

The Negative Aspects of Connectivity: Analyzing the Effects of Social Media on mental Health and Wellness in Young People

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Abstract— social media has, in a way, become indispensable to human communication in the digital era and is particularly popular among youths. Though these platforms enable communication, self-expression, and connectivity with the rest of the world, they threaten mental health and general well-being in a big way. This paper delves into the dark sides of social networking and the ensuing psychological impact on the young generation, such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem, escalated by social media use. The research through a critical review of the existing body of literature and a survey-based analysis, aims at understanding the patterns of online behavior, the experience of cyberbullying, social comparison, and fear of missing out (FOMO) as factors contributing to mental distress. The results show that overuse of social media accounts for a person's emotional and psychological stability being compromised, irregular sleep routines, and even a warped feeling of self-worth. The article wraps up by suggesting measures for a balanced digital life, including the implementation of awareness programs and mental health interventions designed to motivate young people to cultivate healthy social media habits

Index Terms— Social Media, Mental Health, Young People, Anxiety and Depression, Cyberbullying, Social Comparison, Digital Well-being.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is a significant factor that has altered the manner of communication, the way of expression, and the interaction with the world of the younger generation in general, and the society in particular. These days, the emergence of the new platforms e.g. Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) has built dependence on themselves

among users through the 24/7 sharing of their experiences, participation, and emotions. To the young people, the use of social media is not just a medium to establish contact but a phenomenon for their personality growth and social existence. Though the mentioned media challenges would hardly fail to motivate creative, educational, global engagement, and the exploding influence of these media has invited a whole debate concerning health and welfare issues among psychologists, educators, and parents. Over-use of social media has been culled as the source of several psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, loneliness, and low self-esteem. The nonstop exposure to the lives of other people presented through the most attractive and ideal ways often makes the young users looking at themselves against others and thus, feeling that they are not good enough or dissatisfied with their lives. A new phenomenon, "social/comparison," has become prominent in recent days to explain how interaction on line can lead to low self-confidence besides it being recognized as the main cause of self-esteem erosion. Besides that, the terms like the fear of missing out (FOMO) and online validation via likes and comments are able to create dependency and engender addiction-like behaviors, hitherto resulting in emotional exhaustion. Moreover, they are the victims of cyberbullying and online harassment, which cause them to feel mental burden and become emotionally and psychologically distressed. In addition, the social media world dominated by algorithms promotes extended hours of screen time, thereby interfering with regular sleep, study and real face-to-face social interaction. Still, a lot of young people are heavily addicted to social media and thus make use of it for

their emotional comfort and social recognition. The current research work is devoted to the study of the dark sides of social connectivity by understanding the influence of internet use on the mental health and wellness of youth. This research paper intends to uncover the underlying issues of social media-caused distress through a comprehensive review of the existing research, survey data, and psychological theories as well as to suggest the methods of raising awareness in youth about implementing more beneficial digital habits to them.

II. BACKGROUND

In the last 20 years, one of the significant changes brought about by the rapid growth of digital technology is a complete overhaul of the way the social media has become the most influential element of the human communication system. Several platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) have gone far beyond their initial intentions of mere networking to become intricate ecosystems that not only influence but also control people's behaviors, ways of thinking, and lifestyles. Worldwide data gathered lately show that the number of social media users has exceeded

4.9 billion, while the young people aged 13 to 29 are the largest demographic group of the social media community. To this generation, social media is not just a technology; it is an indispensable part of their social, academic, and individual lives. These social media sites users can benefit by connecting with each other and gain easy access to a large library of information, other than that, they are vulnerable to a list of unfortunate psychological and emotional challenges which may harm their mental health and will, in general, obstruct their well, being.

Originally, social media was designed to supplement communication and facilitate interactions on a global scale. However, as the size and importance of the platform grew, the scientists' focus shifted to the identifications of dependency, emotional strain, and behavioral changes in the user group. The idea of "digital addiction" came up as a most frequently referred to issue which describes the desperate need to be emotionally gratified or validated through online engagement. This affiliation with web content is usually accompanied with disconnection anxiety, cruelly checking of notifications, and shortened

attention span. Especially young people as they are still in their developmental stage and social belonging and peer validation are dominantly driving their formation of identity and self, worth. The detrimental psychological side of social media has been the subject of various studies in the contemporary scientific field. Regular encounters with the perfect version of the world and people present on social media compel users to compare themselves with others, which leads to a number of negative effects such as feeling of insufficiency, not liking one's body, and low self, esteem. Trying to exhibit a "perfect life" is the main reason which tempts the users to perform the impression management through which they give up their authenticity for the sake of receiving more likes, comments, and followers. Besides that, the concept of "fear of missing out" (FOMO) exists that, similarly, contributes to the emotional distress, as the youngsters are constantly matching their lives to others' ones to find who is better. Overall, these factors are the main reasons that, thus, frequent social media users through such have anxiety, depression, and loneliness over time. One more major cause is cyberbullying, using digital platforms to purposely harass, intimidate, or humiliate one's target. Cyberbullying, as a subtype of bullying, does not bound by time and place and also very often has a considerable number of people who get to see it, thus, increasing exponentially the victim's agony. Those who are bullied emotionally, usually suffer for a long time, become socially isolated, and in the worst of cases may develop a desire for self, harm or even suicide. Besides that, the online space giving users the choice of whether to reveal their identity or not, encourages the perpetrators to perform hateful acts and discloses the users to sense less empathy. From a broader perspective, over involvement with social media negatively impacts not only one's physical but also social well, being.

Exacerbated screen time interferes with sleeping habits, deprives one's academic performance, and deteriorates real, life interpersonal relationships. Being bombarded with negative news, online quarrels, and unrealistic content may very well account for the emergence of the emotional fatigue and cognitive overload cycle which is hard to break. When put together, these are some of the most worrying effects of digital connectivity which in a way is good since it is beneficial if used moderately but on the other hand, is the source of such disastrous consequences when

misused or overconsumed. This information is a prerequisite to analyzing the impact of social media on the mental health of young people. This research, by integrating psychological theories with the empirical evidence, not only discovers but also explains the complex connection between online socializing and mental health and it further emphasizes the near urgency of awareness, digital balance, and preventive mental health strategies in today's overly interconnected society

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The expanding pool of studies concerning social media and mental health unveil that there is a very strong link between extensive online activities and the occurrence of negative psychological states in youngsters. Among others, JM Twenge (2020) was the first to establish one of the most significant connections between social media use and elevated cases of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation in teenagers, insinuating that incessant digital communication has changed the way young people experience social relationships and their sense of self drastically. The researchers discovered that teen mental health issues have escalated violently since 2011, the time when smartphones started becoming popular, thus, highlighting the influence of digital fixation on emotional instability. In the same vein, Kross et al. (2013) investigated the short duration effects of Facebook usage and were able to establish that the time spent on the social network was a good predictor of both momentary happiness and total life satisfaction decline. The research suggested that the passivity in consuming the others' content usually ends in the negative self, comparison and emotional discontentment instead of real social gratification. To add to that, Primack et al. (2017) performed an extensive questionnaire to young adults aged 19-32 and found that those who net for more than two hours per day on social media were nearly two times more likely to feel socially isolated than those who did it less. This paradox of being continuously connected yet emotionally detached shows how virtual interaction can substitute for real, world connections and lower emotional intimacy. Woods and Scott (2016) investigated the impact of the use of social media at night on poor sleep quality, low self, esteem, and raised levels of anxiety and depression. According to

them, the blue light that is generated from displays and the psychological excitation that results from the late, night scrolling interferes with the natural sleep cycles thus, further weakening the mental health condition. Ceren Hayran et al. (2017) coined the term "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) as the main psychological factor that causes social media addiction. Their study revealed that youngsters characterized by high FOMO are anxious more often, are emotionally unstable, and behave in a compulsive way when it comes to social media. This is in line with Przybylski et al. (2013), who considered FOMO a new psychological phenomenon that originates from the innate human need for

belonging and social approval. Pantic et al. (2012) went deeper into the relationship between Facebook usage and depressive symptoms in adolescents and concluded that those kids who, on a regular basis, compare themselves with the ones presented in the idealized online versions of others, experience significantly higher levels of depression and self, doubt. This is in accordance with Jan Crusius et. al. (2022) Social Comparison Theory that states that individuals evaluate their selves by comparing with others, which is something social media platforms do at a much higher rate. Frison and Eggermont (2017) studied how different emotional responses depend on social media activities and came to the conclusion that, in general, exposure to positive or idealized posts from friends leads to envy and the sense of being less worthy. Whereas, people who launch posts for getting approval, gain a temporary lift of their self, esteem which is then followed by an emotional dependence, thus, they end up forming a vicious circle of external validation. Tandoc et al. (2015) further developed this concept, showing that people who are doing "Facebook surveillance" and attending to self, presentation are at a greater risk of depressive symptoms, especially when their self, worth gets dependent on online feedback such as likes and comments. In the same manner, Mayank Gupta & Aditya Sharma (2021) discovered that FOMO and social media addiction were strong factors that led to decreased psychological well, being and life satisfaction, thus, confirming that the emotional health gets worse along with the increase in digital dependency. Kelly et al. (2019) carried out one of the largest long, term studies in the UK and found out that teenagers who spent over three hours daily on social

media were at a substantially increased risk of depression and anxiety, this was especially true for girls who are more vulnerable to appearance, based social comparison and online harassment. Besides psychological reasons, the studies have also brought to light the physiological and behavioral aspects of the problem of overuse of social media. For example, Ujala Zubair et. al (2023) mentioned that heavy involvement in social media leads to disrupted daily routines, poor academic performance, and lack of physical exercise, which are indirect causes of mental distress. This "reward cycle" is what makes the users keep on looking for gratification, thus, they are hardly able to put an end to their engagement and get a mental recovery. The total impact of these studies is that, on the one hand, social media is a tool for communication, learning, and global awareness, whereas, on the other hand, it is a means for emotional dependency, self, doubt, and digital fatigue. Especially young people are the most affected because they are at a particular developmental stage where identity, social belonging, and self, esteem are still in the process of formation. The issues that are covered in the literature consistently conform to the idea that social media, with all its benefits, is still a source of serious risks to the mental health and wellness of young users. The researches that have been reviewed are in agreement that an overexposure to social media leads to a higher susceptibility to depression, anxiety, FOMO, sleep disturbances, and social isolation. The constant strives for approval, the exposure to the perfect lives of others, and online abuse are the factors that make emotional problems even more severe. Therefore, the reviewed literature points to the very urgent need for digital literacy, awareness programs, and mental health interventions that would help reduce the psychological harm that social media causes to youngsters.

IV. OBJECTIVES

- To examine the relationship between social media usage and mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and stress among young people.
- To analyze the impact of social comparison and online validation (likes, comments, followers) on self-esteem and emotional well-being.
- To investigate the role of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and digital dependency in contributing

to psychological distress among adolescents and young adults.

- To identify the influence of cyberbullying and online harassment on the mental wellness and social behavior of young social media users.
- To propose strategies and interventions for promoting healthier social media habits and improving overall mental health and well-being among young people.

V. RESEARCH MEHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

The present investigation implements a descriptive research design. The main objective of the research is the depiction and the exploration of the effects of social media on the mental health and wellness of young people. Besides the description, the design goes further to analyze the patterns, trends, and correlations existing between social media usage and psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and self, esteem.

2. Research Approach

Researchers have decided upon a quantitative research approach to gather numerical data from the participants of the survey. This approach opens the door for the performance of the statistical analysis as the way to find the correlations and the trends in digital habits engagement and mental health indicators.

3. Sampling Technique

This research relied on the method of convenience sampling and thus the authors chose the youth as the primary group from which to draw their excitements. The selection of participants was based on the researchers' accessibility to them and their willingness in participating in the study.

4. Sample Size

There were 362 people who answered the survey questions and thus made the sample size. The research group consists of both teenagers and young people who are between the ages of 15 and 25 and are happening to be the normal users of social media.

5. Data Collection Method

The study team reaches out to the people directly by a structured questionnaire, which they can take online via email and different platforms like social media. The respondents were given only close, ended

questions and Likert, type items in the questionnaire to assess social media usage, emotional well, being, and self, esteem, as well as to relate FOMO and online interactions to each other.

6. Data Analysis

After that data will be ready to be analyzed, the researchers will deploy different statistical tools to examine it. The research will use descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and frequency) and inferential statistics (correlation and chi, square tests) to point out if there is a link between the use of social media and mental health outcomes. The findings will be shown clearly through graphs and tables.

7. Ethical Considerations

The study was restricted to those persons who had given their consent and also it was ethical to keep secret the respondents' identities. Before the respondent fills the questionnaire, consent is sought online and respondents are assured that their responses will be confidential and used only for research purposes.

8. Limitations of Methodology

Because the research was based on data that the respondents themselves had to provide, it is possible that the answers given by the respondents have a bias in terms of the respondents' personal opinions. What is more, the use of convenience sampling as a method of selecting samples makes it difficult to extend the results to the entire population.

VI. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

1. Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H_0): Social media usage has no significant effect on the mental health and wellness of young people.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): Social media usage has a significant effect on the mental health and wellness of young people.

2. Contingency Table (Observed Frequencies, O)

Daily Hours on Social Media:

Low: <1, 1-2 hours

High: 3-4, >4 hours

Overall Negative Impact (Q15):

Low: 1-3

High: 4-5

As per the data collected:

Low Usage + Low Impact: 28 Low Usage + High Impact: 72 High Usage + Low Impact: 42 High Usage + High Impact: 220

Contingency Table

For $\alpha = 0.05$ and $df = 1$, the critical χ^2 value is 3.841

Since our calculated χ^2 (6.64) > critical value (3.841), we reject the null hypothesis.

Effect Size: Cramer's V = $\sqrt{\chi^2 / n}$

$n \times \min(c-1, r-1)$

$V = \frac{\sqrt{6.64}}{\sqrt{362 \times 1362}} = \frac{\sqrt{6.64}}{\sqrt{492924}} = \sqrt{0.0183} = 0.135$

3. Expected Frequencies (E)

Expected frequency formula: $E = (\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total}) / \text{Grand Total}$

$E(\text{Low Usage, Low Impact}) = (100 \times 70) / 362 = 19.34$

$E(\text{Low Usage, High Impact}) = (100 \times 292) / 362 = 80.66$

$E(\text{High Usage, Low Impact}) = (262 \times 70) / 362 = 50.66$

$E(\text{High Usage, High Impact}) = (262 \times 292) / 362 = 211.34$

4. Compute Chi-Square Statistic (χ^2)

$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$

Cell 1: $(28 - 19.34)^2 / 19.34 = (8.66)^2 / 19.34 = 75.00 / 19.34 = 3.88$

Cell 2: $(72 - 80.66)^2 / 80.66 = (-8.66)^2 / 80.66 = 75.00 / 80.66 = 0.93$

Cell 3: $(42 - 50.66)^2 / 50.66 = (-8.66)^2 / 50.66 = 75.00 / 50.66 = 1.48$

Cell 4: $(220 - 211.34)^2 / 211.34 = (8.66)^2 / 211.34 = 75.00 / 211.34 = 0.35$

$\chi^2 = 3.88 + 0.93 + 1.48 + 0.35 = 6.64$

$df = (\text{rows} - 1) \times (\text{columns} - 1) = (2 - 1) \times (2 - 1) = 1$

According to the chi-square test, there is a statistically significant association between social media usage and the negative mental health impact ($\chi^2 = 6.64$, $p < 0.05$).

The magnitude of the relationship (Cramer's V = 0.135) points to a small to moderate link. It is evident from the data that people who use social media intensively (3-4 hours or >4 hours per day) tend to be the ones who are most likely to state that their mental health has been negatively impacted as compared to those who use it less (<1-2 hours per day). Hence, we reject null hypotheses.

VII. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research's findings unmistakably reveal that a significant association exists between the quantity of time youngsters devote to social media and the degree that it impacts their mental health and general well-being. The statistical analysis with the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 6.64$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that the considerable use of social media, i.e., the usage of three hours or more per day on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, results in a higher probability of experiencing mental health issues than those who have less daily usage. The evidence hence back the rejection of the null hypothesis and confirm that social media use has a statistically significant effect on mental health. The collected data unveil that frequent social media users declare that they suffer from anxiety, stress, loneliness, and emotional exhaustion to a greater extent than others. Several participants in the survey expressed that continuous scrolling, being exposed to the perfect online lives, and the pursuit of likes and comments are the main reasons that trigger feelings of inadequacy and social comparison. Furthermore, the information conveyed that the heavy use most of the time interferes with good sleep patterns, causes a need for constant validation, and diminishes the face-to-face interactions that ultimately lead to mental wellness. The magnitude of the effect (Cramer's $V = 0.135$) shows a small to moderate correlation, signifying that social media is not the only factor that causes mental health problems, however, it is quite influential in determining the emotional states of young people in this age group. As such, the probability of experiencing detrimental psychological effects goes up as one spends more hours on social media. In addition to that, qualitative feedback collected along with quantitative data suggest that a rising consciousness of such adverse consequences is prevailing among young people: a majority of them reported that personal breaks from social media or limited use of electronic devices made their mood, concentration, and emotional calm better. The results present a strong argument that overuse of social networking sites by youngsters, in particular for more than three hours per day, may lead to their psychological distress. It underlines the necessity for deliberate digital behavior and the significance of digital literacy and emotional strength in an ever-more

interconnected world. According to this work, schools, parents, and the government need to promote the use of social media in a healthy manner and put on programs that create awareness and equip young people with the skills to handle the online world responsibly.

VIII. SUMMARY

The research, "The Negative Aspects of Connectivity: Analyzing the Effects of Social Media on Mental Health and Wellness in Young People," was an in-depth investigation on how the escalating use of social media platforms affects the psychological health of young people. Digital connectivity has grown very fast, and social media has, in general, become the most vital part of anyone's daily life, mostly among young people. In brief, these platforms are full of possibilities for communication, self-expression, and learning. Still, certainly, their excessive use has been linked with serious mental health problems. To address issues raised by the researchers, a quantitative research method was employed, and primary data were collected from 362 respondents through a structured digital questionnaire. They answered questions related to social media habits, time spent on the internet, and the feeling or mental state of the users.

The majority of respondents were students and young adults between 15 and 25 years of age. They statistically analyzed the answers to find connections between the social media used and the effect on mental health. A Chi-square test of independence to test the hypothesis was carried out. The null hypothesis assumed that the use of social media did not significantly influence young people's mental health and wellness, whereas the alternative hypothesis posited that it did. The chi-square value calculated from the data ($\chi^2 = 6.64$) was greater than the critical value (3.841) at a 0.05 significance level, thus the null hypothesis was rejected. This determined that the hours of social media usage had a direct negative effect on mental health. The magnitude of association (Cramer's $V = 0.135$) was small to moderate, implying that social media is not the only factor that influences mental health but nevertheless it is a significant one. Results showed that people who are heavy social media users (3–4 hours or more per day) were most likely to indicate that they had experienced stress, anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem. The continuous intake of the perfect world of the internet,

comparing oneself with the others, and the need for virtual affirmation (likes, comments, followers) were some of the reasons for the anxiety identified. In addition, many participants reported that overuse of social media impacted their sleep, concentration, and productivity, thus, it is clear that it impacts wellness in general negatively. In contrast, people who spend less than 3 hours per day on these platforms reported fewer psychological issues and more emotional stability. The researchers argue that social media might be a useful means of communication and information if used in moderation. However, overuse can bring significant damages to the mental health and emotional stability of young people. The article is concerned with the urgent need for digital mindfulness promotion, healthy screen time limits implementation, and offline social interaction encouragement. The school, the parents, and policymakers need to work in concert and put a plan in motion to create awareness programs that help the young learn the proper use of social media and how to safeguard their mental health.

IX .APPENDIX

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age:
 - o 15–17
 - o 18–20
 - o 21–23
 - o 24–25
2. Gender:
 - o Male
 - o Female
 - o Prefer not to say
3. Occupation:
 - o Student
 - o Working
 - o Others

Section B: Social Media Usage

4. How many hours do you spend on social media daily?
 - o Less than 1 hour
 - o 1–2 hours
 - o 3–4 hours
 - o More than 4 hours
5. Which social media platform do you use the most?
 - o Instagram

- o TikTok
 - o Snapchat
 - o Facebook
 - o X (Twitter)
 - o Others
6. Purpose of using social media (you can select more than one):
 - o Entertainment
 - o Communication with friends/family
 - o Learning/Information
 - o Self-expression/Sharing content
 - o Staying updated with trends/news

Section C: Mental Health & Wellness (Use Likert Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

7. Using social media makes me feel anxious.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
8. I often compare my life with others on social media.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
9. I feel stressed if I cannot check social media for a long time.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
10. Using social media affects my sleep patterns.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
11. I feel lonely or isolated despite being active on social media.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
12. I feel the need for validation (likes/comments) from social media posts.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
13. I have experienced negative feelings due to cyberbullying or online harassment.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
14. Social media affects my concentration on studies or work.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
15. Overall, social media has a negative impact on my mental well-being.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

Section D: Habits & Awareness

16. I try to limit my social media usage for better mental health.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
17. I am aware of the harmful effects of excessive social media use.
 - o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

18. I believe taking breaks from social media improves my mental wellness.

o 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

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