



INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON STRESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN GENERATION Z-AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social media as an internet-based communication platform has a profound influence on individuals encompassing both positive and negative aspects. In contemporary society stress has emerged as a critical concern potentially affecting overall well-being and diminishing quality of life. Given the increasing prevalence of social media usage, it is essential to investigate its potential role in contributing to mental stress and its subsequent impact on quality of life.

Aim: To assess the influence of social media on mental health and quality of life of the current generation-Generation Z

Methods: A structured Google Form was developed which included total duration of social media usage, the most frequently used social media platforms, any musculoskeletal pain experienced by individuals. Additionally, the form incorporated two standardized instruments: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to measure stress levels and the SF-12 questionnaire to assess their quality of life. The form was subsequently disseminated among individuals belonging to Generation Z for data collection.

Results: 129 responses were obtained from the Google form. Data was analysed using SPSS V 21. Normality of data was checked using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. As the data was not normally distributed -Spearman Correlation was done. ($p > 0.05$). No correlation was found between Social media usage time and PSS ($p = 0.128$) while weak positive correlation was found between Social media usage time and Quality of life ($p = 0.207$)

Conclusion: Social media usage influences quality of life in Generation Z while there is no influence of social media on stress in Generation Z.

Keywords: Social media, Stress, Quality of life

INTRODUCTION

Social media encompasses a range of platforms and digital tools that have emerged and evolved within the landscape of modern communication technologies including the internet mobile devices and networking systems. The impact of emerging digital phenomena, such as social media, on human health particularly on mental health remains a

significant area of concern and investigation.^[1] The substantial amount of time individuals spend on social media globally has drawn researchers' attention to its potential benefits and associated risks. While social media is utilized across all generations, its consumption is notably higher among Generation Z.^[2]

Social media use is often linked to issues such as stress, anxiety, and fear of missing out (FOMO). However, research also indicates that social media serves as a platform for individuals to share their experiences. Additionally, certain influencers foster supportive online communities, providing a space for interaction and engagement which can have a positive impact on users' well-being^[3].

Excessive social media usage is associated with reduced physical activity as individuals allocate more time to gaming and online interactions. This decline in physical activity can negatively impact overall well-being and quality of life.^[4] Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between social media use, stress levels, and quality of life among Generation Z.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

An observational study was conducted to assess the impact of social media use on stress levels and quality of life among individuals belonging to Generation Z. Data collection was carried out using a structured Google Form which had relevant demographic information from participants.

The questionnaire was divided into three key sections. The first section collected demographic details, including participants' age and daily duration of social media usage. Additionally, this section documented the most frequently used social media platforms, including gaming platforms and recorded any self-reported musculoskeletal pain that participants associated with prolonged social media use.

To categorize social media usage patterns, participants were asked to report their daily time spent on social media, which was then classified into four groups:

- 1–2 hours per day
- 3–4 hours per day
- 5–7 hours per day
- More than 7 hours per day

The survey targeted individuals born between 1997 and 2012, aligning with the defined age range of Generation Z. To comprehensively assess stress and quality of life, the second section of the questionnaire incorporated items from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)^[5]. The PSS is a widely used, self-reported measure designed to evaluate participants' perceived stress levels.

The third section of the form featured the SF-12 questionnaire^[6], a standardized instrument used to assess the overall quality of life of participants. The SF-12 questionnaire evaluates both physical and mental health components.

Both the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the SF-12 questionnaire served as the primary outcome measures for the study. Since these instruments rely on self-reported data, participants' responses were used to quantify their stress levels and overall quality of life in relation to their social media consumption.

Statistical Analysis:

129 responses were obtained. The data was analyzed using SPSS v21. Normality was checked using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; as the data was not normally distributed Spearman Correlation coefficient was used.

RESULTS

A total of 129 responses were obtained. From which 50 were male and 79 were female. 72% of individuals had musculoskeletal pain. From which 32% individuals had neck pain, 24% individuals had shoulder pain and 16% individuals had back pain.

Table 1: Musculoskeletal pain experienced by individuals

Region	Percentage
Neck	32
Shoulder	24
Back	16

Normality of the data was checked using SPSS v 21. As the data was not normally distributed ($p > 0.05$) Kolmogorov – Smirnov test was applied. Spearman correlation was done between Social media use time and Perceived stress scale, Social media use time and Quality of life and Perceived stress scale and Quality of life.

Table 2: Spearman rank correlation coefficient values

Variables	p value	Interpretation	COEFFICIENT VALUE
PSS & SF12	0.487	NOT SIGNIFICANT	0.062
PSS TIME	0.147	NOT SIGNIFICANT	0.128
SF12 TIME	0.018	SIGNIFICANT	0.207

DISCUSSION

Social media use (SMU) has become increasingly common in modern society, particularly among young adults. Studies have explored its impact on well-being, with some evidence indicating a connection between SMU and feelings of social anxiety and loneliness.^[7] The pervasive integration of social media into the daily lives of Generation Z has prompted extensive research into its effects on mental health and overall quality of life. A study by Guan et al^[8]. examined the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and problematic smartphone use (PSU) in Generation Z, identifying stress as a moderating factor. The findings suggest that individuals experiencing higher levels of FoMO are more susceptible to PSU, with stress exacerbating this relationship. This underscores the intricate interplay between social media usage patterns and mental health outcomes in this demographic.

Conversely, some studies highlight the potential benefits of mindful social media engagement. Research from the University of British Columbia indicates that strategies such as reflecting on usage, recognizing the nature of online content, unfollowing negative accounts and engaging actively rather than passively can mitigate feelings of loneliness and anxiety among young adults. This perspective aligns with the notion that the quality of social media interactions, rather than the sheer amount of time spent online, plays a pivotal role in influencing mental well-being. Thus, social media use has the potential to reduce stress levels when individuals engage with positive and meaningful content. Additionally, consuming uplifting social media content can stimulate the release of endorphins, which contribute to mood enhancement and relaxation after a long day.

Quality of life (QOL) is a multifaceted concept that encompasses an individual's overall sense of well-being and life satisfaction. It is shaped by cultural and value systems and is influenced by personal goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. Our study identified a positive association between social media use and quality of life, despite the well-established link between increased social media usage and reduced physical activity, which is directly correlated with quality of life. These findings align with the study conducted by Campisi et al.^[9] who highlighted that the impact of social media networks on quality of life varies based on individual goals. Their research underscores both the benefits and drawbacks of social media use, depending on personal context and usage patterns.

CONCLUSION

Social media usage influences quality of life in Generation Z while but there is no influence of social media on stress in Generation Z.

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