook, making it the most popular platform for communication, news sharing, and social interaction. The platform's role has evolved beyond socializing to become a key tool for campaigning and community organizing. Facebook's advertising reach in Myanmar is 33.8% of the total population,

demonstrating the platform's massive impact in both commercial and personal spaces (Hamza et al., 2024).

YouTube is the second most popular platform, with younger viewers consuming video content for fun and education. Instagram and TikTok are also gaining popularity, particularly among users aged 18 to 24. TikTok has grown rapidly in Myanmar, with 16.65 million users, owing primarily to the platform's engaging content and attractiveness to young people. Telegram, a messaging service, is growing increasingly popular, particularly for community organizations and news sharing. Its security features, including as encrypted texting, make it a popular choice among privacy-conscious users (DataReportal, 2024).

Table 3.2: Social Media Platforms and Their Reach in Myanmar (2024)

| Sr. | Platform | Number of Users | Percentage of Internet Users (%) |
|-----|-----------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Facebook | 14.5 million | 76.7 |
| 2. | YouTube | 7.5 million | 39.7 |
| 3. | Instagram | 1.75 million | 9.1 |
| 4. | TikTok | 16.65 million | 33.8 |
| 5. | Telegram | 5 million | 26.7 |

Source: DataReportal 2024, Myanmar

3.4 Social Media Users Demographics in Myanmar

The demographics of social media users in Myanmar show that the platforms are primarily used by young people. Approximately 70% of social media users are between the ages of 18 and 34, with the highest concentration in cities such as Yangon and Mandalay (Kemp, 2023). These places are home to a more technologically advanced population, which benefits from improved internet infrastructure and digital equipment.

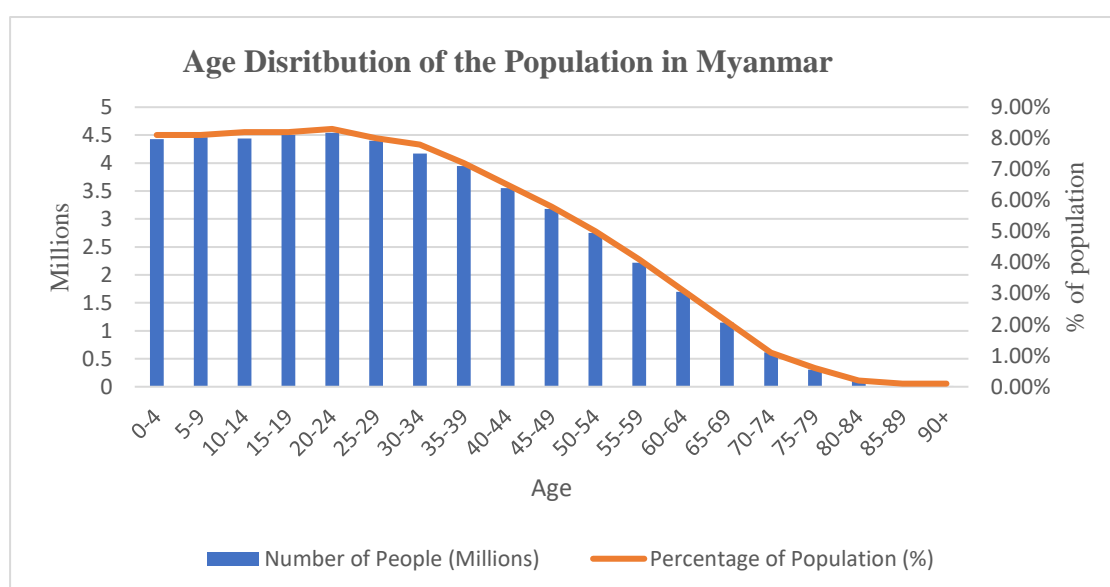
In rural Myanmar, social media usage is constantly expanding, with younger generations, particularly students, increasingly relying on mobile phones to access platforms like as Facebook. As of 2023, almost 60% of rural internet users report using

social media as their primary mode of communication and for obtaining news, educational materials, and services such as telemedicine.

A closer look at Myanmar's age distribution (2024) reveals that the population is largely young, with a significant portion of the population aged 15–29. Over 4.5 million people are aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24. This supports the 2023 data indicating 70% of social media users are between the ages of 18 and 34, emphasizing the importance of youth in driving social media use (Kemp, 2023; DataReportal, 2024).

The following figure shows the age distribution of population in Myanmar:

Figure 3.1: Age Distribution of the Population in Myanmar



Source: DataReportal, We Are Social, & Meltwater (2024)

This youthful age structure explains why the 18-34 population uses social media the most. While males use social media slightly more than females, platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are becoming increasingly popular among women for networking and small business ventures (DataReportal, 2023; We Are Social & Meltwater, 2024).

3.5 Social Media as a Daily Necessity in Myanmar

Social media has become an essential part of everyday life in Myanmar, impacting not just how individuals interact but also how they consume news, entertainment, and educational content. In urban areas, platforms such as Facebook are widely used for both social and professional networking. Many social media users in rural locations, such as Kayin State, rely on Facebook to stay up to date on local news and community events (Ridout et al., 2019).

Social media is becoming increasingly essential in rural Myanmar due to its shortage of traditional media and infrastructure. Facebook and other platforms offer access to educational information, online marketplaces, and healthcare services. Students utilize social media to acquire learning resources and interact with peers, especially during pandemics. HOPE Telecare, for example, provides telemedicine to rural communities, providing virtual medical consultations in areas where healthcare is limited. Furthermore, rural internet connection is increasing by more than 10% each year, expanding the scope of these services (Tech Wire Asia, 2023).

This significant use of social media is reflected in broader data for Myanmar. As shown in Table 3.4, 99% of social media users access these platforms through mobile internet, whereas 44% of Myanmar's population actively uses the internet. These data indicate the importance of social media in both urban and rural areas, where it has become an essential tool for communication, learning, and commerce.

Table 3.3 Overview of Internet Use in Myanmar

| Sr. | Particular | Statistics |
|-----|--|---------------------------|
| 1. | Number of Internet Users | 24.11 Million |
| 2. | Percentage of Population Using the Internet | 44.0% |
| 3. | Annual Growth in Internet Users | + 0.7% (+174 Thousand) |
| 4. | Percentage of Social Media Users on Mobile Devices | 99.0% |

Source: DataReportal, (2024)

3.6 Law and Regulations Governing Social Media in Myanmar

Myanmar's Telecommunications Law (2013) was enacted to govern the telecommunications sector, which includes mobile networks, internet services, and online platforms such as social media. Its primary objective is to provide effective administration of telecommunications services and to assist in the development of the country's digital infrastructure. Section 66(d), which addresses online defamation, is one of the law's most important clauses. This clause allows for legal action against those who are found to have defamed others through telecommunications networks, including social media platforms. The Act aims to prevent the use of internet platforms for harmful purposes, while Section 66(d) has been disputed for its potential impact on free expression in online communication. The law imposes penalties including jail time on any individual found guilty of internet defamation. The Telecommunications Law is essential to regulating Myanmar's expanding digital landscape, but it also emphasizes the need to maintain a balance between safeguarding people from harmful online behaviors and promoting open communication online.

Myanmar's Cybersecurity Law (2021) was enacted to regulate internet activity and protect data security. Its primary objective is to oversee and track digital platforms, including social media, by requiring corporations to retain user data locally, allowing authorities to access it for safety purposes without scrutiny from the judiciary. Additionally, the legislation allows for the limitation or removal of content that is deemed "misinformation" or "disinformation," particularly if it threatens public order or social peace. This rule has significant implications for Myanmar's social media use, affecting platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, and YouTube. It imposes stricter regulations on privacy, online content, and open communication, influencing how people, particularly young, use social media for communication, education, and professional development. (MCRB, 2022).

Overall, these regulations shape social media usage in Myanmar by restricting content, monitoring user activity, and limiting users' capacity to express themselves or share information.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY ANALYSIS

4.1 Survey Profile

Hpa-An, the capital of Kayin State, is a key economic and administrative town, known for its rubber production and cross-border trade with Thailand through the Industrial Zone (Department of Population 2014). Additionally, the township has a diverse economic landscape, with agriculture, trade, and small-scale businesses. Hpa-An, which covers an area of 2,901 square kilometers (1,120.09 square miles), is good for agriculture and manufacturing. The township consists of nine urban wards, and ninety-one village tracts, with a total of 477 villages (GAD, 2019).

Hpa-An's population is predominantly young. According to the Department of Population's 2014 report, fifty-nine percent of the population was of working age (15-64 years), with approximately 18 percent under the age of 14, showing a high potential for workforce development and educational opportunities. In 2019, the population of Hpa-An was 409,220, with 250,789 people over the age of 18 and the rest under the age of 18 (GAD). The large number of young population, especially those aged 15 to 24, is an important demographic for social media, education, and vocational training activity.

In recent years, there has been notable progress in expanding internet connectivity in Hpa-An Township. Telecommunications companies such as MyTel, MPT, ATOM, and Ooredoo have expanded 4G LTE coverage into previously underserved areas. As a result of low data prices, seventy-three percent of households now have access to mobile phones and the internet. This has improved communication and professional growth, with platforms such as Facebook and YouTube playing important roles in education and skill development (DataReportal, 2024).

Hpa-An Township is a semi-urban area populated primarily by young people with access to mobile phones and the internet as a result of the region's rising mobile network coverage. As of 2024, the majority of citizens have frequent access to social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram, which are commonly used for communication, education, and professional development.

The respondents to this study are representative of the youth of Hpa-An Township, aged 18 to 30, who were selected by convenience sampling to provide

insights into the impact of social media on their lives. The area's specific socio-cultural characteristics provide a good case study for examining how social media influences young people in both personal and professional aspects.

Table (4.1) presents the community statistic of Hpa-An Township.

Table 4.1 Total Houses, Households and Population of Hpa-An Township

| Distributions of House, Household | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Sr. | Description | House | Household | Ward | Village tract | village |
| 1 | Township | 9756 | 10123 | 9 | - | - |
| 2 | Village | 60242 | 64184 | - | 91 | 477 |
| Total | | 69998 | 74307 | 9 | 91 | 477 |
| Distributions of population | | | | | | |
| Sr. | Description | Upper 18age | | Total | Lower 18 age | |
| | | Male | Femal | | Male | Femal |
| 1 | Township | 17178 | 19286 | 36464 | 9714 | 10548 |
| 2 | Village | 102887 | 111438 | 214325 | 68090 | 70079 |
| Total | | 120065 | 130724 | 250789 | 77804 | 80627 |

Source: Hpa-An GAD, 2019

4.2 Study Design

This study uses a descriptive research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collecting methods, to explore how social media impacts the youth of Hpa-An Township. This mixed-methods methodology allows for a comprehensive analysis of respondents' social media patterns, psychological impacts, and professional impacts.

4.2.1 Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined by using the Taro-Yamane Formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \\
 &= 250789 / (1 + 250789 * (0.08)^2) \\
 &= 250789 / 1606.05
 \end{aligned}$$

$$=156 \approx 160$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N= Total population (250789)

e = Margin of error (0.08)

4.3 Analysis of Survey Results

This section presents the key findings from the survey, focusing on respondents' demographics, social media usage patterns, and the influence on their personal and professional life.

4.3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are important to understanding the context in which this survey is conducted. A total of 160 people were surveyed, with questions about their place of residence, age, gender, education level, and employment status. These demographic data are essential in determining the analysis of social media usage and its impact on the youth of Hpa-An Township.

Table 4.2 presents a detailed breakdown of the respondents' demographic data. The table divides respondents into age group, genders, educational achievement, and employment status. Each of these categories provides useful information on how respondents interact with social media and how their demographic characteristics influence their usage patterns.

The demographic table is followed by a brief interpretation of the data, which highlights significant patterns and factors that may influence social media use among youth from different background in this study.

Table 4.2 Demographics of the Respondents

| Sr. | Age | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | 18-20 | 60 | 37.5 |
| 2. | 21-23 | 48 | 30 |
| 3. | 24-26 | 21 | 13.1 |
| 4. | 27-29 | 15 | 9.4 |
| 5. | 30 | 16 | 10 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |
| Sr. | Gender | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Female | 102 | 63.7 |
| 2. | Male | 58 | 36.3 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |
| Sr. | Education Level | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Graduate | 28 | 17.5 |
| 2. | High School | 38 | 23.8 |
| 3. | Hpu Hsan Paw Education Center | 1 | 0.6 |
| 4. | Master | 1 | 0.6 |
| 5. | Middle school | 7 | 4.4 |
| 6. | Nursing Training School | 7 | 4.4 |
| 7. | University Student | 78 | 48.8 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |
| Sr. | Employment status | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Employed | 38 | 23.8 |
| 2. | NGO | 1 | 0.6 |
| 3. | Nurse | 1 | 0.6 |
| 4. | Self- Employed | 9 | 5.6 |
| 5. | Student | 104 | 65 |
| 6. | Unemployed | 6 | 3.8 |
| 7. | Volunteer | 1 | 0.6 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

According to the data in table 4.2, the majority of respondents (67.5%) are between the ages of 18 and 23, with the largest group being 18-20 years (37.5%). This shows that the study mostly represents the perspectives of young individuals, who tend to be more active on social media. Only 10% of respondents are 30 or older, therefore the findings are more likely to reflect social media habits of young people.

Table 4.2 demonstrates that women account for 63.7% of all responses, while males account for 36.3%. This might influence the results, as research often reveals that men and women use social media differently. Women may use social media more for social relationships, whereas men may use it for collecting information or professional purposes. The higher percentage of female respondents may highlight the social aspects of social media use.

As indicated in table 4.2, nearly half of the respondents (48.8%) are university students, with 23.8% being high school graduates. Additionally, 17.5% are holders of a graduate degree. This shows that many individuals are using social media for academic or professional purposes, such as networking or acquiring information. The variety of educational levels provides different perspectives on how education influences social media use.

As show in table 4.2, the majority of respondents (65%) are students, with 23.8% employed and a smaller percentage in specialized professions such as self-employment or nursing. This indicates that the sample consists mostly of young people still in school or university. As a result, their social media use may be oriented towards socializing and education rather than career-related activities.

The respondents are predominantly young, urban, and well-educated, with more women than men. These factors are likely to influence the study's findings, as they represent how young people use social media in their daily lives, particularly for socializing and learning.

4.3.2 Utilization of Social Media Platforms

This section explores how respondents use social media platforms, including the specific platforms they engage with, the devices they use to access social media, the amount of time spent on these platforms, their monthly social media expenses, and the type of internet connection they use. Additionally, it shows the frequency that users check their accounts and the primary reasons they use social media. The data collected

from these categories provide important insight into the respondents' social media habits and behaviors.

Table 4.3 Popular Social Media Platforms

| Sr. | Social Media platforms | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------------------|------------|----------------|
| 1. | Facebook | 154 | 30.5 |
| 2. | YouTube | 97 | 19.2 |
| 3. | Instagram | 51 | 10.1 |
| 4. | Telegram | 100 | 19.8 |
| 5. | TikTok | 81 | 16 |
| 6. | Twitter | 3 | 0.6 |
| 7. | Pinterest | 15 | 3 |
| 8. | LinkedIn | 4 | 0.8 |
| Total | | 505 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As shown in Table 4.3, Facebook is the most popular platform, with 154 respondents (30.5%). Telegram and YouTube are also popular platforms (19.8% and 19.2%, respectively). TikTok is also significant, with 16% of respondents using it. Instagram (10.1%), Pinterest (3%), LinkedIn (0.8%), and Twitter (0.6%) had lower popularity among respondents. This distribution reveals that Facebook dominates the social media landscape, followed by Telegram and YouTube, with LinkedIn, a professional platform, have relatively lower usage.

Table 4.4 Devices for Accessing Social Media

| Sr. | Type of device | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------------|------------|----------------|
| 1. | Mobile Phone | 160 | 73.1 |
| 2. | Tablet | 8 | 3.7 |
| 3. | Laptop | 40 | 18.3 |
| 4. | Desktop Computer | 5 | 2.3 |
| 5. | Smart TV | 6 | 2.7 |
| Total | | 219 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.4 indicates that a great majority of respondents (73.1%) use mobile phones to access social media, highlighting the need of mobile-friendly platforms and apps. Laptops are the second most popular device (18.3%), while tablets, desktop PCs, and smart TVs are much less popular, with percentages of 3.7%, 2.3%, and 2.7%. This highlights the importance of mobile devices for social media access, which may be related to respondents' mobility and convenience preferences.

Table 4.5 Time Spent on Social Media

| Sr. | Time Spent | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | 1-2 hours | 28 | 17.5 |
| 2. | 2-3 hours | 35 | 21.9 |
| 3. | 3-4 hours | 32 | 20 |
| 4. | Less than 1 hour | 13 | 8.1 |
| 5. | More than 4 hours | 51 | 31.9 |
| 6. | Unlimited | 1 | 0.6 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As presented in table 4.5, more than half of respondents (52.9%) spend more than three hours per day on social media, with 31.9% reporting more than four hours and 20% reporting three to four hours. Approximately 39.4% of respondents spend between one and three hours every day. Only 8.1% spend less than one hour per day on social media. This data reveals that a significant number of respondents spend a significant amount of their time to social media, possibly indicating its importance in their everyday lives.

Table 4.6 Monthly Expenses on Social Media Use

| Sr. | Cost Per Month (Kyat) | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Under 10,000 kyat | 33 | 20.1 |
| 2. | 10,001 – 20,000 kyat | 83 | 52 |
| 3. | 20,001 – 30,000 kyat | 25 | 16 |
| 4. | 30,001 – 40,000 kyat | 11 | 6.9 |
| 5. | 40,001 – 50,000 kyat | 4 | 2.5 |
| 6. | 50,001 kyat and above | 4 | 2.5 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

According to table 4.6, the majority of respondents (51.9%) spend between 10,001 and 20,000 kyat per month on social media related costs. Approximately 20% of respondents spend less than 10,000 kyat, while 15.6% spend between 20,001 and 30,000 kyat. A small number of respondents (6.9%) report spending more over 30,000 kyat. This data shows a large expenditure in social media, likely for data plans or subscription services, with the majority of respondents spending moderately each month.

Table 4.7 Source of Monthly Expenses for Social Media Use

| Sr. | Source of Expenses | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Brother / Sister | 8 | 5 |
| 2. | Parents | 83 | 51.9 |
| 3. | Relatives | 5 | 3.1 |
| 4. | Yourself | 64 | 40 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

According to Table 4.7, most respondents (51.9%) depend on their parents to pay their monthly social media costs, while 40% pay for themselves. A smaller percentage of respondents rely on siblings (5%) or other relatives (3.1%) to cover these expenses. These data indicate that the majority of respondents, particularly students,

receive assistance from their parents for social media-related expenses, although many of them show financial independence by managing these costs independently.

Table 4.8 Internet Access Types for Social Media Use

| Sr. | Types | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Fiber Internet | 20 | 8.4 |
| 2. | Wi-Fi | 79 | 33.3 |
| 3. | Mobile Data | 129 | 54.4 |
| 4. | Public Internet Access Points (e.g., libraries, coffee shops) | 9 | 3.8 |
| Total | | 237 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As revealed in table 4.8, the majority of respondents (54.4%) use mobile data to access social media, while 33.3% use Wi-Fi. A smaller portion (8.4%) use fiber internet, with only 3.8% using public internet access points. These findings indicate that mobile data is the most common and accessible mode of accessing social media, highlighting the dominance of mobile devices in respondents' social media usage.

Table 4.9 Frequency of Checking Social Media Accounts

| Sr. | Description | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | A few times a week | 25 | 15.6 |
| 2. | Less than once a week | 17 | 10.6 |
| 3. | Once a day | 37 | 23.1 |
| 4. | Once a week | 11 | 6.9 |
| 5. | Several times a day | 70 | 43.8 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As seen in table 4.9, 43.8% of respondents check their social media accounts several times per day, indicating a high degree of engagement. An additional 23.1% check their accounts once a day, while a smaller percentage check out their accounts less frequently, with 15.6% doing so a few times per week and 6.9% once a week. These

results show that a significant percentage of respondents utilize their social media accounts on a daily basis, highlighting the habitual nature of social media usage.

Table 4.10 Purpose of Using Social Media

| Sr. | Purpose of Using Social Media | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | News | 108 | 22.1 |
| 2. | Entertainment | 103 | 21.1 |
| 3. | Educational | 123 | 25.2 |
| 4. | Personal updates from friends/family | 97 | 19.9 |
| 5. | Professional/business-related | 57 | 11.7 |
| Total | | 488 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As presented in table 4.10, social media is use for a wide range of purposes, the most prevalent of which are educational (25.2%) and news (22.1%). Entertainment is another popular choice, accounting for 21.1% of respondents, followed by receiving personal updates from friends and family (19.9%). A smaller portion (11.7%) uses social media for professional or business-related purposes. This indicates that respondents use social media mostly for educational, informative, and personal interaction, with fewer using it for professional networking or business-related news.

Psychological Impact

This section examines the psychological impacts of social media on the respondents. It explores how social media has impacted their access to information, self-esteem, and emotional well-being, including experiences of cyberbullying and the decision to take breaks from social media. The section also addresses the respondents' feelings of social media addiction, anxiety, and loneliness, providing insights into the broader mental and emotional consequences of social media usage among the youth in Hpa-An Township.

Table 4.11 Social Media as a Source of Information and News

| Do you feel that Social media has improved your access to information and news? | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sr. | Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Yes | 147 | 91.9 |
| 2. | No | 13 | 8.1 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |
| If yes, please explain how social media has improved your access to Information and news. | | | |
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | It provides real-time updates on current events. | 88 | 20.6 |
| 2. | It offers a wide range of sources and perspectives | 73 | 17.1 |
| 3. | It is convenient and accessible. | 68 | 15.9 |
| 4. | It allows me to follow specific topics of interest. | 108 | 25.2 |
| 5. | It helps me discover news through friends' shares. | 88 | 20.6 |
| 6. | I can easily search for all the business and general knowledge I want to know. | 3 | 0.7 |
| Total | | 428 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As shown in table 4.11, the vast majority of respondents (91.9%) believe that social media has increased their access to information and news, with just (8.1%) disagreeing. This suggests that for the majority of respondents, social media is an important tool for staying informed, most likely because of the ability of the platform to provide real-time updates and various perspectives. The main benefit of social media in terms of information access is the capacity to allow users to follow specific topics of interest, which was cited by 25.2% of respondents. Additionally, 20.6% appreciate its ability to provide real-time updates on current events, while another 20.6% believe it

helps people find news through friends' shares. 15.9% of respondents value social media's convenience and accessibility, while 17.1% like the wide range of sources and perspectives available on these platforms. These findings indicate that social media is viewed as an important tool for accessing information that is both customized to personal interests and available from a wide ranges of sources.

Table 4.12 Psychological Impact_ Social Media and Self-Esteem

| Please describe how social media affects your self-esteem. | | | |
|---|---|------------------|-----------------------|
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | It makes me feel connected and valued | 111 | 41.7 |
| 2. | It causes me to compare myself to others negatively | 34 | 12.8 |
| 3. | It boosts my confidence through positive feedback | 46 | 17.3 |
| 4. | It makes me feel not good enough | 21 | 7.9 |
| 5. | It helps me receive support and encouragement | 54 | 20.3 |
| Total | | 266 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As indicated in Table 4.12, social media has positive and negative impacts on respondents' self-esteem. A large number of people (41.7%) believe that social media makes them feel connected and respected, while 20.3% think that it helps them receive support and encouragement. However, 12.8% said social media helps them compare themselves to others negatively and 7.9% believe it makes them "not good enough." Additionally, 17.3% believe that social media boosts their confidence through good comments. These findings indicate that, while social media can provide emotional support and acknowledgment it can also lead to negative self-comparisons.

Table 4.13 Psychological Impact_ Cyberbullying and Negative Interactions on social media

| Have you experienced cyber bullying or negative interactions on social media? | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sr. | Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Yes | 65 | 40.6 |
| 2. | No | 95 | 59.4 |
| | Total | 160 | 100 |
| If yes, please describe your experience with cyber bullying or negative interactions on social media | | | |
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Hurtful comments or messages. | 35 | 31 |
| 2. | Been targeted by rumors or gossip | 27 | 23.9 |
| 3. | Had personal information shared without consent? | 20 | 17.7 |
| 4. | Experienced harassment or threats | 13 | 11.5 |
| 5. | Felt isolated or excluded by online groups | 13 | 11.5 |
| 6. | Financial fraud through online shop and message | 5 | 4.4 |
| Total | | 113 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As indicated in table 4.13, 40.6% of respondents have experienced cyberbullying or negative interactions on social media, whilst 59.4% have not. This suggests that a large number of respondents face challenges related to online harassment, which might have negative psychological impacts. The most common type of cyberbullying reported by respondents is receiving hurtful comments or messages (31%). Other major issues include being targeted by rumors or gossip (23.9%) and having personal information shared without permission (17.7%). Some respondents (11.5%) also experienced harassment or threats, as well as feelings of isolation or

exclusion from online communities. These findings highlights the various forms of online harassment faced by the respondents, which may have lasting psychological impacts.

Table 4.14 Psychological Impact_ Reasons for Taking a Break from Social Media Use

| Have you ever taken a break from social media? | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sr. | Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Yes | 99 | 61.9 |
| 2. | No | 61 | 38.1 |
| | Total | 160 | 100 |
| If yes, please explain why you took a break from social media | | | |
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | To focus on studies or work | 70 | 35.2 |
| 2. | To improve mental health | 30 | 15.1 |
| 3. | To reduce stress or anxiety | 42 | 21.1 |
| 4. | To spend more time with family and friends | 34 | 17.1 |
| 5. | Due to bad internet connection | 12 | 6 |
| 6. | To reduce effects on the health of the eyes | 11 | 5.5 |
| | Total | 199 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As shown in table 4.14, 61.9% of respondents have taken a break from social media, while 38.1% have not. This shows that many respondents feel the need to disconnect from social media, potentially due to the negative psychological impacts or the overwhelming aspect of continuous connectivity.

According to the findings in table 4.14, the most common reason for taking a break from social media is to focus on education or work (35.2%), followed by a desire to reduce stress or anxiety (21.1%). Additionally, 15.1% of respondents took a break to improve their mental health, with 17.1% doing so to spend more time with family and

friends. A lower proportion of respondents mentioned factors such as poor internet connection (6%) or concerns about eye health (5.5%).

Table 4.15 Psychological Impact_ Emotional Effects of Social Media Use

| Sr. | Description | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | I am addicted to using social media. | 3.19 | 0.805 |
| 2. | I feel anxious or stressed if I cannot access my social media accounts. | 3.38 | 1.126 |
| 3. | My use of social media has led to feelings of loneliness. | 2.66 | 1.16 |
| Overall mean | | 3.08 | 1.03 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The descriptive data shown in table 4.1 reveal that respondents experience moderate psychological impact as a result of their use of social media. The mean score of 3.19 shows a tendency for social media addiction, while a slightly higher mean of 3.38 suggests that many people feel anxious or stressed when they are unable to use social media. The feelings of loneliness is less prevalent, with the lower mean of 2.66. The overall mean of 3.08 indicates a moderate psychological impact, highlighting a balance of addiction, anxiety, and loneliness in relation to social media use among the respondents.

Social Impact

This section focuses on how social media has impacted the respondents' social lives. It examines the formation of meaningful friendships and professional relationship, as well as the positive and negative effects of social media on personal relationships. The section also investigates how social media affects social relationships, the sharing of different perspectives, and whether it contributes to social isolation.

Table 4.16: Social Impact_ Social Media on Personal and Professional Relationship

| Have you formed any meaningful friendships or professional relationships through social media? | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sr. | Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Yes | 147 | 91.9 |
| 2. | No | 13 | 8.1 |
| | Total | 160 | 100 |
| If yes, please describe how these relationships have impacted your personal or professional life. | | | |
| Sr. | Statements | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Helped me find job opportunities | 100 | 27.5 |
| 2. | Provided support and advice. | 87 | 24 |
| 3. | Expanded my professional network | 40 | 11 |
| 4. | Improved my social life and connections. | 74 | 20.4 |
| 5. | Offer collaboration opportunities. | 62 | 17.1 |
| | Total | 363 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As indicated in table 4.16, 91.9% of respondents said they had made meaningful friendships or professional relationships through social media, while just 8.1% said they had not. This shows that social media plays an important role in assisting users build personal and professional relationships, emphasizing its value as a networking tool in modern society.

Table 4.16 shows that social media contacts have had a significant impact on respondents' personal and professional lives. The most prevalent benefit, stated by 27.5% of respondents, was the opportunity to find job through these connections. Additionally, 24% of respondents reported receiving advice and support, while 20.4% stated that social media had improved their social life and connections. Other benefits

include collaborating opportunities (17.1%) and expanding professional networks (11%). These findings suggest that social media is not only a platform for casual connections but also an essential tool for professional development and skill development.

Table 4.17 Social Impact_ Negative Impacts of Social Media Use

| Have you personally experienced any negative impacts as a result of using social media? | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sr. | Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Yes | 122 | 76.25 |
| 2. | No | 38 | 23.75 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |
| If yes, Please describe any negative impacts that you have personally experienced as a result of using social media? | | | |
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | More conflicts or arguments with friends/family | 42 | 17.4 |
| 2. | Feeling neglected or left out in social gatherings | 11 | 4.5 |
| 3. | Less face-to-face interactions | 107 | 44.2 |
| 4. | Strained relationships with friends or family | 28 | 11.6 |
| 5. | Decreased participation in community activities | 49 | 20.2 |
| 6. | I have not experienced it | 5 | 2.1 |
| Total | | 242 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The data presented in table 4.17 reveals that, of the 160 respondents, 76.25% (122 individuals) stated they had experienced negative impact as a result of using social media, while 23.75% (38 individuals) stated that they had not.

As stated in table 4.17, 44.2% of respondents believe that the most common negative impact of social media usage is a decrease in face-to-face interactions. Other negative impact include a decreased in community participation (20.2%) and strained relationships with friends or family (11.6%) and. Additionally, 17.4% of respondents stated that social media has led to more arguments or conflicts with friends and family, and 4.5% said they feel neglected or excluded at social gatherings. Only 2.1% of respondents reported no negative impacts. These findings suggest that, although social media is an effective tool for communication, it can also lead to social isolation and conflicts in real-life social interactions.

Table 4.18 Social Impacts on Social Media's Influence on Viewpoints, Social Interactions, and Isolation

| Sr. | Statements | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Social media has exposed me to diverse viewpoints and cultures. | 3.53 | 0.808 |
| 2. | Social media has improved my social interactions and relationships. | 3.27 | 0.859 |
| 3. | My use of social media has led to social isolation? | 2.7 | 0.963 |
| Overall mean | | 3.17 | 0.88 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The descriptive data in table 4.18 provide insights into how social media influences both social connections and isolation. Respondents generally agree that social media has introduced them to a diversity of cultures and points of view, with a mean score of 3.53. The improvement of social interactions through social media is indicated by the mean score of 3.27. However, there is an acknowledgment of social isolation, with a mean score of 2.7. The overall mean score of 3.17 suggests a balanced

of social media impact, reflecting its dual role in fostering inclusivity while also contributing to potential challenges such as isolation.

Educational Impact

This section focuses on how social media impact on respondents' educational and professional development. It examines how social media is used for educational purposes, how it contribute to academic or professional development and how it affects productivity. The section also explores views of the respondents on whether social media is a useful tool for learning and accessing reliable educational resources.

As indicated in table 4.19, 92.5% of the respondents stated that social media has contributed positively in their academic or professional developments. Only 7.5% do not consider social media as useful for their academic or professional benefits. This high percentage indicates that social media is viewed to be an important tool in benefiting one's education and career as it creates a platform for learning, networking and staying informed.

As revealed in table 4.19, a large number of the respondents have used social media to access various online courses and resources, as cited by 32% of the respondents. Another 19.2% of respondents have used social media to network with other professionals in their field, while 15.5% stated that it serves as a platform where they can showcase their work. Other benefits included keeping respondents informed about business developments and news (14.9%) and joining related professional groups (13.4%). These findings indicate that social media is not only a platform for social interactions but plays an important role in enhancing professional network and skills developments.

Table 4.19 Educational Impact_ Social Media's Contribution to Academic or Professional Development

| Do you believe social media has helped you in your academic or professional development? | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Sr. | Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
| 1. | Yes | 148 | 92.5 |
| 2. | No | 12 | 7.5 |
| | Total | 160 | 100 |
| If yes, please provide an example of how social media has helped in your academic or professional. | | | |
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1. | It helps me network with professionals in my field | 63 | 19.2 |
| 2. | It provides access to online courses and resources. | 105 | 32 |
| 3. | It offers a platform to showcase my work | 51 | 15.5 |
| 4. | It keeps me updated on business trends and news | 49 | 14.9 |
| 5. | It allows me to join relevant professional groups | 44 | 13.4 |
| 6. | Easy to find the content you need | 16 | 4.9 |
| | Total | 328 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.20 Educational Impact_ Social Media on Productivity

| Please describe how social media has impacted your productivity. | | | |
|---|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1. | It provides useful tools and resources for my work | 74 | 26.2 |
| 2. | It distracts me with non-work-related content | 23 | 8.2 |
| 3. | It helps me stay informed about business developments. | 55 | 19.5 |
| 4. | It enables quick communication with colleagues. | 99 | 35.1 |
| 5. | It can be a source of procrastination | 31 | 11 |
| Total | | 282 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.20 indicates how social media has impact on productivity in both positive and negative ways. While 35.1% of respondents said social media allows for quick communication with coworkers, and 26.2% said it provides important tools and resources for their work, 11% said it could lead to procrastination. Additionally, 8.2% reported that social media distracts them with non-work-related items. These findings suggest that, while social media could increase productivity in some cases, it can also be a distraction if not used properly.

Table 4.21 Educational Impact_ Social Media and Educational Benefits

| Sr. | Statements | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | I use social media for educational purposes. | 4 | 0.634 |
| 2. | Social media is a useful tool for learning and academic growth. | 3.58 | 0.843 |
| 3. | Social media has provided me with high-quality and reliable educational resources. | 3.28 | 0.762 |
| Overall mean | | 3.62 | 0.75 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The descriptive data in table 4.21 show that the majority of respondents believe that social media is frequently used for educational purposes, supported by a high mean score of 4.00 and a low variation (standard deviation of 0.634), indicating agreement. A mean score of 3.58 indicates that social media is seen as a useful tool for learning and academic growth. The lower mean score of 3.28 for resource reliability indicates a degree of hesitation among respondents. The total mean score of 3.62 indicates a generally positive but cautious on the use of social media in education.

Professional Impact

This section examines the role of social media in professional development and its possible positive and negative impacts. It focuses on how respondents use social media to improve their skills as professionals, network with people in their field, and find new opportunities. The section also explores social media's negative consequences on professional lives, such as distractions and exposure to inappropriate content. Finally, it examines how social media influences personal and professional growth.

As indicated in table 4.22, a vast majority (81.3%) of respondents report that social media has contributed to their professional development, while only 18.8% do not consider it beneficial in this area. The high percentage indicates that social media plays an important role in professional development of most respondents, providing opportunities for learning, networking, and showcasing their skills.

Table 4.22 shows that social media has benefitted respondents in various ways. The most common benefit, identified by 35% of respondents, is access to online courses and tools for professional growth. Additionally, 23.2% of respondents believe social media helps them network with people in their field, while 18.1% use it to showcase their work. Keeping up with business trends (15%) and joining relevant professional groups (8.7%) are also noted benefits. These findings highlights the relevance of social media as a tool for professional development, ranging from knowledge expansion to network building.

Table 4.22 Professional Impact_ Social Media's Contribution to Professional Development

| Do you believe social media has helped you in your professional development? | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Sr. | Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | Yes | 130 | 81.3 |
| 2. | No | 30 | 18.8 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 |
| If yes, please provide an example of how social media has helped in your professional development | | | |
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | It helps me network with professionals in my field | 59 | 23.2 |
| 2. | It provides access to online courses and resources | 89 | 35 |
| 3. | It offers a platform to showcase my work | 46 | 18.1 |
| 4. | It keeps me updated on business trends and news | 38 | 15 |
| 5. | It allows me to join relevant professional groups. | 22 | 8.7 |
| Total | | 254 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As indicated in table 4.23, 30.9% of respondents reported social media contributes to procrastination, making it the most commonly stated negative impact. Other negative impact include distractions from work (22.2%) and exposure to unprofessional content (16.5%). A smaller proportion (6.2%) reported that social media negatively impacted on their professional image. However, 24.3% of respondents said that social media had no negative impact on their professional lives. These findings indicate that, while social media can be useful for professional development, it can also be a source of distraction and unproductive behaviour.

Table 4.23 Professional Impact_ Negative Professional Impact of Social Media

| Please describe any negative impacts social media has had on your professional Life. | | | |
|---|---|------------------|-----------------------|
| Sr. | Description | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 1. | It distracts me from work tasks | 54 | 22.2 |
| 2. | It negatively impacts my professional image | 15 | 6.2 |
| 3. | It leads to procrastination | 75 | 30.9 |
| 4. | It exposes me to unprofessional content | 40 | 16.5 |
| 5. | I have no impacts on it | 59 | 24.3 |
| Total | | 243 | 100 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 4.24 Professional Impact_ Social Media's Contribution to Personal and Professional Growth

| Sr. | Statements | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------|---|-------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Social media has opened up new opportunities for my personal growth and profession. | 4.34 | 0.561 |
| 2. | Social media has improved my professional skills and knowledge. | 3.34 | 0.768 |
| 3. | Using social media has increased my professional visibility and opportunities. | 3.25 | 0.761 |
| Overall mean | | 3.64 | 0.70 |

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The descriptive data presented in table 4.24 shows the importance of social media in increasing professional progress and skills. Respondents strongly agree that social media has opened up new opportunities for personal and professional development, as demonstrated by the strong mean score of 4.34 and a low standard

deviation (0.561), indicating a strong agreement. While social media has a moderate impact on improve professional skills and knowledge (mean 3.34), its role in increasing professional exposure and opportunities is also moderate (mean 3.25). Social media has a positive impact on professional growth, as reflected in the overall mean of 3.64, however its influence is stronger in terms of opening opportunities than improving skills and professional visibility.

Overall Experience and Opinions

This section presents overall experiences and opinions of the respondents on how they use various social media platforms. It also explores their preferences, reasons for using specific platforms, and suggestions for increasing the positive impact of social media on the personal and professional life of young people in Hpa-An Township. Additionally, it collects perspectives of the respondents on the challenges they face when using social media and potential solutions.

- (a) What social media platforms (e.g Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn etc.) do you most frequently use, and why do you prefer them over others.

Facebook is the most frequently used platform, with 30.9% of respondents cited it as their preferred medium to stay connected with friends and family and keep up with current news. YouTube followed closely, with 26% of respondents using primarily for educational and entertainment purposes. TikTok also showed significant popularity, with 14.7% of respondents using the platform, for its lively and entertaining short-form videos.

Other platforms such as Instagram (12%), Pinterest (5.6%), and Google (5.4%), are also used, but to a lesser extent. LinkedIn, a professional networking site, is used by only 3.4% of respondents, indicating that professional networking is not a top priority for the majority of respondents. Twitter is the least popular platform, used by only 2% of respondents, likely due to its specialized user base and emphasis on real-time updates.

These findings suggest that respondents mostly use social media for social interactions and entertainment, with fewer engaging for educational or professional purposes.

- (b) What are your suggestions for improving the positive impact of social media on the personal and professional lives of youth in Hpa-An Township?

Respondents shared a variety of insightful ideas to improve social media's positive impact on the personal and professional life of young people in Hpa-An Township. 95 respondents (19.9%) proposed that social media platforms should include additional educational programs and workshops, highlighting the capacity of the platform to serve as significant learning tools beyond mere entertainment. They emphasized how online workshops could provide accessible education to young people who may lack traditional learning opportunities. Meanwhile, 82 respondents (17.2%) suggested that social media could provide career advice and counseling, allowing young people to manage their professional development. This indicates the desire of the respondents for platforms to be used as career-enhancing tools, with job advice and networking opportunities easily available.

Additionally, 69 respondents (14.5%) encouraged the development and sharing of positive and inspiring contents, indicating a strong preference for information that encourages and uplifts rather than contribute to negative online experiences. 68 respondents (14.3%) emphasized the importance of self-improvement by suggesting the inclusion of online courses and resources to assist young people in developing skills. The need for safe online spaces was also emphasized, with 75 respondents (15.7%) urging for platforms that allow young people to openly communicate and share their ideas and experiences without fear of being judged or harassed.

54 respondents (11.3%) suggested the development of social media mentoring programs aimed at connecting young people with experienced professionals who could offer guidance and share expertise. This highlights an acknowledgement for the important role mentorship plays in both personal and professional development. Additionally, 34 respondents (7.1%) believe that social media could help develop stronger community bonds by creating a support network that allows young people to feel connected and engaged with both their local and online communities.

These suggestions collectively suggest that respondents view social media as more than just a tool for casual interaction, but as a platform with the potential to promote personal growth, professional advancement, and community development.

- (c) In your opinion, what are the most significant challenges youth in Hpa-An Township face when using social media, and how do you think these challenges can be addressed?

According to the survey results, respondents provided several thoughtful opinions on the most significant challenges that youth in Hpa-An Township face when using social media, as well as suggestions for addressing these issues. 83 respondents (19%) shared concerns about privacy, highlighting the importance of educating young people about privacy and safe online behaviour. They believed that many young people are unaware of how their personal information can be exposed, and that education could help them navigate social media more safely.

75 respondents (17.2%) misinformation as a key challenge, highlighting how easily false information spreads on social platforms. They suggested promoting critical thinking and encouraging users to verify sources before sharing content. To address this, they suggested providing critical thinking and encouraging users to verify sources before sharing content. Respondents acknowledged the need of educating young people to differentiate reliable information in the digital age.

Social media addiction was also viewed as a significant issue by 61 respondents (14%). They suggested promoting time management practices and encouraging offline activities to help address this issue. Respondents emphasized the importance of balanced relationships with social media in maintaining overall well-being.

Mental health was also regarded as a key issue, with 53 respondents (12.2%) citing social media's significant impact on psychological well-being. Respondents suggested providing access to mental health resources and the formation of support groups to address this issue, highlighting their understanding of the emotional strain that social media can place on youth.

Another 53 respondents (12.2%) demanded raising awareness on online etiquette and enacting stricter policies to promote respectful behavior on social media. They believed that inappropriate online conduct, such as cyberbullying and harassment, could be mitigated through enhanced education and stricter enforcement of online standards.

52 respondents (11.9%) identified lack of digital literacy as a pressing concern. They advocated providing training on how to use social media responsibly, so that young people are better prepared to deal with the complexities of online interactions.

Lastly, 59 (13.5%) respondents cited online safety as a serious issue. They proposed that organizing safety workshops and seminars will educate young people understand the risks involved and how to protect themselves from online threats.

These responses demonstrate that, while social media offers several benefits and opportunities, it also poses significant issues that should be addressed through education, policy changes, and mental health support. The respondents clearly acknowledge the capacity for social media to be a safer, more productive platform for young people if these challenges are effectively addressed.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Findings

The primary objective of this research was to explore the usage of social media platforms by the youth in Hpa-An Township, assess the perceived impact of social media, and evaluate its influence on their personal and professional lives. The analysis of the survey data collected from 160 respondents provides significant insights into the demographic characteristics, social media usage habits, and the perceived impacts of social media. Key findings are summarized as follows:

Facebook emerged as the dominant platform, with 92.2% of respondents using it regularly, followed by Telegram and YouTube. The data indicates that social media has become an integral part of daily life, with 73.1% of respondents accessing these platforms via mobile devices and 31.9% spending over four hours per day online. This high engagement reflects the increasing reliance on mobile technology for social interaction and information gathering. The use of social media aligns with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), where youth models observed online behaviors and social norms, reinforcing their engagement in the digital world. The data suggests that social media is not merely a tool for communication but a platform deeply embedded in the daily routines of youth in Hpa-An Township.

While social media offers significant advantages, such as improved access to information (91.9% reported staying informed), it also presents notable challenges. A substantial portion of respondents (40.6%) reported experiencing cyberbullying, and 61.9% admitted to taking breaks from social media due to stress or emotional exhaustion. These findings highlight the dual role of social media: on one hand, it serves as a source of information and connection, and on the other, it can lead to emotional strain. Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1934) helps explain how these online interactions shape self-concept, with negative interactions like cyberbullying impacting mental health. Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) also applies here, as youth often compare themselves to idealized portrayals on social media, resulting in negative self-esteem and increased anxiety. One respondent mentioned, "Seeing my friends' lives online often makes me feel left out," illustrating how social media can contribute to feelings of exclusion and inadequacy.

Social media plays a pivotal role in educational and professional growth. An overwhelming 92.5% of respondents stated that social media contributed positively to their professional development, particularly in networking, accessing online learning resources, and staying updated on business trends. Platforms like Facebook and YouTube are instrumental in expanding educational opportunities and enhancing career prospects. These findings align with Use and Gratification Theory (Katz, 1959), as youth actively seek these platforms for professional development and skill-building.

However, challenges remain_30.9% of respondents noted that social media led to procrastination and distractions from work tasks. One respondent shared, “While social media has helped me connect with professionals, I find it hard to stay focused during work hours because of the constant notifications.”

Beyond professional development, social media has significantly shaped how youth in Hpa-An Township engage in social and community activities. On average, social media has been reported to enable greater connection and access to diverse perspectives (overall mean = 3.17), though specific aspects show varying effects. It has facilitated connections (mean = 3.53), but also contributed to social isolation (mean = 2.66) and a reduction in face-to-face interactions, with 44.2% of respondents reporting less in-person communication. This shift highlights how social media is increasingly becoming a substitute for traditional social interactions. One respondent noted, “I feel like I talk more with my friends online than in real life,” highlighting the evolving social norms driven by digital platforms. Despite these drawbacks, social media continues to foster community engagement, with many respondents using platforms like Facebook to participate in online discussions and stay connected to both local and global issues.

Procrastination and distraction were highlighted as major challenges, with 30.9% of respondents admitting to struggling with these issues. In terms of coping mechanisms, several respondents shared strategies for managing their social media use, including limiting screen time, using productivity apps, or taking periodic breaks from online platforms. One respondent stated, “I’ve started using app timers to limit my social media time to just 30 minutes a day,” illustrating a practical approach to balancing online engagement and productivity. These insights reveal that while social media can be a source of distraction, youth are finding ways to manage its impact on their daily routines.

5.2 Suggestions

The study reveals both the benefits and challenges of social media use among youth in Hpa-An Township, providing key insights into its broader impact. The following suggestions are made, based on the findings of this study:

The data highlighted that many respondents face difficulties with digital literacy, especially in areas such as online safety, privacy protection, and verifying content accuracy. To address these gaps, schools and community organizations should implement digital literacy programs. These programs should be integrated into the educational system to provide youth with the skills necessary to navigate social media safely and critically evaluate the information they come across.

Many respondents reported experiencing stress and emotional strain due to excessive social media use. To address this, schools, local organizations, and social media platforms should collaborate to provide mental health support. Workshops and counseling services focused on managing online interactions, recognizing signs of online stress, and promoting a balanced approach between online and offline activities would help mitigate these challenges.

Social media is also regarded as a source for career development, particularly in networking and accessing educational resources. However, respondents indicated difficulties in balancing social media use with work or study obligations. Educational institutions and vocational programs should integrate social media-based learning and networking opportunities. Offering structured guidance on how to effectively use social media for career advancement will help youth maximize its professional benefits while managing distractions.

Many respondents expressed concerns about cyberbullying and reported incidents of harmful behavior online. In response, social media platforms should enhance their safety measures to reduce harmful behavior and ensure a safer online environment, while schools, community groups and Information and Public Relations Department should promote positive digital interactions. Educating youth on respectful online communication and encouraging constructive dialogue can help create a healthier and safer digital environment.

Respondents also highlighted the spread of misinformation on social media platforms. To combat this, schools, in collaboration with social media platforms, should offer training that teaches careful review of online content. Empowering youth

to verify information before sharing will help reduce the impact of misinformation in the community.

Additionally, respondents expressed concerns about privacy breaches and exposure to harmful content. Policymakers, including national legislators and ministers, should introduce stronger cyber laws to protect youth from online threats. These legal measures should be complemented by public awareness campaigns and educational programs that promote safer social media use.

By addressing these challenges through digital literacy programs, mental health support, professional development opportunities, and enhanced online safety, youth in Hpa-An Township will be better equipped to engage with the digital world responsibly. These suggested actions could support the personal and professional growth of youth and contribute to the community's socio-economic development by enabling individuals to utilize social media more effectively.

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APPENDIX

THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES ON THE YOUTH IN KAYIN STATE

(A CASE STUDY IN HPA-AN TOWNSHIP)

I am Nan Daing Hpaw Clein. I am currently pursuing a Master of Development Studies (MDevS) at Yangon University of Economics. I would truly grateful if you could complete the questionnaires to provide necessary data for my thesis. I guarantee that each element of data and information you share in this survey will be handled with the highest level of confidentiality. Your answers will be kept anonymous for any further analysis and used only for academic reasons. You may be confident that I value your privacy and anonymity above anything else. Answering the questions will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Many thanks for your time and your participation is highly appreciated.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age:

☐ 18-20

☐ 21-23

☐ 24-26

☐ 27-29

☐ 30

2. Gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

3. Education Level:

- ☐ High School
- ☐ Middle school
- ☐ University Student
- ☐ Graduate
- ☐ Master
- ☐ Other: _____

4. Employment Status:

- ☐ Student
- ☐ employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Self- employed
- ☐ Other: _____

Section B: Usage of Social Media Sites

5. Which social media platforms do you use? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Telegram
- ☐ TikTok
- ☐ Twitter

- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Other: _____

6. How do you usually access social media platforms? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Mobile Phone
- ☐ Tablet
- ☐ Laptop
- ☐ Desktop Computer
- ☐ Smart TV
- ☐ Other.....

7. On average, how many hours per day do you spend on social media Site?

- ☐ Less than 1 hour
- ☐ 1-2 hours
- ☐ 2-3 hours
- ☐ 3-4 hours
- ☐ More than 4 hours

8. Your Monthly expenses on Social Media Site?

- ☐ Under 10,000 kyat
- ☐ 10,001 – 20,000 kyat

- ☐ 20,001 – 30,000 kyat
- ☐ 30,001 – 40,000 kyat
- ☐ 40,001 – 50,000 kyat
- ☐ 50,001 kyat and above
- ☐ Other.....

9. Who provides your monthly expenses using on social media site?

- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Brother / Sister
- ☐ Relatives
- ☐ Yourself
- ☐ Others (please specify)

10. When you use social media, what type of internet connection do you use?

(Select all that apply)

- ☐ Fiber Internet
- ☐ Wi-Fi
- ☐ Mobile Data
- ☐ Public Internet Access Points (e.g., libraries, coffee shops)
- ☐ Other

11. How frequently do you check your social media accounts?

- ☐ Several times a day
- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ A few times a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Less than once a week

12. What is the purpose of using social media? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ News
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Educational
- ☐ Personal updates from friends/family
- ☐ Professional/business-related
- ☐ Other.....

Section C Psychological Impact

13. Do you feel that Social media has improved your access to information and news?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (if No, skip to question 16)

14. If yes, please explain how social media has improved your access to information and news: (Select all that apply)

.....

15. Please describe how social media affects your self-esteem:

.....

16. Have you experienced cyberbullying or negative interactions on social media?

☐ Yes

☐ No (if no, skip to question 19)

17. If yes, please describe your experience with cyberbullying or negative interactions on social media.

.....

18. Have you ever taken a break from social media?

☐ Yes

☐ No (if No, skip to question 21)

19. If yes, please explain why you took a break from social media:

.....

Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the influence of social media on your personal and professional life. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

| 20. Psychological Impact | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| I am addicted to using social media. | | | | | |
| I feel anxious or stressed if I cannot access my social media accounts. | | | | | |
| My use of social media has led to feelings of loneliness. | | | | | |

Section D: Social Impact

21. Have you formed any meaningful friendships or professional relationships through social media?

☐ Yes

☐ No (if No, skip to question 23)

22. If yes, please describe how these relationships have impacted your personal or professional life?

.....

23. Have you personally experienced any negative impacts as a result of using social media?

☐ Yes

☐ No (if No, skip to question 26)

24. If yes, Can you describe any negative impacts that you have personally experienced as a result of using social media?"

.....

Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the influence of social media on your personal and professional life. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

| 25. Social Impact | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Social media has exposed me to diverse viewpoints and cultures. | | | | | |
| Social media has improved my social interactions and relationships. | | | | | |
| My use of social media has led to social isolation? | | | | | |

Section E: Educational Impact

26. Do you believe social media has helped you in your academic or professional development?

☐ Yes

☐ No (if No, skip to question 28)

27. If yes, please provide an example of how social media has helped in your academic or professional development:

.....

28. Please describe how social media has impacted your productivity

.....

Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the influence of social media on your personal and professional life. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

| 29. Educational Impact | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. I use social media for educational purposes | | | | | |
| 2. Social media is a useful tool for learning and academic growth. | | | | | |
| 3. Social media has provided me with high-quality and reliable educational resources. | | | | | |

Section F: Professional Impact

30. Do you believe social media has helped you in your professional development?

☐ Yes

☐ No (if No, skip to question 33)

31. If yes, please provide an example of how social media has helped in your professional development

.....

32. Please describe any negative impacts social media has had on your professional life.

.....

Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the influence of social media on your personal and professional life. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

| 33. Professional Impact | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Social media has opened up new opportunities for my personal growth and profession | | | | | |
| 2. Social media has improved my professional skills and knowledge. | | | | | |
| 3. Using social media has increased my professional visibility and opportunities. | | | | | |

Section G: Overall Experience and Opinions

34. What social media platforms (e.g Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn etc.) do you most frequently use, and why do you prefer them over others?

.....

35. What are your suggestions for improving the positive impact of social media on the personal and professional lives of youth in Hpa-An Township?

.....

36. In your opinion, what are the most significant challenges youth in Hpa-An Township face when using social media, and how do you think these challenges can be addressed?

.....