

Impacts of Social Media on Mental Health of Youth in Karachi, Pakistan: An Exploratory Study

Abstract: *The main task of this research to find out how social media affects adolescent mental health, like depression, anxiety, stress, and the fear of missing out (FoMO), was the goal of this research. This research explored the parent and usage of social networking sites have linked to mental health and prevention of illness. The sample size consists of 120 University students from four educational institutes, and the convenience sampling technique was used to gather data. The connection between social media usage and mental stability is a big problem that needs comprehensive debate, and it requires in-depth research on this topic to find out the problems and their link. This study employs a descriptive methodology, with questionnaire data being used to obtain information. Moreover, this research didn't get any significant connection between frequent consumption of social media networking sites and its link with the mental health of youth in Karachi.*

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Key Words: Social Media, Anxiety, Internet, Mental Disorder, Digital Youth

Introduction

Social media sites have amazing influential power and directly affect the emotional, mental, and psychological issues of the youth. Recently, many parents and activists have shown their concern about the adverse consequences of using social media platforms. According to certain studies, usage of social media websites can raise severe mental illnesses such as suicidal tendencies, loneliness, and reduced empathy. Other studies also show no evidence of harm from using social media websites. Also, most of the individuals considered it beneficial, and the tendency for vague bookings. The results considered included suicidal ideation, loneliness, social anxiety, and reduced empathy.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers have claimed that countless teams use multiple social media services to express their views and opinions with compatible communities. Myriad research claims that using social media, in general, will benefit the individual. The majority of researchers have discovered that social networking sites can have an adverse impact on personality traits. Researchers state that youth face a lack of sleep quality by using social platforms before sleep time.

Teenagers try to attempt suicide if sleep less than six hours a day. Previous studies have linked sleep deprivation to anger, frustration, anxiety, substance use, and despair ([Arora et al., 2018](#)).

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Social networking website customers may be able to find communities working on alternative topics and receive encouraging comments and likes (Pornsakulvanich, 2017; Shapiro & Margolin, 2014). Anxiety and sadness are two additional side effects of social media, especially on image-driven platforms where the use of social media is associated with anxiety known as "FOMOFOMO" or FoMO (Burrow & Rainone, 2017).

Significance of the Study

Social media plays an effective role in adolescents' brain development but also affects them, such as sleeping patterns, mental disorders, and psychological health (Arain et al., 2013). Most of the time youth spend on sleeping, reading, building relationships, and other activities have been replaced by the internet and social media usage (Vaterlaus, Barnett, Roche & Young, 2016). Researcher indicated that watching television and face-to-face conversation is very

crucial to find out how social networking website is affecting the young (Twenge et al., 2017). National Alliance on Mental Disorders claims that one in every five young experienced depression and a severe mental disorder (Mojtabai, Olfson & Han, 2016).

Objectives

1. To look over the correlation between social media websites and mental health conditions.
2. To analyse the connection between social networking sites and anxiety.

Research Question and Hypothesis

- R₁:** Is there any interrelationship between social media platforms and stress?
- H₀:** There is no interrelationship between social media platforms and stress.
- H₁:** There is an interrelationship between social media platforms and stress.

Theoretical Framework

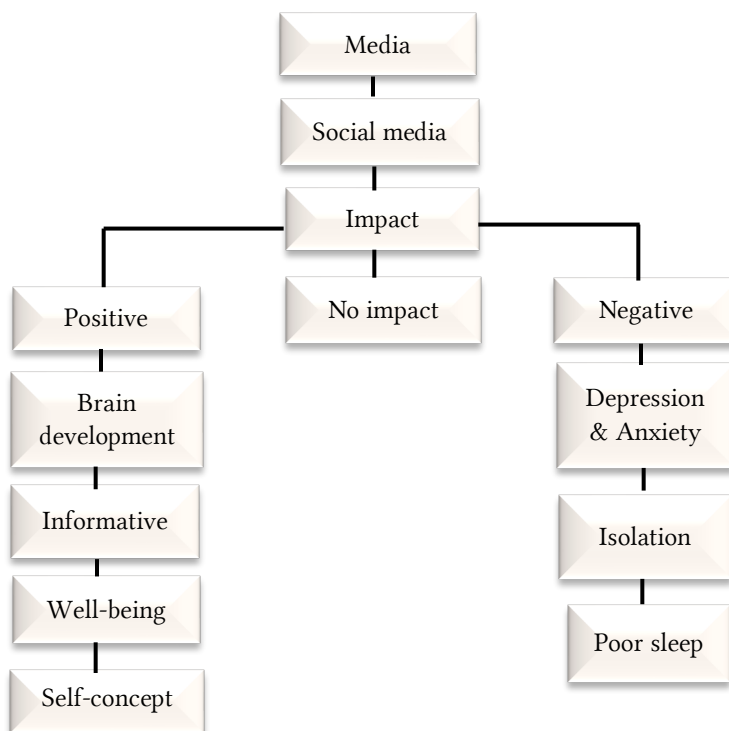


Figure 1:

Literature Review

Digital technologies in recent years have become a serious public health issue (Wei HT, 2012). Research conducted in Pakistan investigated that both social media and traditional media are responsible for developing violent behaviour and irresponsible actions among users (Zaheer, 2018). Teenagers who spend too much time on social media struggle with depression, loneliness, and other negative emotions. It might be time to reevaluate your internet behaviours and find a healthier balance. It is impossible to conclude the "History of Psychology" series with a conclusive, "...and that's how psychology came to be," because the field of psychology is always evolving. Separate areas of science have developed, medicine has assumed a staggeringly significant role in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental diseases, ideas have developed and fallen apart, and academics have devoted their lives to the advancement of the profession.

In more recent times, technology has been incorporated into psychology, making it possible to test brain activity, supplement therapeutic techniques with computer-based counselling, and accurately record and analyse complex data. And that's just the beginning of its potential impact on the discipline. The next generation of researchers will surely benefit from technology. The sophistication of the technologies we utilise at home is a point made by Monk (2002). Enjoyment is a brand-new obstacle for computer- and electronically mediated communication. Numerous studies on "human-computer interaction" have been conducted. According to reports, 45% of British adults experience agitation when unable to access social networking sites.

Phantom vibration syndrome (PVS) rises when the younger generation is unable to access their messages from social networking applications (Rosen et al., 2013).

If any young become addicted to social media, it is difficult to stop him from its use. Likes and comments reinforce individuals to engage in social media continuously, and certain people compare their lives with their friends as well.

Social networking platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook

are considered crucial websites. University students spend around 30 minutes to 2 hours on Facebook each day (Knibbe TJ, 2012). The Internet penetration rate in Pakistan stood at 36.5 per cent of the total Pakistani population at the start of 2022. Nonetheless, new media has created a complicated environment for parents, youth, and healthcare providers. Due to this media environment, myriad new mental health challenges for youth have been raised.

Policymakers focused on the relationship between social media and the level of risk that adolescents face (Boyd, 2014). Adolescents are exposed to myriad risks through social media, such as peer-to-peer violent behaviour, online pornography, antagonistic comments, privacy offence and interference from any third party.

Many studies revealed the relationship between grown-up youth's mental health disorders and the huge time spent on social media platforms by youth. One of the most significant issues with mental health is anxiety. Negative effects include online harassment, depression, sexting, cyber-bullying and so on.

While positive aspects include easy access to health information, valuable knowledge, and socialisation, furthermore, in the current scenario, everyone from the age of 11-93 is highly engaged on social media. Researchers investigated that young who chat for more than an hour a day suffer from social and emotional difficulties such as depression and anxiety more than young people who spend only one hour a day are more likely to be happy and emotionally uplifted. Additionally, 75% of young people watching TV lasted more than an hour a day. Only one-third went to sports and exercised every day.

Social media is more popular among young adults and have greater connectivity with each individual due to this young generation is lonelier than other groups (Pittman & Reich 2016). Unlimited and unhygienic usage of the internet enhances emotional loneliness among the young generation (Kim, LaRose, & Peng, 2009; Yao & Zhong, 2013). United Kingdom mental health foundation revealed that sixty per cent of adults aged between eighteen to thirty-four were found alone while they have all facilities to use social media applications (Murphy, 2010). Moreover,

the social scientist observed that people who use fewer social networking websites are lonelier and also shier, but these problems can be resolved through continuous engagement on social media ([Detters & Mehl, 2012](#)). The main problem in our society is loneliness, which is directly proportional to serious health problems ([Patterson & Veenstra, 2010](#)).

Statistics show that 83% of individuals their ages are between 18- to 29-year-old share their information on social media ([Knight-McCord, 2016](#)). People between the ages of 18-34 are more willing to use social media than older age groups (Bolton, 2013). Social networking websites are used for searching for content sharing and consuming knowledge (Bolton, 2013). The usage rate of social media has positively increased over the past decades. A huge percentage of 18-29 years old use more social media rather than any other age group, with Pinterest at 36% and LinkedIn at 34% ([Greenwood et al., 2016](#)). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (ONS), nearly half (47%) of teens aged 10 to 15 who used the website for more than 3 hours at a time were visually dissatisfied. Also, frequent website users are bullied, cheated in the classroom, and have a huge rate of school refusal. A survey of understanding societies also showed that consumers aged 10 to 15 years were less satisfied with their relationships, including family and friends. In addition to the young survey, there was a survey of children between the ages of 10 and 15.

Recently research clearly indicated that individual suffering from mental disorders is using mobile phones and other media also ([Firth et al., 2015](#)). Approximately 70% of individuals faced severe mental illness as compared to the underprivileged groups ([Brunette et al., 2019](#)). Moreover, findings have shown that individuals face serious mental illness because of online relationships and connections to others on different social media platforms. This observation is quite important because those individuals who face mental illness have fewer social relationships in the offline world ([Badcock et al., 2015](#); [Giacco et al., 2016](#)). Serious mental illness is directly interlinked with huge community participation through religious ceremonies, social circles and

civic engagement ([Brusilovskiy et al., 2016](#)). Using Facebook to upload and share information can foster social relationships and lessen feelings of loneliness ([Detters and Mehl, 2012](#)). Many academics hypothesised that the internet had produced a "lonely crowd" in cyberspace (Nie, 2001; Gregg, 2001).

A study by Michigan university (2013) claimed that young college individuals who are lonely usually use Facebook. Technology use has a direct impact on how young people sleep (Bauducco et al., 2016; Woods, 2016). Eight to ten hours of sleep every night are recommended by the National Sleep Foundation. Additionally, in the US, 15% of teenagers sleep for less than six hours every night, and over 70% of them sleep for less than eight hours. Slept for fewer than six hours each night increases the likelihood that high school adolescents would use cigarettes, abuse alcohol, and experience significant mental issues like anxiety and depression (Bauducco et al., 2016; [Bharanidharan, 2018](#); [Weaver](#)). Usually, those teens that spend most of their time on social media platforms sleep less than the recommended hours and not getting enough sleep ([Twenge et al., 2017](#)). Nonetheless, studies revealed that if more devices had teens in a room, more sleeping disorders they would face (Chassiakos et al., 2016). Around eighty-six per cent, 86% of adults who sleep with electronic devices face myriad sleeping disorders owing to notifications (Woods, 2016).

This research indicated that social media is the core reason for youth's mental disorders also discussed social media benefits but in general and don't particularly designate which social media platform has individual benefits. The majority of researchers found that social media can create negative effects on well-being and point out negative impacts on mental health. The current study investigated that using social platforms roughly equally increases emotions of loneliness and isolation. According to the Mental Health Foundation, nearly sixty per cent of British individuals ages 18 to 34 feels alone frequently or occasionally, compared to 35% of those over the age of 55, according to BBC News (May 25 2010). However, there was an increase in unfavourable social media encounters, which

decreased the good effect. Both findings indicate that virtual relationships and personality qualities are important in producing levels of anxiety, despair, or a sense of isolation in Karachi's social media users. Extrovert youth are happier and more extroverted, according to [Herbage's \(2010\)](#) research.

Conceptualisation

The Displaced Behaviour theory explains the interrelationship between social networking websites and mental hygiene. Displacement is a psychological defence mechanism that focused on those people who suffered from aggression and take out their anger on those people that poses less of a risk. Nonetheless, many theories explained the significant correlation between the social platform and psychological mental disorders in youth. Although, cognitive dissonance classical theory in social cognitive psychology was put forward by Festinger in 1957. This theory describes the discomfort felt when individual thoughts and beliefs are inconsistent with their actions ([Bai et al., 2019](#)).

Methodology

The researcher used a quantitative method approach in this study to find out the interrelationship between social platforms and the mental hygiene of youth. Moreover, in the survey, students shared their feedback about their understanding of mental health, which social media they prefer and why they usage of social media services and their usage. The main goal of this research is to find out the relationship between social networking websites and anxiety faced by youth aged between 15 to 29. In this study, the researcher considered different demographic characteristics of the audience, such as their age, education, and gender. Male and female high school students participated in this study, including the University of Karachi, Indus valley, Greenwich University and AIMS institute. The convenience non-probability sampling technique was used in this research. The researcher approached high school students for a survey and to collect useful information. All participants were 15 or older. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions only, and the sample size consisted of 120 high school students. SPSS software was used for coding and results.

Data Analysis

Sampling Dynamics

Table 1. Sampling details as under

Gender			
1	Male	56	47.1
2	Female	63	52.9
Total		119	100.0
Age			
1	16-20	48	40.3
2	21-25	63	52.9
3	26-30	5	4.2
4	+30	2	1.7
5	Not Mention	1	.8

Table 2. The majority of the respondent said that they do not have any mental health issues with heavy use of social media.

Have you experienced mental health issues?				
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent	
1	yes	32	26.9	
2	No	73	61.3	
3	Prefer not to say	14	11.8	
Total		119	100.0	

Table 3. Results are suggesting that majority of the respondent 89.1 % used social media on daily bases.

How often do you use social networking software? Such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube			
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent
1	Daily	106	89.1
2	A few times a week	8	6.7
3	Once a week	1	.8
4	Once a fortnight	3	2.5
5	Rarely	1	.8
	Total	119	100.0

Table 4. Results show that 21.8 % of youth used social media for getting fun, but the majority used it for various purposes.

Why do you use social media?			
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent
1	To get attention from parents or peers	3	2.5
2	Test friendship of their peers	1	.8
3	Punishing oneself	4	3.4
4	To gain a sense of control	18	15.1
5	To be funny	26	21.8
6	Other	67	56.3
	Total	119	100.0

Table 5. Results suggest that 38.7 % of respondents used social media for private communication, and 33.6 % used it for interpersonal communication.

How do you prefer to discuss your mental health			
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent
1	On social media	8	6.7
2	Face to face	40	33.6
3	Using private messaging apps like text messages, emails, or phone	10	8.4
4	private communication	46	38.7
5	Avoid discussing it	13	10.9
6	Prefer not to say	2	1.7
	Total	119	100

Table 6. It has been proved that the majority of youth don't like to discuss their mental health on social media platforms.

On social media, who do you discuss your mental health with?			
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent
1	Don't discuss it with anyone	49	41.2
2	Online acquaintance (that you don't know in person)	2	1.7
3	People you don't know	5	4.2
4	People you don't know	5	4.2
5	Avoid discussing it	58	48.7
6	Total	119	100.0

Table 7. It is proved that social media disturbed sleep time; 43.7% of respondents said that sometimes and 22.7 %every night harm sleeping time due to heavy use of social media.

Do you think your use of social media is reducing the amount of sleep you get?			
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent
1	No, not at all	24	20.2
2	Yes, sometimes	52	43.7
3	Yes, quite often	16	13.4
4	Yes, every night	27	22.7
5	Total	119	100.0

Table 8. The majority of youth, 60.5 %, said I have not shared about my mental hygiene on social networking websites. This may be because they do not like to discuss their problem with others.

What issues, if any, have arisen as a result of discussing your mental health on social media platforms?			
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent
1	Backlash or abuse	3	2.5
2	Friends and family judging	19	16.0
3	It has affected work	17	14.3
4	Strained relations with family or friends	8	6.7
5	On social media, I have not discussed how I'm doing mentally	72	60.5
Total		119	100.0

Table 9. When we asked, examine your mental health, do you think social media has a favourable or harmful impact?? 33.6 % said that the impact was negative.

Do you believe social media has a positive or negative impact on your mental health?			
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent
1	Positive	36	30.3
2	Negative	40	33.6
3	No effect	43	36.1
4	Total	119	100.0

Table 10. When we asked, how do you feel about the impact of social media on your mental health? 58.8 % of youth admitted that social media messages sometimes upset them.

Do you believe social media has a good or bad overall impact on your mental health?			
Sr. No	Response	Frequency	Per cent
1	No, not at all	25	21.0
2	Yes, sometimes	70	58.8
3	Yes, quite often	19	16.0
4	Yes, every night	3	2.5
5	Total	117	98.3

Table 11. age * Do social media cause anxiety/stress? Cross tabulation

		Do social media cause anxiety/stress?				Total	
		No, not at all	Yes, sometimes	Yes, quite often	Yes, every night		
age	16-20	Count	9	32	5	2	48
		% within age	18.8%	66.7%	10.4%	4.2%	100.0%

		Do social media cause anxiety/stress?				Total
		No, not at all	Yes, sometimes	Yes, quite often	Yes, every night	
	% of Total	7.7%	27.4%	4.3%	1.7%	41.0%
	Count	15	32	14	1	62
21-25	% within age	24.2%	51.6%	22.6%	1.6%	100.0%
	% of Total	12.8%	27.4%	12.0%	0.9%	53.0%
	Count	0	4	0	0	4
26-30	% within age	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%
	Count	0	2	0	0	2
4.00	% within age	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
	Count	1	0	0	0	1
200.00	% within age	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
	Count	25	70	19	3	117
Total	% within age	21.4%	59.8%	16.2%	2.6%	100.0%
	% of Total	21.4%	59.8%	16.2%	2.6%	100.0%

Table 12. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.406 ^a	12	.414
Likelihood Ratio	13.902	12	.307
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.080	1	.149
N of Valid Cases	117		

a. 14 cells (70.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

Table 13. Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.326	.414
	Cramer's V	.188	.414
N of Valid Cases		117	

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

H01: No relationship between the amount of time spent on social media and stress, so we can accept our null hypothesis

Discussion

This researcher read through and compiled a sizable amount of material related to social media platforms and mental comfort. The link between time spent on social and mental disorders explained the study's significance. Social media

platforms are considered as detrimental for the younger generation because issues with mental hygiene that develop during puberty can spread like an epidemic to everyone their entire life. The importance of further research and analysis of that notion cannot be overemphasized. The most recent research shows that there is no connection between using social media services and maintaining good mental happiness. Dealing with others can improve your life for years by lowering tension, fear, and sadness while enhancing self-assurance, bringing happiness, giving pleasure and avoiding loneliness. Moreover, having weak relations puts your mental comfort in grave danger. Myriad youth in

this modern world locate and connect with one another by using multiple social media websites like Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and so on. It's important to realise that social media platforms will never completely replace direct communication.

Conclusion & Recommendations

This study demonstrates how social networking sites negatively impact young people's mental health in Karachi, although statistical analysis did not reveal any correlation. The findings showed that using social media did not predict worse mental health functioning. This research also

explored how particular social media experiences may incite youth mental health. Furthermore, researchers recently did a study on the relation between depression and the use of social media also, spending time on social media and their effects on mental health. The main purpose of this research is to understand the relationship between social media use and anxiety. This study was precisely designed to improve the knowledge of youth and students related to social networking sites (SNS) and their psychological effects on the association of depression among university students. In future research, a wider sample size should be taken and focuses on Kids and teenagers as well.

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