



## EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

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**Abstract**

The study looks on how social media affects youth. Our lives are greatly influenced by technology and innovation, therefore it's critical that we have the skills needed to effectively handle them. Educating youngsters how to use social media can help them excel in their careers and advance personally. On the other hand, overuse of social media has been connected to a number of behavioural health issues, such as disordered eating and problems with self-image. Mixed results have been observed in the research on this topic; for example, some studies have shown that social media use has a significant detrimental effect on mental health. It is worrisome to learn that in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the rates of various mental health conditions among adolescents, including depression and suicide. The rise of social media has coincided with a deterioration in mental health among adolescents and young adults in India, leading to concerns that these platforms may negatively affect mental well-being. This paper explores the relationship between social media use and mental health through correlational and descriptive analyses. Utilizing a generalized difference-in-differences empirical approach, we examine youth mental health data in relation to usage of Social media. Our findings indicate that the introduction of Facebook correlates with an increase in symptoms of poor mental health, particularly depression. Additionally, we observe that students who are most vulnerable to mental health issues show a rise in the use of mental healthcare services following Facebook's introduction. The study also reveals that students are more likely to report experiencing impactive effects after Facebook's launch. The data for this research was collected via Google Forms and supplemented with case studies, providing insights into how today's youth's extensive social media use and uncritical consumption of online content may impact their mental health.

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**Introduction:** Humans are characteristically social beings, and our well-being depends greatly on our relationships with others. Strong social relations can significantly improve our mental health and happiness by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, enhancing self-esteem, offering comfort and joy, combating loneliness, and even extending our life expectancy. Conversely, weak social ties can severely threaten our mental and emotional health.

Adolescents today enjoy unparalleled access to digital content through numerous devices, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, and gaming consoles. The current media environment is more extensive and varied than ever. Social media

plays a crucial role in this ecosystem. In its broadest sense, social media encompasses any digital application or software that enables users to participate in social interactions. As technology progresses, social media has emerged as the dominant method of communication and interaction across all age groups globally. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Tumblr facilitate content sharing and interaction through various digital channels. Given the surge in social media usage over the past decade, it is crucial to evaluate its potential effects on mental health. However, there has been limited response from mental health professionals addressing the impact of social media on psychological well-being. In modern times,

many of us turn to social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram to connect with others. While these platforms offer certain advantages, they cannot replace genuine in-person interactions. Real-world contact is crucial for triggering the hormones that reduce stress and promote happiness and well-being. Ironically, despite their goal of bringing people together, excessive use of social media can lead to increased feelings of loneliness and isolation, potentially worsening mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.()

The extended use of Social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram may be associated with increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Adolescence represents a critical phase in a person's development, characterized by heightened exposure to risk factors such as family problems, bullying, and social isolation, making the preservation of social and emotional growth essential. The rise of digital technology has extremely influenced many facets of adolescent life, with social media use emerging as a protruding feature. Teenagers are frequently connected through social media, whether at home, in school, or at social events, and they actively engage with their peers via these platforms.

Social networking sites attract adolescents by offering opportunities to share photos, images, and videos, as well as to form friendships, exchange ideas, explore new interests, and experiment with self-expression. Users can like, comment on, and share posts without significant limitations. However, this environment also fosters negative behaviours such as trolling, where teenagers may post derogatory comments targeting others' appearance, abilities, language, or lifestyle. Such trolling can lead to adverse outcomes, including anxiety, depressive symptoms, stress, feelings of isolation, and even suicidal thoughts.

Social media can offer several advantages for young people by fostering positive communities and connections with others who share similar identities, abilities, and interests. It provides access to valuable information and serves as a platform for self-expression. One of the key benefits of social media is the ability to build and maintain friendships online, which helps develop social connections. These online relationships can create opportunities for positive interactions with a more diverse group of peers than what is often available in their offline lives, offering essential social support. This support can be particularly beneficial for young people who may feel marginalized, including those from racial, ethnic, and sexual or gender minority groups.

However, over the past decade, concerns have grown regarding the potential negative effects of social media on children and adolescents. Research shows that young people who spend more than three hours a day on social media are twice as likely to experience negative mental health outcomes, such as symptoms of depression and anxiety. (Social Media and Youth Mental Health, 2023)

**Statement of the Problem:** This study looks at how students' use of social media affects their mental health. Specifically, it focuses on how social media use might impact students' sleep quality. The study aims to determine if more time spent on social media is linked to worse sleep, based on previous research suggesting that high internet use can affect sleep negatively

Social media usage and associate risk:

**Research Methodology:** The research methodology employed in this study involved conducting interviews using a structured questionnaire through Google forms. A sample size of 50 participants was selected, consisting of youth aged between 15 and 25 years. To gather the sample, a snowball sampling technique was utilized, where initial participants were asked to refer

others within the same age group. The questionnaire was distributed to students in both junior colleges and degree colleges. Primary data was collected directly from the youth through the use of this structured questionnaire, ensuring consistency and focused responses.

In addition to primary data collection, secondary data was gathered from various credible sources, including articles, journals, and magazines. This secondary data was used to complement and support the findings from the primary research, providing a broader context to the study's results. The sample size of this study consists of 50 youth respondents.

**Media and mental health:** An all-encompassing approach that incorporates moderation, education, and awareness is required to combat social media addiction. Young individuals can benefit from understanding the warning signs of addiction and the need of setting proper limits, as can their families and educators. Promoting digital detoxes, or extended intervals without screens, can help break the vicious circle of dependency. Adolescents can be encouraged to focus their attention away from online activities and toward activities that promote their emotional and psychological well-being by being encouraged to engage in in-person relationships, pursue interests, and lead balanced lives.

There are a number of concerns and repercussions associated with teenagers using social media, commonly referred to as social network sites (SNS), more frequently around the world. These include disclosing too much confidential data, lying about yourself or about others, falling for con artists, and other risks. Addiction to the Internet or social media can have a detrimental effect on a business's operations as well as employees' social, psychological, and emotional health. Additional dangers that can eventually lead to decreased academic performance and productivity include being exposed to

cyberbullying, unlawful access to personal data, content that is inappropriate, sexting, and the influence of third-party advertising. (Verma, 2018).

**Impact of Social Media:** In this rapidly evolving landscape of technology and social media, we find ourselves increasingly tethered to these platforms—sometimes to our detriment. Whether for better or worse, many of us have become absorbed in the lives of others, constantly checking in on their experiences while curating our own for public consumption. This phenomenon blurs the lines between reality and the carefully crafted narratives we present online. We often lose track of time, spending countless hours scrolling through feeds without even realizing it. This excessive engagement takes a toll on our mental, physical, and emotional well-being. We become ensnared in a cycle—a “chakravyuh,” if you will—of the virtual world, where the absence of Wi-Fi or a weak network connection can trigger feelings of discomfort and intense fear of missing out (FOMO). As we navigate this digital landscape, it's crucial to reflect on how it impacts our lives and consider finding a healthier balance between our online interactions and the real world.

The increasing use of electronic communication platforms has given rise to a unique phenomenon called FOMO, or the fear of missing out, which greatly exacerbates anxiety and feelings of inadequacy in young people. The intricacies of FOMO, its consequences on mental health, and strategies for mitigating its impacts are all covered in this section. The constant stream of updates and postings on social media showcasing the experiences, activities, and social interactions of peers feeds FOMO. Teenagers frequently struggle with an enduring anxiety of being left out of occasions and experiences that other people seem to be enjoying. The constant barrage of pictures of social events, travels, and adventures may cause children to feel excluded and uninvolved.

The research now available indicates that although social media can provide some advantages for kids and teenagers, there are also serious concerns that could negatively impact their general and mental health. We don't currently have enough information to say with certainty if social media is safe for younger users. Acknowledging the increasing number of research demonstrating potential adverse consequences of social media use is crucial. In order to safeguard children's and young people's mental health through these crucial developmental phases, we must increase our collective awareness of these threats and act quickly to provide safe and positive digital environments.

#### Social media and anxiety:

#### Findings:

Social media can contribute to depression and anxiety due to the stress of constantly trying to project an unrealistic and unattainable image of perfection within one's social network. The pressure to present a flawless version of oneself—whether it's a perfect career, relationship, or lifestyle—creates ongoing stress, which triggers the release of the stress hormone cortisol. This persistent stress, much like the negative effects of excessive social media use, can lead to depression and anxiety. While social media has the positive benefit of enabling rapid information sharing, it also allows individuals to craft false identities and form superficial connections, which can contribute to mental health issues.

| Question  | Yes                 | No           | Maybe              |
|---|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Mental Health Issues: Anxiety   | 34%                 | 50%          | 16%                |
| Have you ever felt depressed after using social media?                                | 6%                  | 62%          | 32%                |
| Do you compare your appearance to others on social media?                             | 10.2%               | 63%          | 26%                |
| Do you feel more connected or isolated after using social media?                      | 14.3%               | 46.9%        | 38.8%              |
| How many hours a day do you spend on social media?                                    | 14.6 % 3 hours plus | 30.6% 1 hour | 55.1% 2 to 3 hours |
| Do you feel that your social media use is addictive?                                  | 28.6%               | 55.1%        | 16.3%              |
| Does using social media before bed affect your sleep quality?                         | 40.8%               | 40.8%        | 18.4%              |
| How often do you scroll through social media late at night?                           | 49%                 | 28.6%        | 22.4%              |
| Do you use social media to find fitness inspiration or resources?                     | 69.4%               | 18.4%        | 12.2%              |
| Does social media impact your motivation to stay physically active?                   | 61.2                | 2%           | 36.7%              |
| Have you ever changed your eating habits based on what you see on social media?       | 40.8%               | 59.2%        | 0                  |
| Do you believe social media has a positive or negative impact on your overall health? | 34.7%               | 16.3%        | 49%                |
| Have you ever taken a break from social media?  | 44.9%               | 30.6%        | 24.5%              |
| Do you follow any mental health or wellness accounts on social media?                 | 14.9%               | 53.2%        | 31.9%              |

### Findings Regarding Social Media Use and Its Impact:

#### Mental Health Issues: Anxiety

- **34%** of respondents indicated that they experience anxiety due to social media, while **50%** said they do not, and **16%** were uncertain. This suggests that social media has a noticeable but not universal impact on anxiety, with half of the participants not reporting any anxiety related to it.

#### Depression after Using Social Media

- Only **6%** of respondents stated that they felt depressed after using social media. The majority, **62%**, reported no depression, while **32%** were unsure. This suggests that while a minority experience depression due to social media, the platform may not significantly affect many users' mental health in this way.

#### Comparison of Appearance on Social Media

- **10.2%** of respondents compare their appearance to others on social media, while the majority, **63%**, do not, and **26%** are unsure. This indicates that appearance-related comparisons are not as prevalent for most users, but still, a notable portion may occasionally engage in this behavior.

#### Feeling Connected or Isolated After Social Media Use

- **14.3%** of respondents feel more connected after using social media, whereas **46.9%** feel more isolated, and **38.8%** were unsure. This suggests that social media may often lead to feelings of isolation, although some still feel a sense of connection.

#### Time Spent on Social Media

- A significant **55.1%** of respondents spend **2 to 3 hours** a day on social media, **30.6%** spend **1 hour**, and **14.6%** spend more than **3 hours**. This shows a high usage rate, with most individuals spending 2-3 hours per day on social media.

#### Addictive Nature of Social Media

- **28.6%** of respondents believe their social media use is addictive, while **55.1%** disagree, and **16.3%** are unsure. This suggests that while some users recognize a potential addiction, the majority do not view their social media habits as problematic.

#### Impact of Social Media on Sleep Quality

- **40.8%** of respondents feel that using social media before bed affects their sleep quality negatively, while an equal **40.8%** do not believe it does, and **18.4%** were unsure. This indicates that a substantial portion of individuals may experience sleep disturbances due to social media use before bedtime.

#### Late-Night Social Media Scrolling

- **49%** of respondents scroll through social media late at night, with **28.6%** doing so less frequently, and **22.4%** being unsure. This highlights that a significant number of people engage in social media use late at night, which may have implications for sleep patterns.

#### Fitness Inspiration from Social Media

- A majority, **69.4%**, use social media to find fitness inspiration or resources, while **18.4%** do not, and **12.2%** were unsure. This suggests that social media plays a prominent role in motivating or inspiring people towards fitness and healthy living.

#### Impact on Motivation for Physical Activity

- **61.2%** of respondents reported that social media positively impacts their motivation to stay physically active, while only **2%** felt it has no effect, and **36.7%** were uncertain. This reflects the motivational aspect of social media for a large portion of the population.

#### Changing Eating Habits Based on Social Media

- **40.8%** of respondents have altered their eating habits due to social media, while **59.2%** have not,

and none were unsure. This indicates that social media has an influence on dietary choices for a significant portion of users.

#### Perceived Impact of Social Media on Overall Health

- **34.7%** of respondents believe social media has a positive impact on their health, while **16.3%** feel it has a negative impact, and **49%** are uncertain. This shows a divided perception, with many unsure of the overall effects of social media on their health.

#### Taking Breaks from Social Media

- **44.9%** of respondents have taken a break from social media, **30.6%** have not, and **24.5%** were unsure. This suggests that a considerable portion of users have consciously reduced their social media use at some point, potentially due to its effects on well-being.

#### Following Mental Health or Wellness Accounts

- Only **14.9%** of respondents follow mental health or wellness accounts on social media, while **53.2%** do not, and **31.9%** were unsure. This indicates that following wellness-related content is not common for most users, though some still engage with this type of material.

#### Conclusion:

This study explores the link between social media use, anxiety, and poor sleep quality, highlighting its impact on sleep disturbances among young people. The effects of social media on mental health, however, are not uniform across all teens; they can be both positive and negative, with the outcomes differing from one individual to another. For some teens, social media exposure can be detrimental, leading to issues such as cyberbullying, body image concerns, and technology addiction. Additionally, some research suggests that the relationship may be bidirectional—teens dealing with depression may turn to social media more often as a way to cope.

Similar to other forms of social comparison, many teens report feeling lower self-esteem and increased

peer pressure when viewing the curated, idealized profiles of their peers, which often showcase relationships, social events, or personal achievements. These findings point to a complex relationship between social media and both mental and physical well-being. While some individuals report positive outcomes, such as motivation for fitness or inspiration, a substantial number experience negative effects, such as heightened anxiety, disrupted sleep, and a sense of isolation.

Social media use is widespread, with many teens spending several hours daily on various platforms. The survey reveals a mixed perception of social media's impact on health, with users often uncertain about its overall effects, as they report both positive and negative experiences. The research further suggests that teens who feel depressed, frustrated, lonely, or unhappy after spending too much time on social media may need to reconsider their online habits and seek a more balanced approach.

The study also underscores how excessive social media use can exacerbate feelings of sadness, anxiety, jealousy, and low self-worth, often contributing to greater social isolation. Many individuals fall into cognitive distortions, comparing their lives to the carefully curated images of others, which can foster dissatisfaction and sadness. This includes comparing their own photos to others' seemingly perfect images, feeling excluded from social events, and assessing their worth based on likes and followers. These issues are particularly troubling for vulnerable populations, such as teens already grappling with mental health challenges, as excessive social media use can further intensify their symptoms.

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