

**University**

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**“Impact of Social Media and Mental health on  
Gen Z”**

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## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, social media has become something that Gen Z, born constituting around the mid-1990s to early 2010s, really cannot live without. Social media channels are equipped to promote unity among peers, to distribute and to channel news and also to provide a voice to for the people. Moreover, there are also some risks of bad impact on mental health that are related to this amazing technology. Throughout many times, research reported association among excessive social media use and negative state of mental health within the young generation of Gen Z youth (Twenge & Campbell, 2018; Primack et al., 2017).

Through this research, I examine how social networks and mental health of Generation Z people are intertwined, focusing specifically on their negative and positive aspects. The purpose of this study is to explore the causes, the consequences, the solutions, and with the favor of that to give suggestions to the audience on how to protect Generation Z from negative social media effects on their mental health.

## **2. Methodology**

The objectives of this study were achieved by utilizing the mixed-method approach, as this was the most comprehensive approach that would study in detail, the social media impact on the mental health of Generation Z (Gen Z).. The physical health indicators like blood pressure, cholesterol levels, obesity rates and the mental health characteristics such as depression, anxiety levels and perceived social isolation were recorded though standardized scales and questionnaires (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

Moreover, a qualitative data were collected through an individual interviews with mental health professionals and Gen Z members from different social groups. The unit of analysis was defined as an inclusion criteria for the group of individuals belonging to the Gen Z age group that often and frequently uses social media platforms. Ethical considerations were protected by ensuring written informed consent, confidentiality, and adherence to the relevant board's ethical guidelines as set out in institutional review boards.

## **3. Causes of the Issue**

### **Influence of Social Comparison**

Social media sites are full of channels for doing comparisons with peers, celebrities, and bloggers; this induces a lot of insecurity, and at the end of it all, there is low self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014). Scientists are proving that a huge percent of image exposure from social media worsen Gen Z's body dissatisfaction and develop in them disordered eating behaviors (Fardouly et al., 2015).

### **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)**

Craving for not being present at usual social activities and events depicted by social media sometimes goes like that users use it more, become compulsive and check more activities, that cause arousal of sensations of anxiety and stress. (Elhai et al., 2018). The study of how anxiety of losing out on desired experiences (Oberst et al. 2017) may lead to problematic social media use among teens has been proven positive.

### **Cyberbullying and Online Harassment**

Social media platforms contribute to the creation of a behavioral environment capable of the emergence of cyberbullying and online harassment which, in turn, could damage one's mental health (Kowalski et al., 2014). Studies show that among cyberbullied victims there is a high probability of suicidal and depressive thoughts, as well as anxiety. This is the case with cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015).

### **Sleep Disruption**

Enlarged usage of social media, specifically as a pre-bed routine, introduces the disruption of sleep patterns and negatively affects the quality of sleep which result in fatigue and reduced cognitive performance (Levenson et al., 2016). Studies have shown a negative effect on sleep when you use social media among adolescents which mostly affected the overall health (Hysing et al., 2015).

### **Parental Influence and Role Modeling**

Parental behaviour and perception regarding the usage of social media shapes the perspectives and actions of Gen Z. Parents who use social media excessively might unconsciously encourage the normalization of such behavior (Straker et al. 2014). Similarly, parents that underestimate the importance of online security, or who do not monitor their children's social media activities, may inadvertently be a role model to regularize and celebrate the use of problematic online patterns.

## 4. Consequences of research topic

### Negative Impacts

1. **Increased Risk of Mental Health Disorders:** Prior research reports that for the Gen Z teens the significant usage of social media has resulted in increased cases of anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems (Primack et al., 2017). Unattainable body ideals, social categorization and cyberbullying are among the factors that can be responsible for mental stress and decrease in overall level of wellbeing.
2. **Social Isolation and Loneliness:** Though it seems like social media is helpful in maintaining connections and facilitating bonding, over reliance by the users of the platform can be a cause of social disconnection and loneliness (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Based on research people who spent too many hours on social media reported feeling more lonely and claimed they experienced less perceived social support than those who did not use social media at all.
3. **Impact on Sleep Patterns:** Lastly, before lighting lights off, using electronics, especially social media platforms that can be disrupted by your quality and patterns of sleep which in turn can cause something like intoxicated feeling and negative cognitive performance (Levenson et al., 2016). The list of mental health issues that are related to sleep problems is very long.

### Positive Impacts

1. **Social Support and Connection:** Individuals can engage with their mates, exchange experiences and gain support from peers on crucial matters with the help of the social media (Primack et al., 2017). Online forums and communities, those who often feel forgotten and isolated have a chance to receive approval and be a part of a group again.
2. **Access to Information and Resources:** As stated by Twienge and Campbell (2018), social media is appropriate affiliation for getting people to learn about mental health issues, self-help strategies and available support systems. The Internet has opened the doors to online group sessions, networking with mental health professionals and access to online content.

3. **Reduced Stigma Surrounding Mental Health:** According to Levinson et al. (2016), social media platforms facilitate candid conversations and the sharing of personal experiences, which help to lessen the stigma associated with mental health concerns.

## **5. Strategies to Address Problems Associated with the Health Issue**

### **Education and Awareness Programs**

Running educational programs to make people pay attention to the risks of social media overuse and the impact of this practice on one's mental health is undoubtedly becoming paramount (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). These approaches, through which guidelines for appropriate social media usage and strategies for managing social relationships are explicitly stated, could be directed both to the Gen Z members themselves and their parents.

### **Digital Well-being Tools and Features**

Social media outlets can support people in their digital health by providing a framework that guides their online health (Primack et al., 2017). Among the harmful elements of social media, there can be reduced by delivering a clock tool to limit how much time is spent online, screen usage alert, and proper online behavior through good interface.

### **Mental Health Support Services**

Developing an interdisciplinary relationship between mental health associations and social networks providers will provide the opportunity of the mobile applications sales of mental health support services (Levenson et al., 2016). This covers employment of the mental health crisis management instruments, conducting online counseling sessions and progressing in mental health awareness by employing discussion forums and exciting topics.

### **Parental Guidance and Monitoring**

Parents' monitoring of their kids' social media play is of a prime importance, and obviously they should be advised on the ways how to put healthy limitations in place (Straker et al., 2014). Internet platforms having a pre-installed parental control tool let parents watch over their crews' online activities and restrict their exposure to unwanted content.

## **6. Case Study or Real Life Example**

### **Overview**

The researchers at the University of Pittsburgh did the study between depression that young adults suffer and how in demand social media is in their lives. In the span of two years, a study was conducted with 1,787 subjects, starting at the ages of 19 to 32 years of age (Primack et al., 2017).

### **Findings**

Researchers found that the people who used social media a lot, especially those using the Apps such as Insta and Snapchat which have more of image-oriented gameplay had a higher tendency of developing depressive symptoms. Study samples concentrated on those who reported more time spent on social networking sites who were 2.7 times more likely experiencing symptoms of depression than the less active users (Primack et al., 2017).

### **Case Example: Sarah's Experience**

The twenty one year old college student Sarah noticed that she keenly relied on social networks for recognition and global community. Sarah spent nearly the whole day comparing her appearance to the seemingly perfect pictures in her friends' profiles. After that, she started to feel disappointingly inadequate and low on herself. She found it more and more dissatisfying, but at the same time, she was also facing the problem of stopping using social media. The worse it became for Sarah as she chipped in logically, she started to experience anxiety and depression symptoms.

### **Conclusion**

The story of Sarah can thus give rise to a deep intuition among Gen Z about the negative influence that addictive social media usage exerts on the mental health of this generation.

## **7. Recommendations**

- Teach Gen Z generation and their parents the relevance of digital literacy and how to create a sound, healthy online profile to avert the negative results of social media usage (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).
- Social media platforms should integrate functions such as screen time management tools and content filters that will further equip users with the ability to monitor their level of usage and in turn prioritize their policies. (Primack et al., 2017).
- Ensure that mental health treatments through platforms like internet become more easily accessible by people dealing with mental health problems so that they don't require to wait a lot and can have direction and help on timely basis (Levenson, Johnston, & Wenstrom, 2016).

## 8. Conclusion

Since we can not ignore the impact of social media on the Gen Z's mental health, the aim this work is to embrace general wellbeing. Empirical researches show intimate link between social media use and mental health disorders, underlining it as an obligatory treatment of the well-being. We can lower this burden by opting for humanized social media, training individuals on digital well-being, and enhancing access to mental healthcare. In order to solve this problem worldwide and secure the mental health of the next generation, the creative key stakeholders, which include governments, teachers, and media social media need to cooperate as a team (Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

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