

Impact of Social Media on Mental Health of Adolescents

Ms.Simarjeet Kaur^{1*}, Dr.Kamaljeet Kaur², Ms.Aprajita³, Mr.Rohan Verma⁴, Mr. Pangkaj⁵

^{*1,2,3,4,5}Chandigarh University,India

^{*1}simarjeet.uittr@cumail.in, ²kamaljeet.e9811@cumail.in, ³shivangisparrow@gmail.com, ⁴mrrohan121@gmail.com, ⁵pangkaj.r11@cumail.in

*Corresponding Author: - Ms.Simarjeet Kaur

*Chandigarh University,India, Email: simarjeet.uittr@cumail.in

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Abstract

The use of social media has grown significantly in the last few years. Social media refers to "the websites and online tools that facilitate interactions between users by providing them opportunities to share information, opinions, and interest" (Swar and Hameed, 2017, p. 141). Adolescents have been found to be more vulnerable to addiction and crimes related to social media. Hence, the study has tried to understand the association of social media with the well being of adolescents. The first part of the paper deals with the role and relevance of social media.

Further, the literature review depicts a strong connection between social media and individuals' well-being. For the quantitative analysis, various statistical techniques are used. In order to evaluate the association between variables, the composite index has been prepared. Further, the ranking has been given to reflect social media's impact on adolescents' well-being. Lastly, a few recommendations have been made for the state government regarding the well being of the adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Social media plays a significant role in the life of an individual. It impacted our personal life and made a huge bang on our culture, economy, and well being. It provides a platform where people can exchange ideas, connect, relate, seek advice, and offer guidance. The term mass media is defined as a means of communication that operates on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in the society to a greater or lesser degree(Singh, 2002¹).Social media is any digital tool that permits users to create and share content with the public quickly. A wide range of apps and websites such as Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok is built for sharing of photos and videos.

The widespread use of the internet and social media could constitute an opportunity for innovation, socialization and learning. Still, policymakers and researchers in public health have begun to raise concerns about the potential implications for young people's mental wellbeing(Royal Society for Public Health, 2018²).There is various criticism of social media; hence, children and teenagers are likely to access the internet and use social media privately, using mobile devices from their bedrooms, without adult supervision (Frith, 2017³). Furthermore, social media has also changed the way people socialize and interact with each other. The literature reflects that adolescents who spend a lot of time on social media are at higher risk for depression, low self-esteem, and eating disorders.

ADOLESCENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Adolescence is the most crucial period of human life. The word adolescence comes from a Greek word "adolescere" which means 'to grow to maturity'. G.S. Hall, is regarded as the father of adolescent psychology. He believed that this stage brings "storm and stress" among adolescents. Various biological, psychological and social changes occur at this age due to the same their is higher rate of crime, norm breaking and antisocial behavior in this stage.

Adolescents and social media are inseparable from each other. The adolescent of today come into contact with various groups other than those in school through the mass media. Adolescents use social media in large numbers. For instance, a national survey conducted in 2009 found that 73% of teenagers use SNS (Social Networking Sites), which had been increased from 55% in last three years (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Therefore, it is vital to understand the impact of social media on the teenagers.

¹ Singh, J. K. (2002). Mass Media and Information Technology. Mangaldeep Publications, Jaipur.

² Royal Society for Public Health (2018) Status Of Mind - Social media and young people's mental health and wellbeing. London, 2018.

³ Frith E. Social media and children ' s mental health: a review of the evidence. Education Policy Institute.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature was reviewed to understand the phenomenon under study. Various studies reflect that adolescents are among the most never-ending users of social network sites. They spend a considerable amount of their daily life using social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Whatsup, Tiktok, Instagram and Twitter. Today's teens share self-created content, post their opinions, and link to other content online more than any other group (Lenhart et al., 2010). It was also observed that many adolescents sleep with their phones, especially under their pillow and wake up after sleep onset to read and answer texts (Adams, & Kisler, 2013).

Literature also suggests that the use of social media can negatively influence adolescents. For example, playing video games could increase aggressive behaviour among teenagers (Anderson et al., 2007). Likewise, psychological and physical problems such as sleep deprivation, excessive fatigue, back or eye strain, social isolation and lack of real-life social relationships have all been identified as consequences of excessive Internet use (Gross, 2004). Chappell and Badger (1989) stated that social isolation decreases psychological well-being. Many studies have shown that media use is related to adolescents' health and adjustment problems. For example, research has shown that watching television and playing video games is associated with physical inactivity and weight during adolescence (Koezuka, , &Koo, Allison, Adlaf, Dwyer, Faulkner Goodman, 2006).

Strasburger et al. (1999) revealed a close relationship between media violence and real-life aggression. They reported that excess use of media is responsible for episodes of child aggression, teen homicides and increased rates of teenage drug use and sexual activity. The study

Suggested that parents should control excessive media use among adolescents. Further, schools should introduce comprehensive, school-based media education programmes. Bashir and Ahmad (2017) investigated the effect of social media on mental health by reviewing and synthesizing available related literature. Literature reveals that social media is susceptible to the younger generation. The young generation was reported to be at higher risk of serious mental health problems.

Table 1: Cyber crime data over the years 2018-2020

	States	2018	2019	2020	Rate of Total Cyber Crimes (2020)
1	Andhra Pradesh	1207	1886	1899	3.6
2	Arunachal Pradesh	7	8	30	2.0
3	Assam	2022	2231	3530	10.1
4	Bihar	374	1050	1512	1.2
5	Chhattisgarh	139	175	297	1.0
6	Goa	29	15	40	2.6
7	Gujarat	702	784	1283	1.9
8	Haryana	418	564	656	2.2
9	Himachal Pradesh	69	76	98	1.3
10	Jharkhand	930	1095	1204	3.2
11	Karnataka	5839	12020	10741	16.2
12	Kerala	340	307	426	1.2
13	Madhya Pradesh	740	602	699	0.8
14	Maharashtra	3511	4967	5496	4.4
15	Manipur	29	4	79	2.5
16	Meghalaya	74	89	142	4.4
17	Mizoram	6	8	13	1.1
18	Nagaland	2	2	8	0.4
19	Odisha	843	1485	1931	4.2
20	Punjab	239	243	378	1.3
21	Rajasthan	1104	1762	1354	1.7
22	Sikkim	1	2	0	0.0
23	Tamil Nadu	295	385	782	1.0
24	Telangana	1205	2691	5024	13.4
25	Tripura	20	20	34	0.8
26	Uttar Pradesh	6280	11416	11097	4.8
27	Uttarakhand	171	100	243	2.1
28	West Bengal	335	524	712	0.7
	Total	26931	44511	49708	3.8

Source: NCRB, 2020

It is apparent from the table that cybercrime in India has increased almost in all the states being, the highest in Karnataka. It is also evident that the rate of cybercrime in Punjab is 1.3.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the impact of social media on adolescents' social and psychological well-being.

2. To put forth recommendations for better policy interventions at the state level.

Hypothesis

1. The excess use of social media negatively impacts the adolescents' psychological well being.
2. Social media negatively impact the social well being of adolescents.

AREA OF THE STUDY

The study has been conducted in the rural area of Punjab i.e., schools in rural Kharar.

METHODOLOGY

For the quantitative analysis, various statistical techniques are used in the study. These techniques are found to be reliable in analyzing the data. The composite index has been prepared to see the impact of social media on adolescents. T-scores and Zscore have been used, and further, the ranking has been given to the indicators to reflect the positive and negative impact of social media.

Table 2: Socio-economic profile of the respondents

Variable	Statement	Percentage %
Gender	Male	46
	Female	54
Age	14-15	13
	15-16	55
	16 above	32
Religion	Hindu	52
	Sikh	47
	Muslim	1
Number years of using	1-3 years	57
	3-6 years	38
	Above 6 years	5
Most used application	Facebook	10
	Instagram	23
	Whats app	39
	Snap chat	10
	Tiktok	15
	Twitter	3

Gender is an important variable, especially in an Indian context. Hence, both boys and girls were taken to understand the impact of media on both sexes. The table reveals that 46% of the participants were male, and 54% were female. Likewise, gender, religion is an important variables that can make a huge impact on individuals' lives. 52% of the respondents were Hindus, followed by the Sikh religion, i.e.,47%.

Although the internet is not a new phenomenon in India, Airtel was the first company to offer 4G services in India, i.e. 2012. Reliance Jio has tremendously changed the access of users in India. People from both urban and rural areas now have access to the internet over their phones; resultant, people across the countries are using social media irrespective of gender and age. To understand the usage of social media, respondents were asked about the number of years they have been using social media. The majority of them said that they started using social media from the last 1-3 years. The most often used application is WhatsApp. Respondents revealed that they use social media, especially for chatting and making fun videos, over Tiktok application

Table 3: Psychological impact of over utilization of social media on the users

		Z score	T value	Rank
1	Mental tiredness	-1.90	30.82	3
2	FOMO*** and Anxiety	0.84	58.40	1
3	Lack of self esteem	-2.62	23.49	4
4	Depression	-1.86	31.14	2

* Key: 0-33 score low impact **33-66 above score -high impact

*** FOMO (Fear of missing out)

One cannot deny that addiction to social media is a universal phenomenon and is on a sharp rise. Any addiction can have direct implications on a person's psychology. Addiction and obsession with social networking have been reported to cause negative feelings among youth for several distinct reasons (Pantic, I. (2014). Online Social Networking and Mental Health. *Cyberpsychol Behav Soc Netw*, 17 652–657.). Therefore, an effort has been made to understand the psychological impact of social media on the users. The ranking has been given based on the T value, and it has been found that social media has an impact on the mental health of the users. Anxiety was reported by the users, and its scores are high, i.e., 58.40.

On the other hand, it scores low on the different psychological aspects, for instance, depression, mental tiredness and lack of self-esteem. Further, an effort was made to understand why they feel anxious while using social media. Many respondents reported fear of missing out (FOMO). FOMO is the psychological mentality that individuals might be missing out on a social opportunity or situation. This mentality requires that they stay constantly connected with others and updated about what their friends are doing (Beyens et al., 2016; Elhai et al., 2016). The easy access and excess use of smartphones have led to the problematic thing of staying connected with their peers. Closely related to FOMO is anxiety which was reported by the respondents.

Table 4: Social impact of over utilization of social media on the users

		Z score	T value	Rank
1	Social isolation	0.54	55.30	2
2	Victim of cyber bullying and crimes	-0.71	42.91	4
3	Impact on education	-1.26	37.09	5
4	Addiction of social media	1.28	62.52	1
5	Impact on family ties	0.06	50.57	3

* Key: 0-33 score low impact ** 33-66 above score -high impact

After analyzing the psychological impact of social media, an effort was made to understand the social impact of media. It is apparent from table 3 that addiction to media was common among adolescents and ranks at number one. Addiction to media leads to various other social issues among adolescents, such as social isolation and impact on family ties. Group discussions with the respondents revealed that they often try to avoid conversations with their family members. They further said they prefer to share their thoughts with unknown people over social websites. *"One of them said, parents ask me to sit with them and share my day; however, I give lame excuses and walk away from the room"*. Many of them said they merely sit with family members, and due to the same, they have heated arguments with their family members. A few of the respondents reported that they had been a victim of cyberbullying. However, its impact was seen as considerably low. After analyzing the data, it could be concluded that excessive use of social media made an enormous impact on the social well being of an individual. Hence, hypothesis II formulated has a significant strong association between social media exposure and the social well being of adolescents.

CONCLUSION

The central rationale of the study was to examine the relations between social media and well being of individuals. A significant strong association was found between adolescents' social media exposure and their social well being. There is no doubt that better internet access has proved beneficial. However, adolescent age is the crucial period that can decide a person's future. There are various applications over the app store, and further access to various social media sites happens to be a serious problem. In addition, they waste their precious time, which can be used for study and extra curriculum activities. Further, people who use social media try to avoid conversations with their family members because they remain busy in chatting and texting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of findings, few recommendations are made for the well being of an individual. Family is the primary and most crucial agency of socialization. Thus, it is recommended that parents must establish a bridge of communication between themselves and their children. An adolescent is the age of resistance, anger, confusion and emotions; thus, it is pertinent not to use the method of intimidation and follow the method of persuasion and give them the right direction regarding internet use.

Cybercrime is increasing profusely. Hence, it is advised that adolescents must be made aware of their legal rights via seminars and workshops at the school level. Further, children are advised to inform their parents of any threat or blackmail they may face from anyone on the internet. It is also recommended that frequent counselling be given in

schools and colleges where adolescents must be trained on better social media usage to minimize time wastage on chatting and other irrelevant engagements.

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