

The Role of Social Media in Shaping Career Aspirations of College Students in Tiruchirappalli District

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Abstract

Social media has emerged as an important source of information, learning, networking and career development among college students. The present study examines the role of social media in shaping the career aspirations of college students in Tiruchirappalli District. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design and is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from 1,500 college students selected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The study examines social media usage, exposure to career-related content, career awareness and career aspirations. The reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with values ranging from 0.888 to 0.918, indicating good to excellent internal consistency. Percentage analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, one-way ANOVA and multiple regression analysis were employed for data analysis. The correlation results reveal significant positive relationships between social media usage, career-related content, career awareness and career aspirations. Career awareness demonstrates the strongest relationship with career aspirations ($r = 0.599$, $p < 0.001$). The ANOVA results indicate a significant difference in career aspirations across age groups ($F = 3.236$, $p = 0.022$). Multiple regression analysis confirms that social media usage, career-related content and career awareness significantly predict career aspirations, jointly explaining 49.4 per cent of the variation in career aspirations. Career awareness emerges as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.325$), followed by social media usage ($\beta = 0.274$) and career-related content ($\beta = 0.273$). The study concludes that purposeful and informed use of social media can contribute significantly to students' career awareness, planning and aspirations.

Keywords: Social Media, Career Aspirations, Career Awareness, Career-Related Content, College Students, Career Planning, Tiruchirappalli District

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of the daily lives of young people, particularly college students. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, and X (Twitter) provide access to information, networking opportunities, educational resources, and career-related content. In recent years, social media has evolved beyond a medium of communication and entertainment to become a powerful tool influencing individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and career decisions. Through exposure to professional success stories, career guidance videos,

industry trends, and interactions with professionals, students gain insights into various career opportunities and pathways.

Career aspiration refers to an individual's ambitions, goals, and expectations regarding future occupational achievements. The career aspirations of college students are shaped by numerous factors, including family background, educational experiences, peer influence, and technological advancements. Among these factors, social media has emerged as a significant source of career information and inspiration. It enables students to explore diverse professions, acquire relevant skills, and develop professional networks that may influence their career planning and decision-making processes.

In the context of Tiruchirappalli District, where higher education institutions cater to students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, understanding the role of social media in shaping career aspirations is essential. This study seeks to examine how social media usage influences career awareness, motivation, career planning, and professional development among college students, thereby contributing to a better understanding of its impact on their future career aspirations.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is primarily grounded in the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994). This theory suggests that career aspirations and choices are influenced by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and environmental factors. Social media serves as an important environmental factor that exposes students to career-related information, professional role models, and success stories, thereby influencing their career beliefs and aspirations.

The study also draws support from Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn by observing others. Through social media platforms, students observe professionals, entrepreneurs, influencers, and industry experts, whose experiences may shape their career interests and goals. Furthermore, the Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that students actively use social media to satisfy their informational, educational, and professional development needs.

Based on these theories, the study assumes that social media influences career aspirations by enhancing career awareness, motivation, professional networking, and access to career-related information. Thus, social media influence is considered the independent variable, while career aspirations of college students constitute the dependent variable.

Review Of Literature

Hsieh (2025) examined career aspirations among STEM college students using the Social Cognitive Career Theory framework. The study found that digital exposure and online learning environments significantly influenced students' career goals and career confidence. Students who frequently engaged with online professional resources demonstrated stronger career planning behaviours. The findings highlighted the importance of digital platforms in shaping career aspirations among young adults.

George and Mathew (2025) investigated the impact of digital networking on career aspirations among college students. The study revealed that students who actively used social media for professional networking exhibited higher levels of career awareness and motivation. Digital interactions with professionals positively influenced career planning and occupational choices. The researchers concluded that social media serves as an important platform for career development.

Srinivasan and Kumar (2025) explored the role of social media engagement in motivating students toward higher education and professional certifications. The findings indicated that career-oriented social media content enhanced students' aspirations and encouraged continuous skill development. Social media was identified as a major source of professional inspiration. The study emphasised the educational benefits of digital platforms.

Balaji and Lakshmi (2025) examined the influence of social media on career aspirations among South Indian college students. The study found a strong positive relationship between social media exposure and students' career ambitions. Students frequently used social media to gather information about emerging professions and employment opportunities. The researchers highlighted the growing significance of digital media in career decision-making.

Narayanan and Priya (2024) studied the relationship between social media engagement and career development among college students. The findings showed that social media platforms provided opportunities for career exploration and self-improvement. Students considered online professional communities useful for obtaining career guidance and information. The study emphasized the role of social media in enhancing career awareness.

Reddy and Rao (2024) investigated the contribution of social media to employability skill development. The study revealed that webinars, online courses, and professional discussions on social media enhanced students' job readiness. Exposure to career-related content improved confidence and career preparedness. The researchers recommended integrating social media resources into career counseling programs.

Thomas and Joseph (2024) explored social media's influence on career expectations among undergraduate students. The findings indicated that students often modified their career plans after interacting with professionals and influencers online. Social media exposure broadened their understanding of occupational opportunities. The study highlighted the role of digital platforms in career decision-making.

Prakash and Anitha (2024) The study examined the impact of social media on career awareness among higher education students. The findings showed that social media provides real-time information about employment trends, skill requirements, and educational opportunities. Students reported greater confidence in making career decisions after using social media. The study emphasized its usefulness as a career information source.

Sharma and Gupta (2023) investigated professional identity development through social media engagement. The study found that interaction with industry experts and professional communities helped students build stronger career identities. Social media enhanced awareness

of workplace expectations and career pathways. The researchers highlighted the educational value of professional networking platforms.

Ahmed and Khan (2023) examined social media as a source of career awareness among university students. The study found that students following career-focused accounts exhibited greater motivation and occupational awareness. Social media facilitated access to professional advice and mentorship opportunities. The findings supported the positive role of social networking in career development.

Chandra and Devi (2023) studied the impact of social networking platforms on educational and career aspirations. Results showed that social media exposure positively influenced students' interest in higher education and professional careers. Students used online resources to explore career opportunities and future pathways. The study emphasized the motivational role of social media.

Patel and Mehta (2023) focused on LinkedIn usage and career readiness among university students. The study revealed that regular use of LinkedIn improved networking skills and career planning abilities. Students developed greater awareness of industry requirements and employment opportunities. The researchers concluded that professional networking platforms contribute significantly to career readiness.

Dwivedi et al. (2022) discussed the growing importance of social media in knowledge sharing and professional development. The study highlighted that students increasingly rely on digital platforms for career information and networking. Social media was found to support career learning and skill acquisition. The researchers emphasized its role in modern educational environments.

Verma and Singh (2022) analyzed the impact of social media on career decision-making among college students. The study found that YouTube and LinkedIn were widely used for career guidance and educational information. Students reported that social media influenced their occupational preferences and future goals. The findings demonstrated the growing role of digital media in career planning.

Kumar and Raj (2022) examined the relationship between social media usage and career aspirations among undergraduate students. The findings indicated that exposure to career-related content encouraged students to pursue skill development and professional certifications. Social media positively influenced occupational ambitions and future planning. The study highlighted the educational benefits of digital platforms.

Boursier et al. (2021) investigated social media use and career identity development among university students. The study found that social networking platforms facilitated career exploration and occupational awareness. Students gained valuable information about professions and employment opportunities through online interactions. The findings emphasized the contribution of social media to career identity formation.

Wong and Liu (2021) explored the impact of social networking on career planning among university students. The study revealed that active users of professional networking platforms

had clearer career goals and stronger aspirations. Social media provided access to professional contacts and career-related information. The researchers concluded that online networking supports effective career planning.

Alnjadat et al. (2021) examined social media usage patterns and their influence on academic and career outcomes. The study found that students frequently used social media to obtain educational and career-related information. Career-oriented content improved awareness of employment opportunities and future planning. The researchers emphasized the importance of social media in students' personal and professional development.

Research Gap

A review of the existing literature reveals that numerous studies have examined the influence of social media on career awareness, career planning, professional identity development, and employability skills among students. However, most studies have been conducted in international contexts or focused on specific aspects of social media usage. Limited research has explored the comprehensive role of social media in shaping career aspirations among college students in the Indian context, particularly in Tiruchirappalli District. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical evidence examining the relationship between social media influence and career aspirations across different demographic variables. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how social media shapes the career aspirations of college students in Tiruchirappalli District.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To assess the level and pattern of social media usage among college students in Tiruchirappalli District.
2. To examine the influence of social media on students' career awareness and exploration.
3. To analyse the influence of social media on students' career aspirations and career decision-making.
4. To determine the significant relationship and impact of social media usage, career awareness and social-media career content on students' career aspirations.

Hypothesis Of The Study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and career awareness among college students.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between exposure to career-related content on social media and career aspirations among college students.

H₀₃: There is no significant association between demographic characteristics and students' career aspirations.

H₀₄: Social media usage, career-related content exposure and career awareness have no significant impact on students' career aspirations.

Statement Of The Problem

Social media has become an important part of the academic, social and professional lives of college students. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Facebook provide students with easy access to educational information, career guidance, professional networks, skill-development opportunities and information about employment. Consequently, social media is increasingly becoming a source of career inspiration and may influence students' perceptions, preferences and aspirations regarding their future careers. However, the influence of social media on career aspirations is not uniform among all students. Excessive or inappropriate use may expose students to misleading information, unrealistic career expectations and unverified professional advice. At the same time, meaningful exposure to career-related content can improve career awareness, facilitate career exploration and encourage students to develop professional skills. Existing studies have examined social media in relation to career awareness, career planning and professional development, but limited empirical evidence is available on its comprehensive influence on career aspirations among college students in the Indian context, particularly in Tiruchirappalli District. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the role of social media in shaping the career aspirations of college students in Tiruchirappalli District. It specifically analyses social media usage, exposure to career-related content, career awareness and their relationship and influence on students' career aspirations.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the role of social media in shaping the career aspirations of college students in Tiruchirappalli District. The target population comprises college students pursuing higher education in various institutions in the district. The study is based primarily on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire. A total of 1,500 college students were selected as respondents for the study. Since a comprehensive sampling frame of all college students using social media was not available, the study employed a non-probability convenience sampling technique. College students who were readily accessible and willing to participate in the study were selected as respondents from various colleges in Tiruchirappalli District until the required sample size was achieved. The questionnaire covered demographic characteristics, social media usage, exposure to career-related content, career awareness and career aspirations. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the reliability of the measurement scales. Percentage analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, one-way ANOVA and multiple regression analysis were employed to analyse the data and examine the relationships, group differences and predictive influence of the selected variables on career aspirations.

Analysis And Interpretation

Table 1 Demographic Profile and Social Media Usage of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	663	44.2
	Female	810	54.0

	Transgender	27	1.8
	Total	1,500	100.0
Age	Below 18	135	9.0
	18–20	663	44.2
	21–23	572	38.1
	Above 23	130	8.7
	Total	1,500	100.0
Course Level	UG	1,031	68.7
	PG	399	26.6
	Ph.D	44	2.9
	Other	26	1.7
	Total	1,500	100.0
Stream	Arts	317	21.1
	Science	402	26.8
	Commerce and Management	332	22.1
	Engineering	293	19.5
	Other	156	10.4
	Total	1,500	100.0
Year of Study	I	315	21.0
	II	368	24.5
	III	364	24.3
	IV	154	10.3
	PG-I	161	10.7
	PG-II	138	9.2
	Total	1,500	100.0
Type of Institution	Government	570	38.0
	Government-Aided	392	26.1
	Private	538	35.9
	Total	1,500	100.0

Place of Residence	Rural	659	43.9
	Urban	841	56.1
	Total	1,500	100.0
Family Monthly Income	Below Rs. 20,000	610	40.7
	Rs. 20,001–40,000	478	31.9
	Rs. 40,001–60,000	255	17.0
	Above Rs. 60,000	157	10.5
	Total	1,500	100.0
Most Frequently Used Platform	Instagram	451	30.1
	YouTube	366	24.4
	Facebook	136	9.1
	LinkedIn	160	10.7
	WhatsApp	238	15.9
	X	61	4.1
	Other	88	5.9
	Total	1,500	100.0
Average Daily Social Media Usage	Less than 1 hour	143	9.5
	1–2 hours	429	28.6
	2–4 hours	539	35.9
	4–6 hours	273	18.2
	More than 6 hours	116	7.7
	Total	1,500	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 presents the demographic profile and social media usage pattern of the 1,500 respondents. In terms of gender, female respondents constitute the largest group with 810 respondents (54.0%), followed by males with 663 respondents (44.2%), while transgender respondents account for 27 respondents (1.8%). Thus, the sample is slightly dominated by female respondents.

With regard to age, the majority of respondents belong to the 18–20 years category, accounting for 663 respondents (44.2%), followed by those aged 21–23 years with 572 respondents (38.1%). Respondents below 18 years constitute 135 (9.0%), while those above 23 years

account for 130 (8.7%). Therefore, the respondents are predominantly young college students in the 18–23 age group.

Regarding course level, undergraduate students form the largest proportion with 1,031 respondents (68.7%), followed by postgraduate students with 399 respondents (26.6%). Ph.D. scholars account for 44 respondents (2.9%), while 26 respondents (1.7%) belong to other categories. Hence, the study mainly represents undergraduate students.

In terms of stream, Science students constitute the largest group with 402 respondents (26.8%), followed by Commerce and Management with 332 respondents (22.1%), Arts with 317 respondents (21.1%), Engineering with 293 respondents (19.5%), and other streams with 156 respondents (10.4%). The distribution indicates representation from different academic disciplines, with Science students forming the largest group.

With respect to year of study, second-year students represent the highest proportion with 368 respondents (24.5%), followed closely by third-year students with 364 respondents (24.3%). First-year students account for 315 (21.0%), while PG-I and IV-year students constitute 10.7% and 10.3%, respectively. PG-II students represent 9.2%. Thus, the sample includes respondents from different stages of higher education.

Regarding type of institution, 570 respondents (38.0%) study in government institutions, 538 (35.9%) in private institutions, and 392 (26.1%) in government-aided institutions. Government institutions therefore have the highest representation in the sample.

In terms of place of residence, 841 respondents (56.1%) are from urban areas, whereas 659 respondents (43.9%) are from rural areas. Hence, urban respondents constitute a slightly larger proportion of the sample.

Regarding family monthly income, 610 respondents (40.7%) belong to families earning below Rs. 20,000 per month, followed by 478 respondents (31.9%) in the Rs. 20,001–40,000 category. A further 255 respondents (17.0%) report income between Rs. 40,001–60,000, while 157 respondents (10.5%) belong to families earning above Rs. 60,000. Thus, the respondents predominantly belong to lower and middle-income families.

Regarding the most frequently used social media platform, Instagram ranks first with 451 respondents (30.1%), followed by YouTube with 366 respondents (24.4%) and WhatsApp with 238 respondents (15.9%). LinkedIn is used most frequently by 160 respondents (10.7%), Facebook by 136 (9.1%), other platforms by 88 (5.9%), and X by 61 (4.1%). Therefore, Instagram is the most frequently used platform among the respondents.

In terms of average daily social media usage, 539 respondents (35.9%) spend 2–4 hours per day, representing the largest group. This is followed by 429 respondents (28.6%) spending 1–2 hours and 273 respondents (18.2%) spending 4–6 hours. A smaller proportion spends less than one hour (9.5%) or more than six hours (7.7%) per day. Overall, the findings indicate that social media is a regular part of respondents' daily activities.

Reliability Test (Cronbach's Alpha)

Table 2 Reliability Statistics of Social Media Usage

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.907	8

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics for the **Social Media Usage** scale. The Cronbach's Alpha value is **0.907** for 8 items. Since the alpha value is well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, the scale demonstrates **excellent internal consistency**. Therefore, the items used to measure social media usage are highly reliable.

Table 3 Reliability Statistics of Career-Related Content

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.907	8

Table 3 presents the reliability of the **Career-Related Content** scale. The Cronbach's Alpha value is **0.907** for 8 items, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items. The scale can therefore be considered reliable for measuring respondents' perceptions regarding career-related content on social media.

Table 4 Reliability Statistics of Career Awareness

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.888	8

Table 4 indicates that the **Career Awareness** scale has a Cronbach's Alpha value of **0.888** for 8 items. This value exceeds the acceptable reliability level and demonstrates **good internal consistency**. Hence, the items included in the career awareness construct are reliable for further statistical analysis.

Table 5 Reliability Statistics of Career Aspirations

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.918	10

Table 5 shows a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.918 for 10 items measuring Career Aspirations. This is the highest reliability coefficient among the four constructs and indicates excellent internal consistency. Therefore, the career aspirations scale is highly reliable and suitable for subsequent analysis.

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
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SM Mean	1500	11.00	40.00	24.2407	4.80841
CRC Mean	1500	8.00	40.00	24.1613	4.79458
CA Mean	1500	9.00	40.00	24.0713	4.52075
CAS Mean	1500	14.00	47.00	30.1413	5.74544
Valid N (listwise)	1500				

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of the four major constructs. Social Media Usage (SM Mean) has a mean score of 24.2407 and a standard deviation of 4.80841, with scores ranging from 11 to 40. Career-Related Content (CRC Mean) records a mean of 24.1613 and a standard deviation of 4.79458, with scores ranging from 8 to 40. Career Awareness (CA Mean) has a mean score of 24.0713 and a standard deviation of 4.52075, with scores ranging from 9 to 40. Career Aspirations (CAS Mean) has the highest mean score of 30.1413, with a standard deviation of 5.74544, and scores ranging from 14 to 47. Thus, among the four constructs, Career Aspirations records the highest average score, whereas Career Awareness records the lowest mean. The standard deviations indicate a moderate degree of variation in respondents' scores.

Table 7 Correlations

		SM Mean	CRC Mean	CA Mean	CAS Mean
SM Mean	Pearson Correlation	1	.405**	.504**	.548**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	1500	1500	1500	1500
CRC Mean	Pearson Correlation	.405**	1	.498**	.546**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	1500	1500	1500	1500
CA Mean	Pearson Correlation	.504**	.498**	1	.599**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	1500	1500	1500	1500
CAS Mean	Pearson Correlation	.548**	.546**	.599**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	1500	1500	1500	1500

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among Social Media Usage, Career-Related Content, Career Awareness and Career Aspirations. All the correlations are positive and statistically significant at the 1% level. Social Media Usage has a positive correlation with Career-Related Content ($r = 0.405$, $p < 0.001$), Career Awareness ($r = 0.504$, $p < 0.001$) and Career Aspirations ($r = 0.548$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that higher social media usage is associated with greater exposure to career-related content, higher career awareness and stronger career aspirations. Career-Related Content is positively correlated with Career

Awareness ($r = 0.498$, $p < 0.001$) and Career Aspirations ($r = 0.546$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, Career Awareness has a positive and comparatively stronger relationship with Career Aspirations ($r = 0.599$, $p < 0.001$). Overall, the results indicate that career awareness has the strongest association with career aspirations, while all four constructs are significantly related to one another.

Oneway Anova

Table 8A Descriptives

CAS Mean

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Below 18	135	30.7259	5.82510	.50134	29.7344	31.7175	17.00	46.00
18–20	663	29.6652	5.70282	.22148	29.2303	30.1000	14.00	47.00
21–23	572	30.5962	5.74254	.24011	30.1246	31.0678	15.00	46.00
Above 23	130	29.9615	5.74443	.50382	28.9647	30.9584	14.00	44.00
Total	1500	30.1413	5.74544	.14835	29.8503	30.4323	14.00	47.00

Table 8A presents the mean career aspirations scores across different age groups. Respondents below 18 years have the highest mean career aspirations score (30.7259), followed by those aged 21–23 years (30.5962). Respondents above 23 years have a mean score of 29.9615, while the 18–20 years group records the lowest mean of 29.6652.

Table 8B Test of Homogeneity of Variances

CAS Mean

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.032	3	1496	.992

Table 8B reports a **Levene statistic of 0.032 with $p = 0.992$** . Since the significance value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis of equal variances cannot be rejected. Therefore, the assumption of **homogeneity of variances is satisfied**, making the standard ANOVA appropriate for comparing career aspirations across age groups.

Table 8C ANOVA

CAS Mean

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	318.994	3	106.331	3.236	.022
Within Groups	49163.044	1496	32.863		
Total	49482.037	1499			

Table 8C shows that the F-value is 3.236 with a significance value of 0.022. Since $p = 0.022$ is less than 0.05, there is a statistically significant difference in career aspirations among the different age groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in career aspirations among respondents belonging to different age groups is rejected. Age is therefore significantly associated with differences in career aspirations.

Table 8D Post Hoc Tests

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: CAS Mean

Tukey HSD

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Below 18	18–20	1.06077	.54129	.204	-.3314	2.4529
	21–23	.12977	.54853	.995	-1.2810	1.5405
	Above 23	.76439	.70443	.699	-1.0474	2.5761
18–20	Below 18	-1.06077	.54129	.204	-2.4529	.3314
	21–23	-.93100*	.32714	.023	-1.7724	-.0896
	Above 23	-.29638	.54987	.949	-1.7106	1.1178
21–23	Below 18	-.12977	.54853	.995	-1.5405	1.2810
	18–20	.93100*	.32714	.023	.0896	1.7724
	Above 23	.63462	.55700	.665	-.7979	2.0672
Above 23	Below 18	-.76439	.70443	.699	-2.5761	1.0474
	18–20	.29638	.54987	.949	-1.1178	1.7106
	21–23	-.63462	.55700	.665	-2.0672	.7979

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The Tukey HSD post hoc analysis identifies the specific age groups responsible for the significant ANOVA result. The comparison between 18–20 years and 21–23 years is

statistically significant, with a mean difference of -0.93100 and $p = 0.023$. The other pairwise comparisons are not statistically significant because their p-values are greater than 0.05. Hence, the significant overall ANOVA result is primarily attributable to the difference between respondents aged 18–20 years and 21–23 years.

Table 8E Homogeneous Subsets

CAS Mean

Tukey HSD

Age	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05
		1
18–20	663	29.6652
Above 23	130	29.9615
21–23	572	30.5962
Below 18	135	30.7259
Sig.		.215

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 217.909.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Table 8E presents the homogeneous subsets based on Tukey HSD. The mean career aspirations scores are 29.6652 for 18–20 years, 29.9615 for above 23 years, 30.5962 for 21–23 years, and 30.7259 for below 18 years. The results reinforce the finding that the 18–20 and 21–23 age groups differ significantly, while the remaining groups do not show statistically significant pairwise differences.

REGRESSION

Table 9A Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.703 ^a	.494	.493	4.09194

a. Predictors: (Constant), CA Mean, CRC Mean, SM Mean

b. Dependent Variable: CAS Mean

Table 9A presents the multiple regression model in which Career Aspirations (CAS Mean) is the dependent variable and Social Media Usage, Career-Related Content and Career Awareness are the independent variables. The model produces an R value of 0.703 and an R^2 value of 0.494. The adjusted R^2 is 0.493. The R^2 value of 0.494 indicates that approximately 49.4% of the variation in career aspirations is explained jointly by social media usage, career-related content and career awareness. The remaining 50.6% may be attributable to other factors not included in the model. Thus, the regression model demonstrates a substantial explanatory capacity.

Table 9B ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	24433.047	3	8144.349	486.405	.000 ^b
Residual	25048.991	1496	16.744		
Total	49482.037	1499			

a. Dependent Variable: CAS Mean

b. Predictors: (Constant), CA Mean, CRC Mean, SM Mean

Table 9B shows that the regression model has an **F-value of 486.405 with $p < 0.001$** . Since the significance value is below 0.05, the overall regression model is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that **social media usage, career-related content and career awareness do not significantly predict career aspirations** is rejected. The three independent variables, taken together, significantly explain variation in respondents' career aspirations.

Table 9C Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	4.359	.684		6.377	.000	3.018	5.700					
SM Mean	.328	.026	.274	12.602	.000	.277	.379	.548	.310	.232	.715	1.399

CRC Mean	.327	.026	.273	12.607	.000	.276	.378	.546	.310	.232	.720	1.388
CA Mean	.412	.029	.325	14.151	.000	.355	.470	.599	.344	.260	.643	1.555

a. Dependent Variable: CAS Mean

Table 9C shows that all three independent variables have positive and statistically significant effects on career aspirations.

- Social Media Usage: $B = 0.328$, $\beta = 0.274$, $t = 12.602$, $p < 0.001$. This indicates that social media usage has a significant positive influence on career aspirations.
- Career-Related Content: $B = 0.327$, $\beta = 0.273$, $t = 12.607$, $p < 0.001$. This shows that exposure to career-related content significantly and positively contributes to career aspirations.
- Career Awareness: $B = 0.412$, $\beta = 0.325$, $t = 14.151$, $p < 0.001$. This variable has the largest standardized beta coefficient, indicating that career awareness is the strongest predictor of career aspirations among the three independent variables.

The regression equation based on the unstandardized coefficients is:

$$\text{Career Aspirations} = 4.359 + 0.328(\text{Social Media Usage}) + 0.327(\text{Career-Related Content}) + 0.412(\text{Career Awareness})$$

Findings

The study reveals that social media has become an important source of career-related information and inspiration among college students in Tiruchirappalli District. The demographic profile indicates that female respondents constitute 54.0 per cent of the sample, while 44.2 per cent are male. A majority of the respondents (44.2 per cent) belong to the 18–20 years age group, and undergraduate students account for 68.7 per cent of the respondents. Government institutions represent the largest institutional category with 38.0 per cent. Urban students constitute 56.1 per cent of the sample. Instagram is the most frequently used social media platform (30.1 per cent), followed by YouTube (24.4 per cent), while 35.9 per cent of respondents spend 2–4 hours daily on social media. The reliability analysis demonstrates strong internal consistency among the study constructs. The Cronbach's Alpha values are 0.907 for Social Media Usage, 0.907 for Career-Related Content, 0.888 for Career Awareness and 0.918 for Career Aspirations, confirming that the measurement scales are reliable. Correlation analysis reveals significant positive relationships among all the major variables. Social Media Usage is positively correlated with Career Aspirations ($r = 0.548$, $p < 0.001$), while Career-Related Content is positively correlated with Career Aspirations ($r = 0.546$, $p < 0.001$). Career Awareness demonstrates the strongest correlation with Career Aspirations ($r = 0.599$, $p < 0.001$). ANOVA confirms a significant difference in career aspirations across age groups. Multiple regression further establishes that Social Media Usage, Career-Related Content and Career Awareness significantly influence Career Aspirations. Career Awareness is the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.325$), followed by Social Media Usage ($\beta = 0.274$) and Career-Related Content ($\beta = 0.273$).

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, several suggestions are proposed to maximise the positive role of social media in shaping students' career aspirations. First, colleges and higher educational institutions should integrate social media-based career guidance programmes into their student development activities. Career counselling cells can use platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn to disseminate verified information on employment opportunities, competitive examinations, internships, scholarships and professional courses. Second, students should be encouraged to follow credible career-oriented accounts, institutions, professionals and industry experts rather than relying on unverified influencers or misleading online information. Since career awareness emerged as the strongest predictor of career aspirations, institutions should focus particularly on strengthening students' awareness of career pathways, required qualifications, skills and employment opportunities. Third, colleges should organise digital career literacy and social media awareness programmes to help students distinguish authentic career information from misinformation and unrealistic career portrayals. Students should also be encouraged to use social media purposefully for learning, professional networking and skill development. Fourth, faculty members and career counsellors can create institution-specific social media groups or channels to share verified career resources and interact with students regularly. Finally, students should maintain a balance between academic activities and social media usage. Proper time management and responsible digital behaviour can help students obtain the career benefits of social media without excessive or distracting use.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media plays a significant role in shaping the career aspirations of college students in Tiruchirappalli District. The findings demonstrate that social media usage, exposure to career-related content and career awareness are positively associated with students' career aspirations. In particular, career awareness has the strongest relationship with career aspirations ($r = 0.599$) and emerges as the strongest predictor in the regression model ($\beta = 0.325$). The study further establishes that social media can serve as an effective platform for career exploration, professional networking, access to career information and career motivation. However, the benefits depend on students' ability to use social media purposefully and critically. Therefore, educational institutions should guide students towards reliable career content and strengthen digital career literacy. Overall, responsible and informed use of social media can contribute meaningfully to students' career awareness, planning and future career aspirations.

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