



# Patterns of Social Media-Driven Job Search Among College Students in Northeast India

Bivan Rodrigues Mukhim<sup>1\*</sup>, Alpana Choudhury<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, Assam Don Bosco University (ADBU), Guwahati, Assam, India [bivanmukhim@gmail.com](mailto:bivanmukhim@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati, Assam, India [alpana.choudhury@dbuniversity.ac.in](mailto:alpana.choudhury@dbuniversity.ac.in)

## Abstract

Over the last two decades, digital media platforms, also known as social media, new media, or social networking platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube, have become powerful tools for job-seeking among young people, especially in digitally connected yet socioeconomically diverse regions of India. However, studies examining the impact of social media on the career paths of college students in India are limited. In this context, this study examines the exploitation of social networking platforms for job-related purposes among college-going students in Northeast India, a socioeconomically diverse region in India. The study uses a structured questionnaire to collect responses from students in Northeast India. The data was analysed to understand how they use social networking platforms for career-related purposes. The study, based on responses collected from college students across different educational levels, disciplines, and socio-demographic backgrounds in Northeast India, explores how social networking platforms have been utilised by the youth in Northeast India for networking, skill enhancement, job searching, and making informed career decisions. The findings presented in this paper are expected to inform educational institutions, policymakers, and platform developers on how to enhance digital career support systems and better understand the career needs of students in the region.

**Keywords:** Social media, Career search, Northeast India, Youth, Job search

## 1. Introduction

Social networking platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube, have transformed from their traditional role as mere communication tools to become powerful instruments for supporting career development and job hunting, particularly among young job seekers (Mowbray & Hall, 2021; Laukkarinen, 2023). This transformation of social media is especially significant in regions which are characterised by socioeconomic diversity, such as Northeast India. While these platforms support social relationships, activism, and identity construction, and provide unprecedented access to professional networks, skill-building resources, and job opportunities, they also introduce several challenges, such as the proliferation of fake job postings, digital divides, and the creation of unrealistic career expectations (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2022; Afzal et al., 2023). Despite these developments, there are no academic studies exploring how Indian youth use social networking platforms for career-related purposes. Indeed, this lack of knowledge is a crucial issue for scholars working on career guidance in India. In this background, this study aims to examine how college students in Northeast India utilise social media to gain career-related information (Kakati, 2025). The study employed a structured questionnaire to gather insights related to the topic from students at colleges in Northeast India. The key findings derived from this study will provide meaningful insights for higher educational institutions in India and elsewhere to integrate digital literacy into career counselling,

for policymakers in designing inclusive digital employment initiatives, for individuals and organisations involved in career guidance, and for platform developers in enhancing user experience and security.

## 2. Literature Review

Research has shown that over the last two decades, social networking platforms have emerged as a dominant channel for young people seeking employment opportunities, transforming traditional job-search patterns into digital, network-driven processes (Mowbray & Hall, 2021; Laukkarinen, 2023). The extensive review of literature conducted for this study revealed that a considerable number of studies establish that platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube, have a beneficial effect on the job-seeking behaviour of undergraduates and recent graduates (Mowbray & Hall, 2021; Nikolaou, 2014). A recent study by Diepenbrock and Gibson (2018) notes that employers have increasingly relied on social networking platforms to recruit college students. Their analysis suggests that students should curate their online professional profiles and actively engage with digital communities to improve their employment prospects. It has also been found that Generation Z, who utilise a significant amount of their daily time on social media, prefer to search online for job-related purposes (Karacsony et al., 2020). This study highlights the changing nature of recruitment and the need for organisations, including higher education institutions, to adapt their career development and supportive mechanisms according to the expectations of young people in the current digital era. Previous research, employing theoretical models, has explored the use of social media as a job search.

A recent study revealed that college students prefer LinkedIn for career-related activities (Carmack & Heiss, 2018). The study further argues that it was influenced by their past use of the platform, attitudes toward its usefulness, and perceptions of control over it. In other words, the study suggests that students with greater familiarity and positive attitudes toward LinkedIn are those who most frequently engage in online job-search activities. Another study found that LinkedIn is the most commonly used social networking platform for job searching (Bauer et al., 2023). It further noted that individuals with a strong LinkedIn network tend to get more job offers. However, the study notes that the benefits arising from online networking are not evenly distributed across all social groups.

A recent study conducted by Adecco Group (2014) has shown that more than 50% of job seekers worldwide rely on a minimum of one social networking platform for job searching. The study further found that the most popular social networking platforms used worldwide for gaining career-related information are Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube. Among these, LinkedIn is the platform that is widely used for career-related purposes, with around 35% of all job seekers utilising it. The second most widely used platform is Facebook, with approximately 17% of job seekers worldwide relying on it for career-related information. Twitter is found to be the third most actively used for job search, with approximately 6% of job seekers. The study further notes that individuals with higher degrees are among the top users of social media for job searching.

Researchers have also examined how digital media shapes the perceptions of recruiting organisations and their hiring practices. In a recent investigation (Yu et al., 2025), it was opined that responses to employer reviews on social media can influence the attractiveness of an organisation. Interestingly, their results suggest that job-seeking students were more responsive to excuses and apologies in response to negative reviews. In contrast, working professionals preferred prosocial responses such as offers

of help. This indicates that youth exhibit unique expectations regarding how organisations should present themselves on social networking platforms.

The educational implications of using social networking platforms for job seeking have also been addressed in the academic literature. Research has shown that incorporating Facebook into university-based vocational education can enhance students' sense of autonomy and prepare them to participate effectively in the job market (Seki et al., 2016). Extending this, Diepenbrock and Gibson (2018) argue that institutions of higher education must explicitly train students not only to develop professional documents but also to teach them how to use social media strategically for job-related application processes. Similarly, Arif et al. (2023) reported in their systematic review that university students today widely use social networking platforms for job hunting.

The literature review reveals that a considerable share of young people use social networking platforms as a tool for career hunting, both for networking and evaluating potential employers. It also shows that successful use of these digital platforms depends on students' familiarity with and attitudes toward online networking, as well as wider social factors such as identity and access to networks. Therefore, there is a need for educators and higher education institutions to continually guide young people in using social media effectively and equitably in the contemporary job search process. This study aims to address this research gap by examining the usage patterns of social media among college students in Northeast India.

### **3. Objectives**

The key objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the usage pattern of social networking platforms among college students in Northeast India.
2. To identify the most preferred social networking among college students in Northeast India.
3. To examine the purpose and frequency of social media usage, with a specific focus on career-related activities.
4. To assess how social media is used as a source of career information among college students in Northeast India.
5. To determine the proportion of students engaging in active career-oriented behaviours on social media, such as following career pages, checking job posts, applying for jobs, and attending webinars.
- 6.

### **4. Methodology**

This study employs a descriptive research design to investigate the patterns of social media-driven job search among college students in Northeast India. The study employed a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from college-going students enrolled in various colleges in the state of Meghalaya. The questionnaire focused on four key areas: the extent of social media use, preferred platforms, purpose and frequency of use (with an emphasis on career-related activities), the usefulness of social media as a career information resource, and the participation of students in active, career-oriented online behaviours.

#### **4.1 Sample and Participants**

A total of 530 responses were collected through offline administration of the questionnaire across ten Arts and Science colleges in Meghalaya. After the removal of incomplete and invalid responses, 521 responses were retained for final analysis. The sample was drawn from private, government and government-aided colleges. The

majority of respondents (57.8%) were from private colleges, followed by government-aided colleges (25.5%) and government colleges (16.7%). The respondent profile consists predominantly of female students, at 83.3%. A high proportion of students came from rural backgrounds, at 57.2%. Most participants belonged to the 19- to 21-year age group, accounting for 68.5%. The majority of respondents were in undergraduate programmes, constituting 84.1% of the study population.

#### **4.2 Instrument**

The study employed a structured questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and multiple-choice questions for collecting data. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: demographic profile questions, general social media usage, and social media usage for career-related purposes. The third section explored the extent and pattern of career-oriented behaviour on social media, including platform preference, frequency of engagement, and types of activities undertaken, such as checking job postings, following career pages, applying for jobs, and participating in webinars.

#### **4.3 Data Collection Procedure**

The primary data for this study were collected offline by distributing printed questionnaires to students in their respective classrooms with prior permission from institutional authorities. The respondents for this study were informed in advance about the purpose of this research and assured that the data collected from them would be kept confidential and that their anonymity would be maintained. They were also informed that participation in the study was voluntary and they were free to leave it at any stage of the data collection.

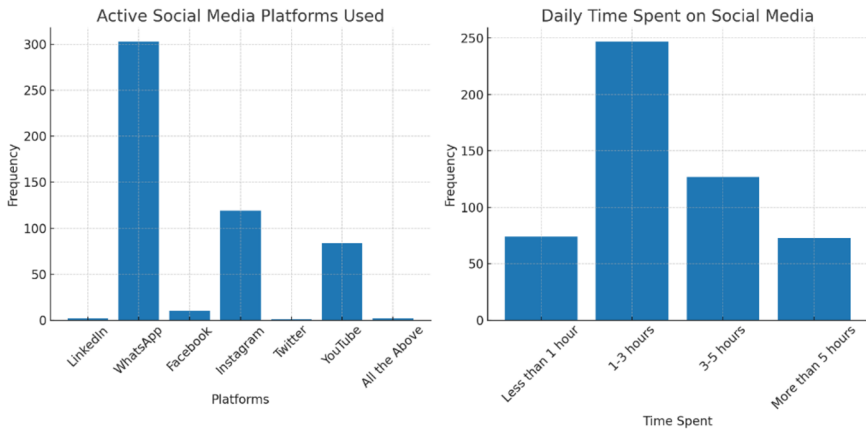
#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

After basic data cleaning, the study conducted a percentage analysis to describe the distribution of responses and achieve its key objectives. The study used frequency and percentage tables to identify dominant trends in social networking platform preference, the purpose of social media use, the frequency of engagement in career-related activities, and perceptions regarding the usefulness of social networking platforms for job searching.

### **5. Results**

The data analysis revealed that the vast majority of respondents, that is, 97.7%, use a minimum of one social networking platform, indicating a significant influence of social media on college-going students in Northeast India. The data analysis, which focused on identifying the most widely preferred social networking platforms among college-going students, found that WhatsApp is the most popular platform among them. Figure 1, it indicates a high level of social media influence among college students in Northeast India. It has been found that 58.2% use WhatsApp, followed by Instagram (22.8%) and YouTube (16.1%). Analysis also revealed alarming insights, such as the limited use of professional networking sites, with only 0.4% of respondents using LinkedIn. The analysis of data on the daily time spent on social networking platforms by the respondents revealed that most of them spent a substantial amount of time on these platforms. The examination of the daily time spent on social media platforms among students, as shown in Figure 2, reveals that most students spent a significant amount of time on social media platforms. Nearly half of the students, with a share of 47.4%, reported spending 1–3 hours on social media per day, and a further 24.4% spend 3–5 hours daily. It suggests that social media has a significant impact on the daily activities of college students, despite their busy class schedules.

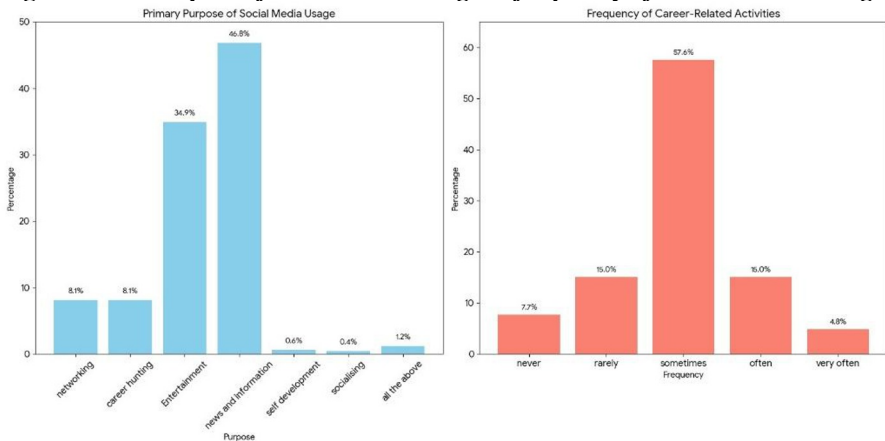
**Figure 1 & 2 Social media usage among college students in Northeast India**



*Note.* Drawn from the primary data collected for this study.

Figure 3 & 4 reveal that most students use social media primarily for information-related and entertainment purposes. The data analysis, aimed at recognising the purpose and frequency of social media usage among college students in Northeast India, revealed that the majority of respondents used social media primarily for information collection and entertainment. The largest share, at 46.8%, reported that they use social media mainly to stay updated with news and gather general information. However, 34.9% reported that they followed social media for various forms of entertainment. Only a small proportion of students, with a share of 8.1%, indicated that their primary purpose of social media was career hunting. Although only a minority viewed social media as primarily career-oriented, a large majority, with a share of 57.6%, reported that they sometimes only engage in career-related activities on these platforms. Furthermore, 15% stated that they often engage, and 4.8% reported that they very often do so. This suggests that while social networking platforms are not typically viewed as primary career tools by students, they are nonetheless regularly used for such purposes.

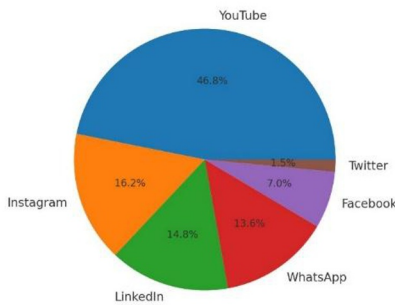
**Figure 3 & 4 Purpose of social media usage & frequency of career-related usage**



*Note.* Drawn from the primary data collected for this study.

The data analysis revealed that YouTube was perceived as the most useful social networking platform for career-related purposes. It has been found that 46.1% of the participants preferred YouTube. This was followed by Instagram, with 15.9 per cent, LinkedIn, at 14.6 per cent, and WhatsApp, at 13.4 per cent, among the respondents. However, Facebook and Twitter accounted for small proportions of perceived usefulness, at 6.9% and 1.5%, respectively. These trends suggest that students rely not only on explicitly professional platforms but also on general social media for career-related content. The results indicate that a variety of platforms are being used to access relevant career information, including YouTube and Instagram, with video and image-based content being particularly valued.

**Figure 5** *Use of social networking platforms for career-related purposes*



*Note.* Drawn from the primary data collected for this study.

The data analysis presented in Fig. 5 revealed meaningful insights into the proportion of students engaging in active, career-oriented behaviours on social media, such as following career pages, checking job posts, applying for jobs, and attending webinars. The analysis found that a sizeable proportion of students actively engage in career-oriented behaviours on social media. Two-thirds of the respondents, with 67.2 per cent, reported following career-oriented pages or influencers. Nearly half of the respondents, with 47.5 per cent, used to check job postings at least weekly or more frequently, and around one-third, with 32.8 per cent, have applied for a job found through social media. Nevertheless, more targeted forms of engagement, such as joining career-related groups or forums (19.6%) and actively taking part in career-related discussions (34.7%), were less common. Participation in webinars or online career events remains limited, with nearly half (45.9%) of respondents reporting that they have never participated in such events. These findings suggest that while students actively seek job information and opportunities on social media, engagement in more interactive or community-based career activities remains relatively low.

## 6. Discussion

The key findings derived from this study indicate that digital media has evolved as part of the everyday lives of the college-going students in Northeast India and plays a multifaceted role beyond simple socialisation. It aligns with the findings of previous studies, which have noted that social networking platforms dominantly impact the everyday lives of college students and their higher education settings (Zachos et al., 2012; Astleitner & Schlick, 2025). The very high proportion of college-going students' minimum use of a social networking platform confirms the expansion and

dissemination of digital technology in the region. It supports earlier research suggesting that young adults increasingly rely on online platforms for both personal and professional purposes (Chassiakos & Stager, 2020; Lim et al., 2022). The predominance of WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube as preferred platforms highlights the popularity of general communication and multimedia-based applications among students; however, the negligible usage of LinkedIn suggests that students in the region have not widely adopted professional networking sites. This may reflect a limited awareness of the potential role of professional networking platforms in early-stage career development or a perception that such platforms are more relevant to graduates or working professionals.

Although the primary motivation for social media use remains entertainment and news consumption (Masciantonio et al., 2023), a substantial proportion of respondents reported engaging in career-related activities at least occasionally. This suggests a shift in how students perceive social media, recognising its value as an informal tool for accessing job-related information and opportunities. Importantly, although only a small share of students reported that they primarily use social media for career hunting, more than three-quarters of respondents admit that they sometimes or often use it for this purpose. This misalignment between stated primary purpose and actual behaviour underlines the multifunctional use of social media and the blurred boundaries between private and professional online spaces (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2022).

The finding that YouTube is perceived as the most helpful source of career information sheds light on students' preference for accessible, intuitive, and visually engaging content. Several previous studies have reported the benefits of depending on YouTube for gathering job-related information (Joseph, 2022). It is possible that video-based explanatory content, such as career guidance videos or walkthroughs of application processes, is considered more trustworthy and easier to follow than text-based content. The fact that Instagram scores higher than LinkedIn as a helpful resource for career information also reflects the emergence of informal career guidance communities and influencer-led content on popular mainstream platforms (Pena et al., 2022). In contrast, the relatively low perceived usefulness of Facebook and Twitter could be due to the decline of these platforms among young users or the lack of targeted career-related content visible to this particular demographic.

Although the data reveal a reasonably high level of passive engagement, such as following pages and checking posts, more proactive forms of online career engagement, including joining specific groups or participating in discussions and webinars, remain limited. This could indicate a general hesitation among students to transition from information consumption to active participation, possibly due to a lack of confidence, perceived irrelevance, or uncertainty about how to effectively engage with professional content online (Laukkarinen, 2023). Notably, the share of students who have applied for positions found on social media, at 32.8%, is significant. It indicates that these platforms are initial tools for the youth prior to their actual job search process, moving beyond simply providing information.

The findings suggest that social networking platforms have become a key component in the early-stage career trajectory of college students in Northeast India. However, its use remains exploratory, mainly passive, rather than deeply integrated into more structured career development practices. There is, therefore, an opportunity for educational institutions and career service providers to guide students in using these platforms more strategically and to build digital literacy around professional networking and online career engagement.

## 7. Conclusion

The study revealed that social networking platforms have emerged as a widely used and increasingly relevant medium for career-related activities among college students in Northeast India. However, its use remains largely informal and unstructured. While students actively use social networking platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp, for gathering information and exploring occasional opportunities, professional networking platforms like LinkedIn remain vastly underutilised, and active participation in webinars or career-related groups is limited. To fully utilise social networking platforms as a career development tool, the study recommends that colleges and universities must integrate digital career literacy into their curriculum and conduct targeted workshops that raise awareness of professional platforms and build competencies in online networking, job search strategies and content evaluation. Career guidance units may also create and maintain institutional pages or groups that curate reliable job-related information and engage students through interactive activities such as Q&A sessions, live webinars and mentorship programmes. Furthermore, collaborations with industry professionals and alums to share sector-specific insights and opportunities via social media could motivate students to transition from passive consumption to more proactive engagement. Strengthening these support mechanisms will better equip students to navigate the evolving digital labour market and enhance their prospects in an increasingly social-media-driven job search environment.

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