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The Impact Of Social

Media On Generation Z.

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Abstract

The report examines the impact of social media on Generation Z. The main ideas in the report include the positive and negative effects of the increasing prevalence of social media in daily life, including mental health, self-esteem, relationships, personal opinions, productivity, academic life, communication skills, and social communication. In order to test the hypothesis 46 of Gen Z were surveyed through questionnaires and interviews. As we concluded that social media can facilitate communication and help us maintain connections with friends and family, access information, expand our relationships, provide a positive effect on mental health, provide a sense of support, especially during times of isolation or crisis, provide a platform for marginalized voices and provide a source of inspiration and motivation. On the other hand, it can contribute to feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness, as we often compare ourselves to others and feel pressure to present a perfect image of ourselves online, increasing isolation, cyberbullying , and can be a distraction and lead to procrastination. Which can negatively impact our productivity and academic performance. So It is important to understand the negative effects to mitigate them while capitalizing on their positive aspects.

Tabel of content

Tabel of figures

Nomenclature list

Gen Z	Generation z
FOMO	Fear of missing out

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Social media is a type of online communication platform that enables individuals or groups to create, share, or exchange information, opinions, ideas, and media content, such as text, images, videos, and audio files. Social media platforms are designed to facilitate social interactions, allowing users to connect and form virtual communities based on shared interests, hobbies, or demographics.

Social media has become an integral part of the lives of Gen Z individuals, who are the demographic cohort that follows the Millennials and precedes Generation Alpha. While there is some debate about the exact dates that define Gen Z, it is generally understood to refer to people born between the mid-to-late 1990s and the mid-2010s. It has transformed the way Gen Z individuals communicate, interact, and perceive themselves and the world around them.

While social media has its benefits, as there is no boredom. It also has negative effects on mental health, identity formation, and social skills and causes cyberbullying, comparison, and FOMO. It is important to understand the impact of social media on Gen Z individuals and take steps to mitigate its negative effects while capitalizing on its positive aspects. This requires a multifaceted approach that involves parents, educators, and policymakers, working together to promote healthy social media use and raise awareness about the potential risks associated with its overuse.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does social media use affect anxiety and depression levels among Gen Z individuals?

2. What is the relationship between social media use and academic performance among Gen Z individuals?

3. How does the amount of time spent on social media relate to negative body image and self-esteem issues among Gen Z individuals?

4. How does the use of social media affect Gen Z social life?

5. How does social media use relate to cyberbullying victimization among Gen Z individuals?

1.3 Hypothesis

1. Social media use is positively correlated with increased anxiety and depression among Gen Z individuals.

2. Gen Z individuals who spend more time on social media are likely to have lower academic performance compared to those who spend less time on social media.

3. Gen Z individuals who spend more time on social media are more likely to experience negative body image and self-esteem issues than those who spend less time on social media.

4. Gen Z individuals who use social media to compare themselves to others are more likely to experience feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.

5. The use of social media is associated with decreased face-to-face communication and social interaction among Gen Z individuals.

6. Social media use is associated with increased cyberbullying victimization and perpetration among Gen Z individuals.

1.4 Motivation for Carrying out the Research

The primary reason for carrying out research on the impact of social media on Gen Z is to understand how it affects their daily life basis. Social media has become an integral part of the lives of Gen Z, and studying its impact can help identify the benefits and risks associated with social media use.

1.5 Main Contribution

Shedding light on the effects of the frequent use of social networking sites by Generation Z, and identifying the resulting benefits and risks that affect each of their actions and behaviors and the consequences that will have on their life and society.

1.6 Objectives

This report is arranged as follows: present the methodology followed to test the hypothesis, present the result and discussion of the methodology and present the conclusion and recommendation of the study.

1.7 Literature Review

The concerns about the impact of social media on mental health and well-being particularly on gen z have been raised, in this literature review, we will examine three studies that explore the effect of social media.

The article titled "Social Media and Mental Health" is a comprehensive guide that explores the relationship between social media use and mental health. The article provides an overview of the potential negative effects of social media on mental health, as well as ways to use social media in a healthy and positive way. Positive effects of social media use include connecting with others, accessing information, and finding social support. Negative effects can include increased anxiety, depression, loneliness, and social comparison. Causes for negative effects can include excessive use, unrealistic standards, and exposure to cyberbullying. The article offers strategies for healthy social media use, such as setting limits, being mindful of content, and using social media to connect in a meaningful way (Robinson, Smith, n.d.).

One notable study titled "Impact of Social Media on Self-Esteem". Provides insights into the specific impacts of social media on self-esteem among Gen Z individuals. The study highlights that excessive social media use has been linked to increased levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness among Gen Z individuals. Additionally, it reveals that Gen Z individuals who frequently engage with social media platforms tend to compare themselves to others and experience lower self-esteem. Moreover, excessive social media use can negatively impact

academic performance by causing distractions and reduced focus. While the study by Johnson et al. focuses primarily on self-esteem, it is important to consider other research to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effects of social media on Gen Z's mental health and academic performance. Overall, the existing literature suggests that social media use among Gen Z can have significant implications for self-esteem and academic performance. By understanding these impacts, interventions can be developed to promote healthy social media use among Gen Z individuals(Jan, Soomro, and Ahmad, 2017) .

The study titled " Social media: Its impact with positive and negative aspects." focuses on the impact of social media on various fields. While social media has positive effects, it can also have negative impacts on their mental and physical health. One positive aspect of social media is that it helps youngsters to stay connected with each other, exchange useful information, and find support online that they may lack in traditional relationships. In addition, social media can provide a source of advice and information. However, there are also several negative effects of social media on youngsters. Spending excessive time on social media can affect youngsters' health, as they may neglect other important activities such as exercise or sleep. Exposure to violent or harmful content on social media can also influence youth negatively and make them more prone to violence.

Research has shown that excessive social media use among youngsters is associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression, as well as poor academic performance. It can also lead to negative body image and self-esteem issues, cyberbullying victimization and perpetration, and decreased face-to-face communication and social interaction (Shabnoor, Tajinder, 2016).

2. Methodology

2.1 Data Collection

2.1.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was created on April 24. It was about the impact of social media on Palestinian gen z. It consists of questions about how much they spend time on social media and how it affects them. It was sent to five groups of Palestinian citizens on Facebook. Only 45 members responded. The purpose of the questionnaire is to show how social media affects the Palestinian generation and to conduct a study on gen z who suffer from social media addiction to make them aware of its harms, and in particular its benefits.

78.3% of participants said that social media harms their mental health, 63% of participants said that it harms their academic life, 56.5% of participants said that it has created a culture of comparison and perfectionism, 17.4% of participants said that it has impacted their creativity and self-expression, 58.7% of participants said that they have been cyberbullied or witnessed cyberbullying on it and 45.7% of participants said that it has made them more isolated from people. As shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The negative impact of social media on gen z

2.1.2 interview

The questions of the interview were as follows:

First question: Do you think social media has positively or negatively impacted your mental health?

Multiple studies have found a strong connection between social media and mental health as it can increase the risk of anxiety, loneliness, depression and self-harm.

However, On the other hand, social media can also provide opportunities for communication, and sharing of information, which can be beneficial for mental health. Social media can also provide a place for awareness of mental health issues (Sadagheyani, Tatari, 2020).

Second question: How social media affected your productivity and your academic life?

social media can have detrimental effects on teenagers, including decreased privacy, distraction from academic responsibilities, and the consumption of productive time. However, when used appropriately, social media can also provide benefits for students. For example, online communities can be formed to collaborate on projects or engage in group discussions about course material. Additionally, social networking sites can serve as a means of keeping absent students up-to-date on current academic information (Peter, 2015).

Third Question: Do you think social media has influenced your opinions and beliefs on certain issues?

Social media has played a significant role in shaping opinions and beliefs on various issues. Social media provided a platform for individuals and groups to express their opinions and beliefs on specific issues, so the answer of most of Generation Z was that their decisions and opinions were influenced by other opinions present on these platforms.

Fourth question: Have you ever taken a break from social media, If so why ?

Some people take a break from social networking sites because of its impact on their focus, mental health, and academic life, so they take time out to find balance and mental clarity to sharpen their focus and improve their mental health.

Fifth question:If social media platforms disappeared tomorrow, how would it affect your daily routine?

If social media platforms disappear tomorrow, it would have a significant impact on gen z daily routines, because they used to spend more than 20% of their day watching all updates in people's lives, communicating with friends and more. So they will feel lonely, bored and FOMO.

Sixth question: Do you think social media platforms should have stricter regulations and guidelines for users?

Social media platforms should have regulations and instructions for the users, whereby the user is directed and taken to the right track. As people suffer from cyberbullying on social media by receiving harmful comments and messages that will affect their mentality and self esteem. Also there are a lot of people on social media who are a bad influence on gen z by promoting false ideas that negatively affect their beliefs, ideas, and personalities.

Seventh question: Do you think social media has created a culture of comparison and perfectionism?

Social media has created a culture of comparison and perfection, as the ability to present an ideal life on social networking sites. People often post their best moments and photos, which creates a sense of pressure on others to present similarly perfect versions of their own lives. This can lead to a culture of comparison, where individuals feel the need to constantly measure themselves against others, leading to feelings of inadequacy.

Eighth question: Do you think social media has impacted your creativity and self-expression?

Social media has a negative and positive impact on creativity and self-expression, as it can provide a wide space for individuals to express themselves and present their creative work to a wide range of people, and it can be a source of inspiration for new ideas. On the other hand, it can have a negative impact, as pressure on oneself to gain likes can lead to a more complex production.

Ninth question: Have you ever been cyberbullied or witnessed cyberbullying on social media?

The increased use of social media has resulted in a rise in cyberbullying. Social media platforms that permit unrestricted commenting can create an intimidating atmosphere for victims, who may face threats, derogatory comments, or edited images that they cannot control. Individuals may feel ashamed about the problem and hide it from their loved ones, which exacerbates feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety. Insufficient awareness and assistance may prevent victims from seeking help and result in poor mental health outcomes(Greenwood, 2023).

Tenth question: How do you think social media has impacted your communication and social skills?

Social media can have a positive impact on the individual as it can strengthen his communication and social skills as it provides them with a space to share their opinion and ideas to people from all other the world. On the other hand, the excessive use of social media has negative effects, as excessive use can lead to a lack of skills to communicate with people face to face, as they become more accustomed to communicating via social media.

Eleventh question: How frequently do you use social media platforms?

Spending long hours on social media has negative effects, and the more time spent on social media, the greater the negative effects on the individual, and among these effects are reduced face-to-face social interaction, decreased productivity as spending a lot of time on social media also leads to It can make it more difficult to focus on important tasks and can lead to procrastination, etc.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The results of our survey shed light on the impact of social media on Gen Z, revealing both positive and negative effects on mental health, self-esteem, relationships, and personal opinions. Our findings indicate that:

54.3% of participants spend 3-5 hours on social media daily and 41.3% of them spend more than 5 hours on it. As shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Daily usage of social media

63% of participants report that social media affected their academic life as it consumes most of their time which leads to not having time to study and be productive, whereas 26.1% reported that it has a positive impact on their academic life as it makes them connected with their classmates and professors, leading to better collaboration and academic success. As shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Social media impact on the academic life

50% of participants report that social media often affects their opinions and beliefs on certain issues. And 39.1% of participants report that social media rarely affects their opinions and beliefs on certain issues. As shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Social Media Impact on Opinions and Beliefs

78.3% of participants report that social media harm their mental health. Where 39.1% of participants report that they take a break from social media for hours, 30.4% of them take a break for days, 17.4% didn't take a break at all, and 13% took a break for months. As shown in Figure 5. Most of them did so because social media consumes all their time so they did it to have more free time, or to focus on their academic life, others did it because it affects their mental health, made them lose confidence, increases pressure, or all the reasons.

Figure 5 Break period of social media

37% of participants reported that if social media disappears it will be a minor inconvenience, 23.9% of them report that it will be a major disruption, and 10.9% report that it won't affect their routine. As shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 The effect on the routine if social media disappears

95.7% of participants reported that social media platforms should have stricter regulations and guidelines for users. 56.5% of them reported that social media has created a culture of comparison and perfectionism. 26.1% of them report that it impacted their creativity and self-expression positively and 17.4% of them reported that it impacted their creativity and self-expression negatively.

58.7% of participants reported that they have been cyberbullied or witnessed cyberbullying on social media. 45.7% of them reported that it has made them more isolated from people, and 37% reported that it made them more connected with people, as their circle of acquaintances and friends became wider.

3.2 Discussion:

As I delved into the topic of social media and its impact on our lives, I couldn't help but feel a sense of duality - it's a world of endless possibilities, yet also a world of endless comparisons. It's a platform for connecting with others, yet also a breeding ground for loneliness. It's a source of inspiration, yet also a source of anxiety. So, let's take a closer look at the pros and cons of social media and how they affect our mental health, self-esteem, relationships, personal opinions, productivity, academic life, communication skills, and social communication. Let's explore the reasons behind these effects and perhaps find ways to navigate this complex digital landscape.

The results found that social media has both positive and negative impacts on various aspects of our lives, including mental health, self-esteem, relationships, personal opinions, productivity, academic life, communication skills, and social communication.

Starting with mental health, the report found that excessive use of social media, particularly for more than 3 hours per day, can have negative effects on our mental health. This is because social media can contribute to feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness, as we often compare ourselves to others and feel pressure to present a perfect image of ourselves online. However,

social media can also have positive effects on mental health, as it can provide a sense of connection and support, especially during times of isolation or crisis. As from the results above it has shown that people who spend more time using social media were more likely to have a negative impact on mental health, as the results indicated that 75% of people who spend more than 5 hours on social media answered that they experienced a negative impact. And 82% of people who spend 3-5 hours answered that it negatively affects their mental health. While the majority of those who spend less than one to two hours, its effect was positive.

Moving on to self-esteem, the report found that social media can have a negative impact on our self-esteem, as we often compare ourselves to others who appear to have perfect lives. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth. However, social media can also have a positive impact on self-esteem, as it can provide a platform for self-expression and creativity, and allow us to connect with others who share our interests and passions.

In terms of relationships, the report found that social media can both strengthen and weaken our relationships. On one hand, social media can facilitate communication and help us maintain connections with friends and family, especially those who live far away. On the other hand, social media can also lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, as we may misinterpret messages or engage in online arguments that damage our relationships.

When it comes to personal opinions, the report found that social media can contribute to the formation of echo chambers, where we only see and engage with opinions that align with our own. This can limit our exposure to different perspectives and viewpoints, and contribute to polarization and divisiveness. However, social media can also provide a platform for marginalized voices and allow for the dissemination of important information and ideas.

In terms of productivity and academic life, the results found that social media can be a distraction and lead to procrastination, which can negatively impact our productivity and academic performance. However, social media can also provide a source of inspiration and motivation, as well as a platform for networking and career development. As the majority of the answers centered around spending a lot of time on social media, which prevents studying. 62.5% of the participants who use social media for more than 3 hours do not find time to study which distracts them from studying. And the remaining 32.5% also use it for more than 3 hours, but it

helps them stay in touch with colleagues and professors, which leads to academic success. And 5% said that the use of social media does not affect their productivity or academic achievement.

Finally, in terms of communication skills and social communication, the report found that social media can both enhance and hinder our communication skills. On one hand, social media can provide a platform for practicing and developing communication skills, such as public speaking and networking. On the other hand, social media can also contribute to the decline of face-to-face communication skills and lead to a reliance on digital communication.

Overall, while social media has its benefits, it is important to be aware of its potential negative impacts and use it in moderation. It is important to strike a balance between using social media for connection and self-expression and taking breaks to prioritize our mental health, relationships, productivity, and communication skills.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, social media has had a significant impact on our lives that we should be aware of, both positive and negative. On the positive side, social media allows us to connect with others, access information, expand our relationships, and find support. However, excessive use of social media can have negative effects on our academic life, self-confidence, social life, and mental health, including increased anxiety, depression, loneliness, and social comparison. The causes of negative effects can include excessive use, exposure to negative content, and cyberbullying.

4.2 Recommendations

1. **Set Limits:** Setting limits on social media use can help to reduce the negative impact of excessive use. Consider setting specific times of day to check social media or setting a time limit for each session.

2. **Limit exposure to negative content:** Be mindful of the content consumed on social media. Limit exposure to negative or triggering content and instead focus on positive and uplifting content.

3. **Connect in a Meaningful Way:** Use social media to connect with others in a meaningful way. Engage in positive conversations, share uplifting content, and use social media to build positive relationships with others.

4. **Take Breaks:** Take regular breaks from social media. Consider taking a break for a day, a week, or even longer to find balance and mental clarity.

5. **Seek Support:** If social media use is having a significant negative impact on mental health, seek support from a professional or people around you. A therapist can provide guidance and support to help to improve your overall mental health.

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