



The Impact of Social Media Use Integration on Stress and Mental Well-Being in Young Adults

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Abstract: The primary objective of the current study is to look into how young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 relate to social media use integration, perceived stress, and psychological well-being. For this study, a quantitative research design utilizing the online survey approach was chosen. To evaluate the research goals, 130 young individuals completed the WHO-5 Well-Being Index, the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), and the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS). The findings indicated a favorable correlation between felt stress and social media use integration. Additionally, there was a strong inverse association with social media use integration and psychological well-being. Psychological well-being was significantly correlated negatively with perceived stress. Although the explained variance was small, social media use integration was a significant predictor of psychological well-being and perceived stress. Additionally, psychological well-being was more accurately predicted by perceived stress than by social media use integration. These results imply that while young adults' psychological well-being is impacted by social media integration, perceived stress is a key factor in determining their psychological well-being. These findings highlight the importance of social media integration and stress management on the mental health of young adults.

Keywords: *Social Media Use Integration, Perceived Stress, Psychological Well-Being, Young Adults, Cross-Sectional Study.*

1. Introduction

1.1 *Background of the Study*

With the quick development of digital technology, there has been a noticeable shift in how people interact, communicate, and look for information. Social media apps like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook (X), and Snapchat have become more and more integrated into people's social life during the last ten years, particularly among young adults. Consequently, social media usage has shifted from a communication tool to a vital component of social identity formation and functioning. Young adulthood is considered a period between 18 and 25 years. This important stage of human development is characterized by the development of social interactions, academic demands, professional goals, emotional control techniques, and identity creation. People are quite sensitive to peer approval, social input, and a sense of belonging during this time. Considering the fact that social media heavily relies on social comparison, feedback (likes, comments, and sharing), and self-presentational strategies, its impact on psychological functioning during young adulthood is a significant concern.

Social media has been associated with a number of detrimental psychological effects, such as increased anxiety, stress, depressive symptoms, sleep issues, FOMO, and fewer in-person contacts, despite its many positive aspects, such as connectedness, peer support, and information sharing. However, intentional and moderate usage of social media has been linked as well with favorable results, including enhanced feelings of wellbeing, connectivity, and social support. Consequently, the intricate connection between social media and its actual psychological effects. Given how common social media use is, it is now essential to investigate not only how social media use affects mental health but also how it is used and how it affects psychological consequences.

1.2 *Conceptualizing Social Media Usage*

The concept of social media usage is multifaceted and extends beyond the amount of time spent online. It encompasses the degree of social media usage, the kind of social media usage, the kind of social media platform usage, the kind of engagement (passive and active usage), the psychological involvement in social media usage, and the motivation behind social media usage. Direct communication and participation on social media platforms are examples of active social media usage. Observing and watching other people's content on social media platforms is considered passive social media usage.

Different psychological implications of social media use: Feelings of inadequacy and social comparison have been linked to passive consumption. Conversely, social support and connection have been linked to active usage. PSMU (social media addiction), on the other hand,

has been described as excessive social media usage that interferes with daily life and emotional well-being. Therefore, understanding social media use requires examining not only frequency but also patterns, motivations, and emotional dependence associated with digital engagement.

1.3 Mental Well-Being in Young Adults

A multifaceted concept, mental well-being encompasses the social, psychological, and emotional aspects of human functioning. Positive feelings, life satisfaction, stress reduction, emotional stability, and the capacity to form meaningful interpersonal connections are all components of mental well-being. Mental well-being includes resilience and mental wellbeing in addition to the lack of mental maladjustments.

Peer relationships, career ambiguity, academic constraints, and sociocultural influences can all have an impact on young adults' mental health. The impact of social media on mental health must be investigated in light of social media's rise to prominence as the primary platform for socialization. The term "psychological distress" describes the effects of digital media use on mental health, including stress, anxiety, and depression. The positive side of mental well-being is referred to in the same context when elements like self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived social support are present.

Stress and Coping Framework

From the standpoint of stress and coping, social media could be contributing to both stress and coping. Social media may be used by people as a coping mechanism for stress and other bad feelings. On the other hand, excessive social media use might make a person feel more stressed. According to the theoretical viewpoints presented, social media's role is neither wholly positive nor wholly bad.

1.4 Review of Existing Literature and Research Gap

The literature currently in publication shows conflicting results about the relationship between social media use and mental health. While moderate engagement with these sites is positively associated with feelings of social support, connectedness, and life satisfaction, other studies have found a strong correlation among the usage of these sites and mental health issues like anxiety, depression, sleep problems, and loneliness.

Despite the accumulation of a substantial body of literature, there are a number of gaps:

1. Various studies focus on the use of social media among people of Western culture, thereby limiting the generalization of the results to diverse cultures.
2. There exists a lack of uniformity in the measurement of the use of social media, as some studies focus on the time factor only.
3. There exists no clear distinction between the concepts of positive and problematic use.

4. There exists a lack of research that incorporates the factors of psychological distress and well-being.

Although a lot of research has been done on the subject worldwide, more needs to be done to understand how young adults utilize social media in particular cultural and educational contexts.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

Given how common social media is in young adults' life and the conflicting results about the psychological effects of social media use, it is imperative to look at the connection between social media and mental health using a methodical methodology. Teachers, young adults, and mental health experts can all gain important information from this relationship. The goal of the current study was to add to the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between young adults' use of social media and their mental health, including both good and negative psychological effects.

1.6 Aim of the Study

This study's main goal is to evaluate how young adults' use of social media and mental health are related.

1.7 Research Objectives

- a) To assess how much young adults use social media.
- b) To assess young adults' reported levels of stress.
- c) To assess young adults' psychological health.
- d) To assess the connection between perceived stress and social media use.
- e) To assess the connection between psychological health and social media use.
- f) To assess the connection between psychological health and perceived stress.

1.8 Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between social media usage and mental well-being among young adults.

H2: Higher levels of problematic social media usage are associated with increased psychological distress.

H3: Purposeful and moderate social media usage is associated with higher perceived well-being.

2. Review of Literature

Joshi et al. (2023) studied the psychological and social correlates of cell phone social media use among undergraduate students. The findings showed that psychological well-being

was positively correlated with both self-connectedness and interpersonal connectedness. While connectivity to others did not show up as an important indicator of psychological well-being, connectedness to oneself did. The findings showed that using social media for personal reasons had a greater positive impact on psychological health.

Dharejo et al. (2023) examined the relationship between social media use and overall well-being among young people through a systematic review of 111 articles between 2013 and 2023. The results demonstrated that there was discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of social media use. Overuse of social media has been linked to stress, sleep issues, social isolation, and a decline in in-person connections. However, it was discovered that young people's general well-being was positively impacted by social media use that was thoughtful and moderate since it boosted support from society and connectedness. It was determined that the impact of social media use varied depending on how much and how it was used.

Murari et al. (2024) carried out a systematic review with the aim of investigating the association between social media usage and various dimensions of social well-being. According to the systematic review, teens who use social media more frequently are more likely to experience negative social outcomes, such as cyberbullying, comparisons with others, low self-worth, substance abuse, academic underperformance, fear of missing out (FoMO), and social overload. The comprehensive review did, however, also show that social media use among older persons who were socially isolated had good social effects; social media use was related with higher life satisfaction, lower degrees of loneliness, and better social support and belonging. Additionally, enhanced performance at work and employee well-being were found in the systematic review.

Merino et al. (2024) investigated that the relationship between body image perceptions and the influence of social media on mental health. The review claims that social media's impact on physical measurements has an impact on mental health and self-esteem. Gender and culture can have a big impact on how people perceive their bodies. Depending on their cultural background, these factors affect people differently. The review concludes that in order to better understand body image, it is critical to take into account comprehensive interventions and policy to address factors that lead to body dissatisfaction.

Vagka et al. (2024) investigated the relationship between smartphone use, involvement in social media, nomophobia, and psychological characteristics among young adults. According to the study, having more online friends and using social media more frequently were associated with higher levels of nomophobia. Young adults with normal or higher levels

of self-esteem were more active on the internet than those with lower levels. greater levels of anxiety were linked to more messages, whereas greater levels of stress and anxiety seemed to have a detrimental effect on the number of online followers, even if anxiety, depression, and stress were not associated to the use of the digital network.

Kumar et al. (2025) conducted a study on the extent of internet usage related to social media and its association with psychological distress among undergraduate and postgraduate students. The results showed the extent of excessive internet usage for social media among a significant proportion of the student group. The results also showed a higher proportion of excessive internet usage among males than females. A significant proportion of the excessive internet users were also using multiple social media accounts.

3. Methodology

The study was designed to examine the relationship between social media use integration, perceived stress, and psychological well-being among young adults.

3.1 Research Design

The current investigation was carried out using a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research strategy. The cross-sectional technique shows that the variables were not altered over the data collection period. Since the primary goal of the study was to determine the relationship between the variables instead of the cause-and-effect relationship, the design was suitable. Because the quantitative approach made it possible to measure the variables using statistical tools, it was suited for the current study. In order to develop the theoretical framework and comprehension of the connection between social media use and mental health, pertinent empirical research was also examined.

3.2 Variables

Independent Variable (IV):

- Social Media Use Integration

Dependent Variable (DV):

- Perceived Stress
- Mental Well-Being

3.3 Participants

The study's sample consisted of 130 young adults whose ages range between 18 and 25 years. This developmental stage was chosen for this study since it is the period of heightened engagement in digital activities and psychological changes. This study comprised both male

and female participants. The proportion of each gender was calculated using the dataset to ensure accurate representation of each gender. All the participants in this study were supposed to be active users of social media. Anyone who did not fall within the specified age range and did not provide consent for taking part in the study was eliminated because it was a volunteer study.

3.5 Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling, a non-probability technique, was used. A Google Form was created to collect the sample. This enabled the participants to fill the form remotely. This method was effective, as the data was collected remotely, and the responses were automatically recorded on a spreadsheet. Although the method was not the best for the research, it was appropriate for correlational research.

3.6 Instruments

The information was gathered using three standardized self-report measures of psychological well-being, perceived stress, and social media use. These measures are frequently employed in psychological research since they have been demonstrated to have strong validity. They have proven to be useful in evaluating young people's mental health.

Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS): The Social Media Use Integration Scale, developed in 2013 by Jenkins-Guarnieri and associates, was also used to assess social media use. The assessment of how much social media use is incorporated into a person's everyday activities and emotional experiences is the basis of this social media usage metric. This behavioral and emotional involvement metric is a thorough assessment of how often a person uses social media. The social media use assessment is a multi-item test with a Likert response format that enables respondents to indicate how much they agree on the statements used to gauge their usage of social media. The degree to which a person is emotionally linked to social media and the degree to which they are socially integrated through social media use are the two main components of a metric of social media use.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10): The level of perceived stress was assessed using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), which was created by Cohen et al. (1983). A standard psychological test called the PSS-10 is used to gauge how stressful people's life circumstances have been throughout the past month. These circumstances include emotions of overload, unpredictability, and lack of control all of which are significant elements of perceived stress. Ten items with a 5-point rating system ranging from 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often) make up the scale. Prior to determining the overall stress score, some things are assessed in reverse. A higher perceived stress level is indicated by a higher total score. Numerous investigations involving

various age groups and cultural backgrounds have employed this scale. As a result, it is deemed suitable for this research.

WHO-5 Well-Being Index: The WHO-5 Well-Being Index was also used to gauge psychological well-being. The World Health Organization created this scale. This short, verified scale is used to gauge general well-being. Five items make up the scale, and responses range from 0 (never) to 5 (always). The raw score is between 0 and 25. Better psychological health is indicated by a higher score. A percentage value that falls between 0 and 100 can be obtained by multiplying the raw score by four. The scale was chosen based on its brevity, simplicity, and good psychometric properties in measuring overall mental well-being.

3.7 Procedure

The process of collecting the data was carried out through an online survey created using Google Forms. Before the study was submitted, the participants received an informed consent declaration outlining the purpose of the study, its voluntary nature, its confidentiality, and their freedom to withdraw from it at any time. The research could only begin with participants who accepted the consent declaration. The three scales were administered after the subjects were asked basic demographic questions. Instructions on how to accurately understand the scales were given before the scales. Participants were encouraged to respond to the scales based on their personal experiences. The estimated time taken to fill the form was about 10 to 15 minutes. The responses collected from the participants were automatically stored in a secure virtual spreadsheet.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study was carried out in accordance with ethical research guidelines. Participation in the research was purely voluntary, and no form of coercion or motivation was used. Anonymity was ensured by not collecting any identifiable personal information from the research participants. Such data was not used for any unauthorized purpose.

The nature and goal of the study were explained to the participants, and they were also informed that their answers would be kept totally private. They were also made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any stage before submitting their research responses.

3.9 Statistical Analysis

To evaluate the link between the study's variables, statistical software was used to examine the data. To summarize the scale data and demographic information, descriptive statistics were calculated. In a similar vein, the degree and direction of the association between social media use, perceived stress, and psychological well-being were evaluated using Pearson's product moment correlation.

To determine the significance of the results, a significance level of 0.05 was established. To derive significant conclusions on the connection between young adults' use of social media and wellbeing, the results were analyzed in light of the study's goals and the body of prior research.

4. Results

Reliability Analysis

Table 1: *Reliability Analysis of Study Variables*

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
SMUIS	10	.82
PSS-10	10	.78
WHO-5	5	.85

The internal consistency of each of the standardized instruments employed in the study was examined using reliability analysis. The Social Media Use Integration Scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .80$), indicating that the items consistently measure social media integration. The WHO-5 Well-Being Index showed excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$), suggesting strong coherence among its items in assessing psychological well-being. The Perceived Stress Scale yielded an alpha of .68, which falls within the acceptable range for psychological research, particularly in non-clinical young adult samples. The reliability coefficients indicate that the instruments used in the study are sufficiently consistent and effective for further statistical analyses such as correlation and regression.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Min	Max
SMUIS Total	32.79	8.34	14	53
PSS-10 Total	19.03	5.39	6	33
WHO-5 Total	13.04	5.23	1	25

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the research variables. The mean perceived stress score was 19.03 (SD = 5.39) and the mean social media use integration score was 32.79 (SD = 8.34). The central tendency as well as variability of the research variables were examined using descriptive statistics. A moderate degree of social media integration into participants' daily lives is indicated by the mean value of Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS). The

mean perceived stress score (PSS-10) suggests moderate stress levels within the sample. The mean psychological well-being score (WHO-5) was 13.04 (SD = 5.23), reflecting average mental well-being among participants. The standard deviation values show a respectable degree of response variability, indicating that the data are suitably dispersed and appropriate for additional inferential studies like regression and correlation.

Pearson Correlation

The nature and degree of the association between Social Media Use Integration, Perceived Stress, and Psychological Well-Being were assessed using Pearson product moment correlation analysis.

Table 3: *Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3
SMUIS Total	—		
PSS-10 Total	.24**	—	
WHO-5 Total	-.17**	-.64**	—

Relationship Between Social Media Use Integration and Perceived Stress

Additionally, the results demonstrated a statistically significant positive association $r(128) = .24$, $p = .007$ between the integration of social media use and perceived stress levels. This indicates that young adults in the nation who use social media more frequently have greater stress levels. The minor correlation, however, indicates that while social media integration does add to stress levels in young adults throughout the nation, it does so only slightly.

Relationship Between Social Media Use Integration and Mental Well-Being

Integration of social media use and mental health were found to be negatively correlated in a statistically significant way. At $r(128) = -.17$, $p = .049$, this was determined to be significant. This suggests that psychological well-being is negatively correlated with the degree of social media integration in daily life. Because of this weak correlation, social media integration and psychological well-being are not very closely related.

Relationship Between Perceived Stress and Mental Well-Being

Perceived stress and mental well-being were shown to be strongly correlated negatively ($r(128) = -.64$, $p < .001$). This implies that individuals who reported higher levels of stress

exhibited lower levels of mental health. This association was noteworthy, demonstrating the substantial correlation between perceived stress and mental health.

There are minor but statistically significant connections between stress and well-being, indicating a moderate association between social media integration and psychological consequences, according to correlation analysis. However, there is a large negative association between perceived stress and mental health, suggesting that stress is a significant predictor of psychological health in young adults.

Regression Analysis

Table 4: *Social Media Use Integration Predicting Perceived Stress*

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	14.24	1.84	—	7.76	< .001
SMUIS Total	0.15	0.06	.24	2.77	.007

To determine whether Social Media Use Integration was a significant predictor of Perceived Stress, a basic linear regression analysis was performed.

The total regression model was statistically significant ($F(1,128) = 7.65, p = .007$), indicating that the model significantly outperformed a model without predictors in terms of perceived stress prediction.

$R^2 = .056$, or 5.6% of the variance in felt stress was explained by the model. Perceived stress was significantly predicted by the integration of social media use ($B = 0.15, SE = 0.06, \beta = .24, t(128) = 2.77, p = .007$).

The unstandardized coefficient indicates that felt stress rises by 0.15 units for each additional unit in social media use integration.

Table 5: *Social Media Use Integration Predicting Mental Well-Being*

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	16.49	1.82	—	9.04	< .001
SMUIS Total	-0.11	0.05	-.17	-1.99	.049

To determine if Social Media Use Integration was a significant predictor of Psychological Well-Being, a second simple linear regression analysis was conducted.

With $F(1, 128) = 3.95$ and $p = .049$, the regression model as a whole was statistically significant.

$R^2 = .030$ indicates that this model accounted for 3.0% of the variance in psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being was significantly predicted by social media use integration ($B = -0.11$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = -0.17$, $t(128) = -1.99$, $p = .049$).

Mental well-being decreased as social media use integration increased according to the negative regression coefficient.

Overall, the regression analyses indicated that social media use integration significantly predicted both perceived stress and psychological well-being. Higher levels of social media use integration were associated with increased perceived stress and decreased psychological well-being. However, the low R^2 values suggest that social media use integration accounts for only a small proportion of the variance in these outcomes, indicating that additional factors contribute to stress and well-being in young adults.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to examine how young individuals aged 18 to 25 experience stress and mental well-being in relation to the behavioural and psychological integration of social media into their daily lives. Unlike traditional approaches that primarily focus on time spent on social media, this study emphasized the extent to which social media is embedded in individuals' routines and emotional experiences. The findings indicate that participants generally reported moderate levels of social media integration and perceived stress, along with average levels of mental well-being. Correlational analysis revealed that higher social media integration is associated with increased perceived stress and slightly lower mental well-being, while stress itself demonstrated a strong negative relationship with mental well-being, highlighting its central role as a psychological determinant. Furthermore, regression analysis confirmed that social media integration significantly predicts both stress and mental well-being; however, the amount of variance explained remains moderate, suggesting that its impact, although statistically significant, is limited in magnitude. These findings suggest that social media integration may function more as a secondary contributing factor rather than a primary cause of psychological outcomes. In the context of young adulthood, which is already characterized by identity-related concerns, academic pressure, and social comparison, the integration of social media into everyday life may intensify existing stressors rather than independently producing negative mental health effects. Overall, the results underscore the importance of viewing social media as part of a broader psychosocial framework influencing well-being.

5.1 Discussion of Hypotheses

The present study examined the role of social media use integration in predicting perceived stress and psychological well-being among young adults. Overall, the findings provided support for the proposed hypotheses, although the strength of the relationships was relatively modest.

Hypothesis 1 stated that felt stress would be positively correlated with social media use integration. This theory was confirmed by the findings. However, the strength of the association was small, indicating that while integration contributes to stress levels, it does not serve as a dominant predictor. This finding aligns with previous literature suggesting that emotionally embedded digital engagement may intensify cognitive overload and social comparison processes.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that psychological well-being will be adversely affected by social media use integration. This theory was validated. Nevertheless, the effect size was modest, suggesting that integration may influence well-being indirectly rather than functioning as a primary determinant.

Hypothesis 3 highlighted that psychological well-being would be adversely affected by perceived stress. This hypothesis received strong empirical support. The magnitude of the association was substantially larger than the relationships involving social media integration, highlighting stress as the central psychological mechanism influencing well-being in the present sample.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between social media use integration, perceived stress, and mental well-being among young adults aged 18 to 25, with a focus on the extent to which social media is behaviourally and psychologically embedded in daily life rather than merely the time spent on it. The findings indicate that higher levels of social media integration are associated with increased perceived stress and slightly lower mental well-being. However, the variance explained by social media integration remains limited, suggesting that it functions as one of several contributing factors rather than a primary determinant of psychological outcomes. In contrast, perceived stress demonstrated a strong negative relationship with mental well-being, highlighting its central role in influencing psychological health among young adults. These results suggest that while social media integration has a statistically significant impact, its influence is indirect and comparatively weaker than that of stress. Overall, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of social media's

psychological integration in emerging adulthood, emphasizing the importance of considering broader psychosocial factors in the assessment of mental health.

6.1 Suggestions and Practical Implications

Based on the findings of the present study, the following suggestions are proposed:

a) Promote Mindful Social Media Use

Young adults should be encouraged to engage in balanced and conscious use of social media. Higher integration was associated with increased stress and slightly lower well-being, indicating the need for regulated usage.

b) Focus on Stress Management Programs

Given the strong negative relationship between perceived stress and mental health, stress reduction strategies such as mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and coping skills should be emphasized.

c) Conduct Psychoeducational Workshops in Colleges

Educational institutions can organize awareness programs focusing on healthy digital habits and emotional regulation to help students manage social media use effectively.

d) Encourage Balanced Lifestyle Practices

As social media explains only a small portion of variance in stress and well-being, individuals should prioritize physical activity, adequate sleep, and real-life social interactions.

e) Incorporate Social Media Assessment in Counseling

Mental health professionals should evaluate patterns of social media use during assessments and guide individuals toward healthier and more controlled engagement.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

a) The cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences between the variables

b) The use of convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings

c) The sample is restricted to young adults aged 18–25, which may not represent other age groups

d) Data were collected using self-report measures, which may be subject to response bias

e) The study does not differentiate between types or purposes of social media use

f) Certain external factors influencing stress and well-being were not considered

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

a) Future studies may adopt longitudinal designs to better understand causal relationships

b) Research can be extended to more diverse populations across different age groups and settings

- c) Further investigation into different forms and patterns of social media usage is recommended
- d) Additional psychological variables such as anxiety, depression, and self-esteem may be explored
- e) Future studies may examine factors that influence or explain the relationship between variables
- f) Incorporating qualitative or mixed-method approaches may provide deeper insights
- g) Research may also focus on developing and evaluating interventions related to social media use and stress

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