

The Impacts of Social Media on Mental Health

This study investigates the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes, focusing on symptoms of depression, anxiety, and social isolation among young adults. As social media becomes increasingly embedded in daily life, concerns have emerged about its psychological effects. Existing research suggests that excessive and problematic social media use correlates with higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms, often mediated by factors such as social comparison, sleep disturbances, and reduced real-life social interaction. This proposal aims to explore how time spent on different platforms, type of engagement, and perceived social support influence users' mental well-being. A mixed-methods approach combining surveys and interviews will be used to assess these relationships, with results expected to inform interventions and promote healthier digital habits.

Chapter One: Introduction

Background of the Study

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X have revolutionized global communication, offering opportunities for social connection and self-expression. However, emerging evidence indicates that heavy social media use may negatively affect mental health, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Reports link time spent on social media with increased symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, and feelings of social isolation. Understanding this dynamic is critical in a world where digital behaviour shapes psychological well-being.

Statement of the Problem

While social media enhances connectivity, it also fosters unhealthy comparison, decreased self-esteem, and exposure to cyberbullying. There is insufficient understanding of how usage intensity and platform engagement patterns contribute to adverse mental health outcomes. This study addresses the need for evidence-based insight into these effects, paving the way for practical solutions.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the relationship between social media usage and mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression.

To determine the moderating role of social support and self-esteem in this relationship.

To recommend interventions that promote healthy social media behaviours among young adults.

Research Questions

What is the relationship between social media usage and mental health outcomes?

How does the type and duration of social media use influence psychological well-being?

What moderating factors (e.g., social support, self-esteem) affect this relationship?

Significance of the Study

Findings will be valuable for educators, policymakers, therapists, and digital platform designers. Insights can guide awareness campaigns, mental health support services, and safer online ecosystem development for students and youth.

Scope and Limitations

The study will focus on university students aged 18–30, examining their social media usage patterns and perceived mental health status. Limitations may include self-reported biases and challenges in establishing causality due to the cross-sectional design.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The Relationship between Social Media and Mental Health

Multiple studies identify correlations between frequent social media use and symptoms of depression and anxiety. Heavy users are more likely to engage in social comparison and experience low self-worth, especially when exposed to idealized online personas.

Moderating and Mediating Factors

Perceived social support and self-esteem have been found to moderate this relationship. For example, individuals with strong offline social support networks report fewer negative mental health symptoms, even with higher social media use. Conversely, limited real-life support amplifies social media's psychological risks.

Positive Impacts of Social Media

Despite potential harms, social media can foster belonging and support, especially in marginalized groups. Online communities provide opportunities for emotional expression and peer connection that can buffer stress.

Research Gaps

Existing studies largely focus on correlations rather than causation, emphasizing the need for mixed-method designs combining quantitative and qualitative evidence. This study aims to fill this gap.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-methods approach will be used, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. This combination will help uncover both measurable trends and contextual factors shaping users' experiences.

Population and Sample

The target population includes undergraduate students from local universities. A total of 150 participants will be selected through stratified random sampling, categorized by age, gender, and frequency of social media use.

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire to quantify time spent on social media, platforms used, and mental health indicators such as anxiety, depression, and self-esteem using validated scales (e.g., DASS-21).

Semi-structured interviews to gather narrative insights on emotional experiences related to social media engagement.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis via SPSS to identify trends. Qualitative responses will be coded thematically to detect recurring psychological themes.

Ethical Considerations

All participants will provide informed consent, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout. Data will be anonymized, and participants may withdraw at any time.

References

Sources include official health reports such as:

Andreassen et al. (2016), Social Media and Mental Health, PMC

Azizan (2024), Exploring the Role of Social Media in Mental Health

Watson & Ellithorpe (2021), Problematic Social Media Use and Anxiety

West Visayas State University (2022), Research Methodology for Investigating the Impact of Social Media on Mental Health

Primack et al. (2017), Social Media Use and Depression in Young Adults