EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH: AN EMPIRICAL INQUIRY

Abstract

Social media has become an essential part of the daily routine of many students, and it has the potential to influence their mental health positively or negatively. The research was conducted using an approach that included a survey with teenagers from various educational institutions.

The survey included questions that aimed to determine the frequency of social media usage, the types of social media platforms used, and the impact of social media on mental health. The interviews provided more in-depth insights into the experiences and perceptions of students regarding social media's impact on their mental health.

The findings of the study revealed that social media usage was prevalent among students, with Snapchat and Instagram being the most commonly used platforms. The study also revealed that social media use has both positive and negative impacts on students' mental health. On the positive side, social media provided a sense of connection and support, However, on the negative side, excessive use of social media was linked to increased stress, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

Overall, the study highlights the need for students to be aware of the potential risks associated with social media use and the importance of using social media in moderation. Furthermore, the study provides insights into how educators, parents, and mental health professionals can support students in their social media usage to promote positive mental health outcomes.

Keywords: teenagers, social-media, mental illness, addiction, therapy

Author

Dr. Shivaji Banerjee
Senior Assistant Professor
Former Head of the Department
Management, Faculty of Commerce
St. Xavier's College (Autonomous)
Kolkata, India.
drshivaji@sxccal.edu

Guest Faculty
Department of Commerce and
Business Management
University of Calcutta.

Visiting Faculty
School of Management
IIEST Shibpur.

Aditya Jain
Ex Student
Under Graduate Department
Bachelors of Commerce
St. Xavier's College (Autonomous)
Kolkata, India.
adjain0209@gmail.com

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In today's interconnected world, the proliferation of social media platforms has forged unprecedented connectivity. While these platforms have undoubtedly yielded numerous benefits like enhanced communication and information access, they have also engendered apprehensions regarding their influence on mental well-being. Among adolescents, social media has seamlessly woven into their daily fabric, with many dedicating considerable hours to scrolling through feeds, sharing posts, and engaging with peers.

Nevertheless, the impact of social media on students' mental health remains a topic of ongoing discourse. While certain studies posit that social media usage can yield positive outcomes, such as alleviating feelings of isolation and furnishing social backing, others contend that it can exert adverse effects, contributing to heightened symptoms of anxiety and depression. This research endeavour delves into the nexus between social media and teenagers' mental well-being, scrutinizing potential risk factors, adaptive strategies, and the roles of parents and educators in counteracting unfavourable ramifications. By illuminating this pressing matter, this investigation aims to yield insights that can guide policies and interventions geared towards fostering the psychological robustness and well-being of adolescents in the digital era.

II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Considering the widespread adoption of social media among adolescents and its potential influence on their psychological well-being, it becomes imperative to delve deeper into comprehending the intricate nexus between social media engagement and mental health repercussions. This study aims to enrich the existing reservoir of knowledge by delving into the ramifications of social media usage on students' mental well-being.

In particular, this investigation will probe the following research query: What correlations underlie social media usage and mental health outcomes, encompassing elements such as anxiety and depression, within the student demographic? Through addressing this inquiry, we endeavour to illuminate the conceivable hazards posed by social media engagement on the mental health of students, thus paving the way for strategies aimed at cultivating favourable mental well-being outcomes in this cohort.

To fulfil its purpose, the study will adopt a cross-sectional design, gathering data from a representative sample of students. Subsequently, the amassed data will undergo meticulous statistical scrutiny to unveil any noteworthy associations between social media use and mental health consequences.

The implications of this study carry significant weight for educators, parents, and policymakers alike, all invested in nurturing the holistic development of students. The findings have the potential to underpin the creation of empirically grounded interventions, geared towards alleviating the adverse impacts of social media on mental health. Furthermore, the results could serve as a compass guiding the formulation of guidelines for prudent and responsible social media engagement among students.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Extensive scholarly discourse envelops the realm of social media's influence on the mental well-being of student cohorts, within which a burgeoning corpus of research has diligently scrutinized the potential adverse consequences stemming from undue engagement with these digital platforms. Numerous empirical investigations have successfully delineated a positive association between heightened social media usage and the manifestation of symptoms encompassing anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem among young adults, particularly pronounced in those who habituate extended durations on these platforms or partake in protracted social comparison.

Lin et al. (2016) orchestrated a study that revealed an unequivocal linkage between excessive social media consumption and escalated anxiety and depression markers within college students. Parallelly, Hunt et al.'s (2018) inquiry documented a conspicuous correlation between social media utilization and a rise in feelings of isolation and concomitant diminishment of well-being in adolescents.

In tandem with such explorations, select studies have undertaken a microcosmic investigation into the nuanced mechanisms by which social media interfaces with mental health. Pantic et al.'s (2012) research, for instance, illuminated the potential for a diminished capacity for face-to-face communication engendered by social media utilization, thereby contributing to the pervasive specters of social isolation and loneliness.

Conversely, an alternate strand of scholarship has endeavored to espouse the affirmative impacts of social media on mental health. Ellison et al. (2007) advanced the notion that social media could serve as a conduit for engendering feelings of social support and connection, particularly catering to those ensconced within geographically marginalized or isolated contexts.

Kross et al.'s seminal contribution in 2013, encapsulated within the study "Facebook Use Predicts Declines in Subjective Well-Being in Young Adults," underscored the potential repercussions of Facebook utilization, postulating a linkage to augmented expressions of depression and anxiety. This investigation substantiated a discernible correlation between extended periods of Facebook engagement, a decline in life satisfaction levels, and a positive relationship between frequent account checks and heightened depressive symptomatology. Augmenting this scholarly narrative, citations by Bányai et al. (2017), Elhai et al. (2017), and Vannucci & McCauley Ohannessian (2019) uniformly corroborate the association between excessive social media involvement and deleterious mental health outcomes, characterized by a triad of anxiety, depression, and stress.

Pittman and Reich (2016) traversed the landscape of social media's impact on loneliness, underscoring a discernible penchant for engendering sentiments of isolation and social estrangement, particularly salient among college students ensnared in frequent digital engagement.

Cumulatively, this panoply of research coalesces to depict a comprehensive portrait of the intricate symbiosis between social media utilization and the mental well-being of students.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand which social media is most popular among teenagers.
- To understand the threats teenagers, face online.
- To understand what illnesses are most common in teens who are very active on social media.

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation underpinning this research concerning the influence of social media on students' mental health is rooted in the amalgamation of the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC). As delineated by the SCT, individual conduct is molded by three principal elements: personal attributes, environmental circumstances, and behavioral patterns. Within the realm of social media engagement, personal facets may encompass self-esteem, self-efficacy, and perceived control, while environmental dimensions could entail social norms and social support. Behavioural facets could involve the frequency and duration of social media interaction, as well as the nature of activities pursued on these platforms.

In parallel, the TMSC posits that stress constitutes a reciprocal interaction between individuals and their surroundings, with individual coping mechanisms profoundly influencing their stress response. In the context of social media engagement, stressors may emanate from sources such as cyberbullying, social comparisons, and the apprehension of missing out (FOMO). Coping strategies may encompass seeking solace in social support networks, embarking on problem-solving endeavours, or even abstaining from social media participation altogether.

This framework proposes that personal attributes like self-esteem and self-efficacy could act as protective shields against the detrimental ramifications of social media, while positive social norms and bolstered social support may amplify positive mental health outcomes. Conversely, behavioural aspects such as excessive social media use or participation in unfavorable online activities could elevate stress levels and subsequently contribute to negative mental health repercussions.

In totality, the conceptual framework of this study underscores the intricate and multifaceted interplay between social media utilization and mental health outcomes among students. Moreover, it furnishes a structured framework for dissecting the myriad components that contribute to this intricate relationship.

1. **Isolation and Social-Media:** The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in an unparalleled era of physical seclusion and the implementation of social distancing measures, resulting in a profound surge in the utilization of social media platforms. As individuals found themselves confined to their domiciles and devoid of in-person interactions, social media emerged as a principal avenue for upholding social ties and alleviating sentiments of solitude.

For numerous individuals, social media has evolved into a lifeline throughout the pandemic, facilitating connections with loved ones, enabling participation in virtual gatherings, and providing a conduit for seeking solace. Additionally, these platforms have metamorphosed into pivotal sources for pandemic-related information and updates, alongside disseminating public health advisories.

Nevertheless, the amplified reliance on social media during these times has also cast a spotlight on its potential adverse impacts on mental well-being. Empirical research has unveiled that excessive engagement with social media can engender heightened levels of anxiety and depression, particularly when exposed to negative news or misleading information. Furthermore, the propensity for social comparison and the fear of missing out, both inherent in social media dynamics, can exacerbate sentiments of inadequacy and seclusion.

Consequently, while social media has undoubtedly served as an invaluable conduit for preserving social bonds amid the pandemic, it becomes imperative to exercise prudence regarding its potential repercussions on mental health. Striking a balance through moderate usage, seeking out content that is uplifting and informative, and according precedence to alternative means of nurturing social connections, such as phone conversations and video calls, can collectively aid in mitigating the adverse effects of social media on mental well-being.

2. **Addiction and the Mind:** The omnipresence of social media in our lives has ignited apprehensions about its potential to manipulate and exert control over our thoughts and behaviors. Criticisms have been levied against social media platforms for their utilization of algorithms and targeted advertising, wielded to subtly and sometimes surreptitiously shape our perceptions and inclinations.

One avenue through which social media can sway the human psyche is through the application of persuasive design techniques. These platforms are meticulously crafted to be captivating and to retain user engagement for prolonged periods, often utilizing notifications, gamification, and other triggers that prompt dopamine release in the brain. This can foster a cycle of compulsive use and reliance on social media, culminating in adverse effects on mental well-being.

Moreover, these platforms frequently cultivate echo chambers and filter bubbles, curating an environment where users encounter solely information and viewpoints consonant with their existing beliefs and preferences. This can engender a skewed reality and reinforce entrenched biases, ultimately fueling further polarization and division.

Furthermore, social media can be harnessed as a tool for propaganda and dissemination of misinformation, particularly within the context of political campaigns and mass communication. The widespread proliferation of false information and conspiracy theories carries significant implications for public health, safety, democratic institutions, and civic participation. This phenomenon has experienced an exponential surge during the pandemic, with the consumption of certain types of content reshaping neural pathways and altering the personalities of teenagers. The combination of high-speed internet access and sensationalized portrayals across media platforms has resulted

in the distortion of cognitive processes and the emergence of addiction to an artificial reality. Amid this landscape, the quest for validation drives individuals to engage in a myriad of absurdities, perpetuated by viral content that influences others, particularly young people, to replicate these actions.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A variety of statistical and analytical techniques were employed in this study, including the utilization of features from Google Forms and Microsoft Excel. The primary data collection involved the use of self-administered questionnaires. To ensure questionnaire suitability and gauge response patterns, a pilot study was conducted. These questionnaires were then distributed to students aged between 12 and 19, selected from specific educational institutions.

The questionnaire design aimed to assess participants' perceptions of their mental well-being, social media usage patterns, and overall life perspectives. The questions were designed to be self-explanatory and presented in a close-ended format. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), was also incorporated. Additionally, this study involved the analysis of multiple papers and a comprehensive exploration of online articles to acquire secondary data. These efforts were directed towards enhancing the depth of understanding on the subject matter.

VII. SAMPLING DESIGN

The study targeted students from prominent educational institutions in Bhagalpur, including Mount Assisi School, Marwari College, St. Joseph's School, St. Teresa School, and B.N College. A convenience-based approach led to the selection of a total sample size of 500 respondents. Ultimately, 400 out of the distributed 500 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a robust 80% response rate.

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In this study, two questions were asked in the first section to obtain a clearer picture of the background of the respondents. This provides a quick understanding of the pattern of the responses received.

Table 1- Gender			Table 2-Screen Time(in hours)		
Category	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	160	40	1-3	122	30.5
Female	240	60	3-6	278	69.5
Total	**400**	**100**	**Total**	**400**	**100**

Table 3- Age		
Category	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Pre-teen	120	30
Late-teen	280	70
Total	**400**	**100**

Source: developed for research

The above tables depict the demographic profile of the respondents in a comprehensive manner. Table 1 portrays that majority of the respondents were females which consist of 60% while the minority was males which consist of 40%.Based on Table 2 it can be concluded that maximum respondents were heavy users, with 69 percent of students using a phone for more than 5h in a day. Apps with the highest screen time were **Snapchat, Instagram and WhatsApp.** Late teens are more hooked on social media and are more vulnerable to mental illness, the content that is advertised are often very vile, negative, it plants the seed of inferiority complex and unnecessary comparison among teenagers which causes a lot of body image issues and self-esteem issues among them.
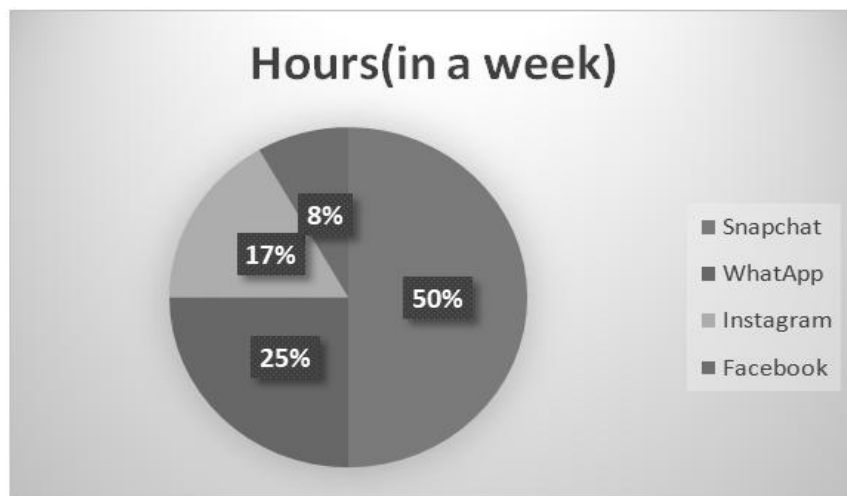

Consolidated data of a week was taken and the usage pattern shows of the time spent on the phone fifty percent of time was spent on snapchat, for example a heavy user screentime clocks to 40h in week that is more than 5h per day and half of that time is spent on snapchat.
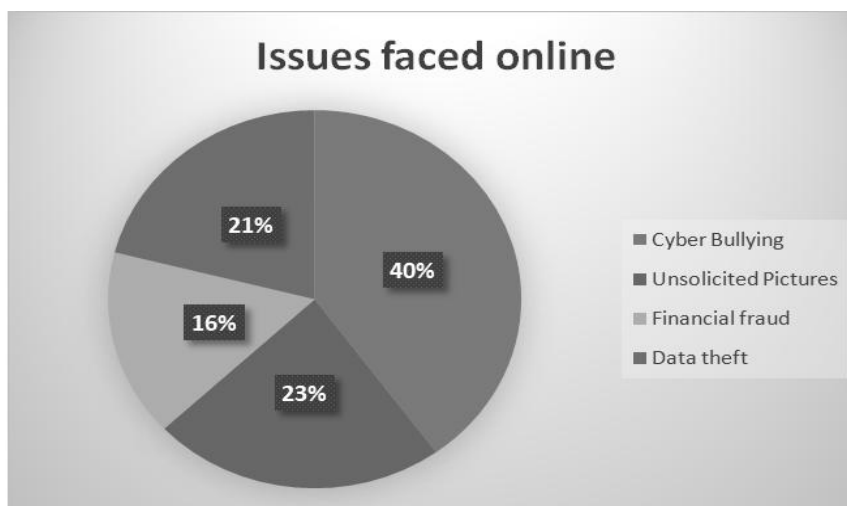
The above chart shows the most common issues students face online, cyber bullying also includes trolling, rape threats and in general threats, these negative encounters have a very harsh impact on students, a lot of people especially women receive unsolicited pictures with sexual innuendos which can be traumatic and triggering, with the lack of police

involvement in these cases the delinquents get away easily, financial frauds and data theft are the new frontiers where innocent people are scammed of their hard earned money, spam calls and fraud messages have increased astronomically over the time, harmless looking influencers namely people who have a decent following on social media have become the new gods and these people have specialized in selling get rich quick schemes, and unreliable stock tip, which have caused massive losses to people.
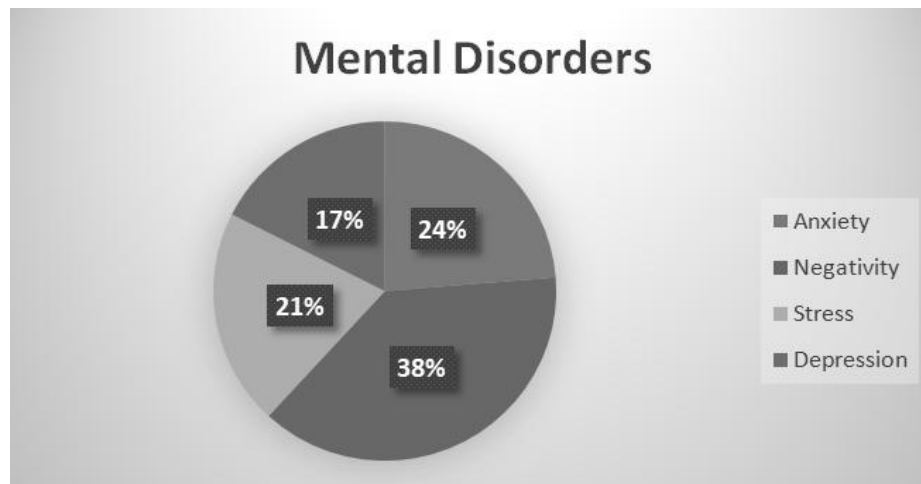
These mental illness are a major concern, lack of routine in pandemic and spending hours on social media can even lead to depression, excessive consumption of media drops baseline dopamine levels in humans, which leads to more stress and anxiety and medication, there are a lot of students diagnosed with ADHD, which is probably due to excessive consumption, a deteriorating mental health will also impact physical health, very short attention spans, increase in aggressive behavior are all linked to excessive consumption of primarily social media.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

While the implementation of strategies such as dissociating from detrimental associations, seeking therapeutic intervention, regulating screen exposure, and incorporating periodic respites offers potential remedies, it is pertinent to acknowledge the superficial nature of these measures in addressing the complex realm of adolescent mental well-being. A more profound course of action necessitates the cultivation of spiritual intelligence within this demographic cohort. A prescriptive inclusion of wisdom literature as a mandatory facet of their educational curriculum stands poised to engender a comprehensive ontological perspective. By imparting foundational virtues encompassing love, patience, and contentment, a robust moral constitution can be fostered, thereby manifestly attenuating susceptibility to psychopathological proclivities.

Concomitantly, a more profound and nuanced approach dictates an exploration of the underlying etiologies underpinning mental health aberrations, paralleled by the provisioning of targeted resources and support mechanisms to facilitate adept navigation through the intricacies inherent in these challenges. This endeavor necessitates an intricate interplay of therapeutic counsel, community consolidation, and the advocacy of adaptive coping modalities.

Within the parental domain, a vigilant custodianship over their offspring's virtual interactions and content assimilation remains a paramount prerogative. Striking an equilibrium between didactic guidance and an allowance for individual autonomy substantiates a pivotal tenet. Moreover, both parental and pedagogical stakeholders share an instrumental agency in ameliorating adolescent mental well-being outcomes. Through active monitoring of virtual interactions, the cultivation of an atmosphere conducive to candid discourse, and the provision of guidance and tools to cultivate judicious digital practices, these stakeholders collectively contribute to the facilitation of adolescents' adept negotiation of the intricate digital landscape and the concomitant cultivation of psychological resilience.

X. CONCLUSION

The inescapable ubiquity of social media within contemporary society is an indubitable reality, irrespective of individual sentiments. Its enduring pertinence in our lives is poised to endure, albeit accompanied by a nuanced duality that mandates circumspect and deliberate engagement. The present scholarly inquiry delves comprehensively into the intricate nexus binding social media and the mental well-being of adolescent demographics, revealing a dichotomous landscape rife with latent vulnerabilities and attendant protective factors. While social media has ushered in transformative paradigms of communication and self-expression, it concurrently unfurls multifarious challenges that intricately interlace with the psychological welfare of the younger generation.

In a broader context, this study resoundingly underscores the imperativeness of perpetuated scholarly exploration, as well as targeted interventions, both catalyzed by a resolute commitment to nurturing the psychological health and holistic prosperity of teenagers. The enduring resonance of social media in shaping the cognitive landscape of contemporary youth precipitates an unequivocal necessity for the discernment of sagacious strategies aimed at countervailing detrimental repercussions while harnessing the latent dividends.

This research paper stands as a foundational edifice upon which future inquiries into the intricate interplay between social media and mental health can be erected. More significantly, it proffers an emphatic summons to orchestrate proactive endeavors, ensuring the sanctity of teenagers' well-being remains inviolable amidst the irrevocable advent of the digital epoch.

XI. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Efforts have been made to make the research paper as exhaustive as possible; a lot of students were interviewed on telephones, but still, there is scope for improvement

- Datasize couldbebigger.
- Impact of social media on education could also be studied.
- Impact of social media on the usage of language could also be studied.

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