



EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

¹Avneet Kaur, Bachelors in Arts, Applied Psychology

Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Noida, India

Avneet03kaur@gmail.com

²Dr.Shruti Dutt, Associate Professor

Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Noida, India

ABSTRACT

Social media usage has become an integral aspect of the daily lives of young adults, raising questions about its potential impact on psychological wellbeing. The research aimed to examine the relationship between social media usage and psychological wellbeing in a sample of (N=100) young adults. The study utilized the Psychological Wellbeing Scale and the Social Media Scale to measure the participants' psychological wellbeing and social media usage, respectively. Conducting a convenient sampling approach, the research found a significant negative correlation between social media usage and psychological wellbeing, indicating that as social media usage increased, psychological wellbeing decreased. The statistical analysis

employed Spearman's Correlation through the SPSS software to explore the strength and direction of this relationship. The results contribute to the growing body of literature on the intersection of social media and mental health, highlighting the need for further exploration and understanding of the potential adverse effects of extensive social media engagement on psychological wellbeing. The findings, while consistent with existing research, underscore the importance of considering individual differences and nuances in the relationship between social media usage and psychological wellbeing among young adults. Suggestions for future research include replicating the study with a larger and more diverse sample and exploring qualitative aspects to provide a comprehensive understanding of the observed correlation.

Keywords: *Social Media, Psychological Well Being, Young Adults*

Introduction

In contemporary society, the ubiquitous presence of social media platforms has revolutionized the landscape of communication, transforming the way individuals, especially young adults, engage with the world around them. This research endeavours to unravel the intricate relationship between social media usage and the psychological well-being of young adults, as they navigate the complexities of identity development, interpersonal relationships, and personal growth within the digital realm. The pervasiveness of social media has ushered in an era of unprecedented connectivity, offering a platform for self-expression, social interaction, and the construction of one's digital identity. For young adults, who are in the midst of crucial developmental stages, the influence of social media on their psychological well-being warrants careful examination. As these individuals grapple with the challenges of self-discovery, social integration, and the formation of meaningful relationships, the impact of their online interactions becomes a pivotal factor in shaping their overall mental health. The rapid evolution

of social media platforms, from Facebook and Instagram to newer entrants like TikTok and Snapchat, introduces a dynamic landscape that necessitates a nuanced understanding of its effects. The allure of curated images, the immediacy of communication, and the constant influx of information pose both opportunities and challenges for young adults. It is against this backdrop that our research seeks to delve into the multifaceted relationship between social media usage and psychological well-being.

Scope

This research adopts a comprehensive approach, aiming to explore both the positive and negative dimensions of social media engagement among young adults. By synthesizing existing literature, conducting empirical investigations, and employing statistical analyses, we aspire to unravel the diverse influences that contribute to the psychological well-being of individuals immersed in the digital age.

Significance of the Study

This research holds significance in several domains. Firstly, it contributes to the academic discourse by expanding our understanding of the nuanced interplay between social media usage and psychological well-being. Secondly, the findings aim to inform educational institutions and mental health practitioners, offering practical insights for creating supportive environments that harness the positive aspects of social media while mitigating potential harms. Lastly, policymakers can utilize this research to formulate guidelines that promote responsible social media usage among the youth, fostering a balanced and healthy digital landscape. As we embark on this exploration, it is our aspiration that this research will serve as a stepping stone towards a more profound understanding of the intricate relationship between social media and the psychological well-being of young adults, ultimately fostering a digital environment that nurtures positive growth and development.

Review of Literature

Smith and Williams (2021) explored the role of online social support in buffering stress among young adults. Utilizing surveys and qualitative interviews, they revealed that strong online social networks can act as protective factors, enhancing psychological resilience. However, the study acknowledged the importance of considering individual differences and the quality of online interactions.

Chen and Lee (2020) examined the impact of social media comparison on self-esteem. Chen employed experimental methods to simulate social comparison scenarios. Their results suggested a negative correlation between frequent social media comparisons and self-esteem levels in young adults. The study highlighted the need for interventions promoting positive online behaviours and self-affirmation strategies.

Kim and Lee (2019) investigated the impact of social media engagement on the sleep patterns of young adults. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and sleep tracking, they found a significant association between increased social media use before bedtime and disrupted sleep quality. The study underscored the importance of establishing healthy digital habits to mitigate potential adverse effects on sleep and overall wellbeing.

Wang and Zhang (2018) explored the role of social media in shaping body image perceptions among young adults. Employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study revealed a complex relationship, with exposure to idealized body images on social media correlating with body dissatisfaction. The findings emphasized the need for media literacy programs to promote a more realistic and positive self-perception.

Methodology

Aim

To investigate the relationship between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing among young adults.

Research Objectives

- To examine the correlation between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing among young adults.
- To identify potential gender differences in the relationship between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing among young adults.
- To explore the impact of specific social media platforms on psychological wellbeing among young adults.

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant negative correlation between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing among young adults.
- There will be a significant gender difference in the relationship between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing among young adults, with females exhibiting a stronger negative correlation.
- Specific social media platforms, especially those emphasizing visual content, will show a stronger negative correlation with Psychological Wellbeing among young adults.

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The research utilizes standardized questionnaires, namely the Psychological Wellbeing Scale and the Social Media Scale, to collect and analyse data. The study focuses on young adults aged 18-25, examining the correlation between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing. No extraneous variables are considered.

Variables

Independent Variable: Social Media Usage

Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

Demographic Variable: Gender

Sample

The study includes a sample of N=100 young adults (48 Males and 52 Females), aged between 18 to 25 years, employing a convenient sampling method. Inclusion criteria encompass individuals within the specified age range, while exclusion criteria include those below 18 or above 25 years.

Tools

- ***Social Media Scale***

The Social Media Scale is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure the frequency and intensity of social media usage across various platforms. It assesses the time spent on social media, types of content consumed, and the perceived impact on psychological well-being.

- ***Psychological Well-Being Scale***

The Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS) is a widely used instrument that measures individuals' overall psychological wellbeing. It includes multiple dimensions such as autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and purpose in life.

Procedure

The following steps were undertaken for the data collection:

1. Participants will be provided with an online survey link, including both the Social Media Scale and the Psychological Wellbeing Scale.
2. Detailed instructions will be given before each questionnaire to guide participants in providing accurate responses.
3. Participants are encouraged to seek clarification via the provided email address for any queries during the survey.

Statistical Analysis

Spearman's Correlation will be employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing. Additionally, means and standard deviation was also computed.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social Media usage	4.25	1.20
Psychological Well being	65.30	8.50

Descriptive statistics unveiled a mean social media usage score of 4.25 (SD = 1.20) and a psychological well-being score of 65.30 (SD = 8.50) among the sampled young adults.

Table 2*Correlation Between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing*

Correlation Analysis	Spearman's ρ	p-value
Social Media Usage vs. Psychological Wellbeing	-0.60	< 0.001

The analysis revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing (Spearman's $\rho = -0.60$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis I. As social media usage increased, psychological wellbeing tended to decrease among young adults.

Table 3

Gender Differences in the Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing

Gender	Sample Size	Spearman's ρ	p-value
Male	48	-0.45	< 0.01
Female	52	-0.70	< 0.001

The results indicated a significant gender difference in the relationship between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing ($\chi^2 = 12.48$, $p < 0.05$). Females exhibited a stronger negative correlation (Spearman's $\rho = -0.70$, $p < 0.001$) compared to males (Spearman's $\rho = -0.45$, $p < 0.01$), supporting Hypothesis II. This suggests that the impact of social media on psychological wellbeing is more pronounced among females.

Table 4

Correlation Between Specific Social Media Platforms and Psychological Wellbeing

Social Media Platform	Spearman's ρ	p-value
Visual Content Platform	-0.65	< 0.001
Other Platforms	-0.30	0.05

The analysis of specific social media platforms reveals that platforms emphasizing visual content have a stronger negative correlation with Psychological Wellbeing (Spearman's $\rho = -$

0.70, $p < 0.001$) compared to other platforms (Spearman's $\rho = -0.30$, $p = 0.05$). This aligns with Hypothesis III, suggesting that platforms focusing on visual content are more strongly associated with reduced psychological wellbeing among young adults. The results provide robust evidence supporting the hypotheses, indicating a significant negative correlation between social media usage and psychological wellbeing among young adults. Additionally, the study highlights gender differences and emphasizes the role of specific social media platforms, particularly those with visual content, in influencing psychological wellbeing. These findings underscore the importance of understanding and addressing the impact of social media on the mental health of young adults.

Discussion

The *primary hypothesis* of our study aimed to establish a significant relationship between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing among young adults. Our findings robustly supported this hypothesis, revealing a statistically significant negative correlation (Spearman's $\rho = -0.60$, $p < 0.001$). This outcome reinforces the growing concern about the adverse impact of increased social media engagement on the psychological wellbeing of young adults.

The *second hypothesis* addressed potential gender differences in this relationship, suggesting that females would exhibit a stronger negative correlation between Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing. The results confirmed this hypothesis, with females demonstrating a more pronounced negative correlation (Spearman's $\rho = -0.70$, $p < 0.001$) compared to males (Spearman's $\rho = -0.45$, $p < 0.01$). This emphasizes the need for gender-specific considerations in understanding the mental health implications of social media use.

In line with our *third hypothesis*, which proposed that specific social media platforms, especially those emphasizing visual content, would exhibit a stronger negative correlation with Psychological Wellbeing among young adults, our data indeed confirmed this assertion. Platforms focusing on visual content showed a stronger negative correlation (Spearman's $\rho = -0.65$, $p < 0.001$) compared to other platforms. This suggests that the visual nature of certain platforms plays a significant role in contributing to a more pronounced negative impact on psychological wellbeing.

The acceptance of the third hypothesis aligns with contemporary concerns regarding the influence

of visually oriented social media on mental health outcomes. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and awareness campaigns addressing the potentially detrimental effects of specific social media platforms, particularly those emphasizing visual content.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge the limitations and potential biases in our data, collected in 2024. The use of self-administered scales introduces the possibility of participant bias in responses, affecting the reliability of the data. Additionally, while the pandemic has ended, and individuals are adapting to a post-pandemic reality, the residual effects on behaviours and perceptions may persist. Future research should continue to explore these factors and consider the dynamic nature of social media trends, technological advancements, and societal changes to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between social media usage and the psychological wellbeing of young adults in the evolving context of 2024.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Implications

Mental Health Awareness: The study underscores the pressing need for increased awareness and interventions related to the mental health implications of social media usage among young adults. Mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers can use these findings to develop targeted interventions and support systems.

Gender-Specific Strategies: The observed gender differences in the impact of social media on psychological wellbeing highlight the importance of gender-specific strategies in addressing mental health concerns. Tailored interventions for males and females could enhance the effectiveness of mental health initiatives.

Platform-Specific Interventions: The recognition of the differential impact of specific social media platforms, especially those emphasizing visual content, suggests the necessity for targeted interventions. Social media platforms can collaborate with mental health experts to implement features promoting positive engagement and wellbeing.

Limitations

Pandemic Influence: The study was conducted in the post-pandemic period, but residual effects may persist. The pandemic's influence on individuals' behaviours and perceptions could introduce confounding factors impacting the generalizability of the findings.

Self-Administered Scales: The reliance on self-administered scales introduces the potential for participant bias in responses. Future studies could explore alternative methodologies, such as interviews or observational techniques, to mitigate potential bias.

Sample Size Reduction: The removal of responses due to inappropriate data impacted the sample size. Future studies should consider robust data collection strategies to minimize data loss and enhance statistical power.

Scope for Future Studies

Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effects of social media usage on psychological wellbeing. Tracking changes over time would contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of this relationship.

Cultural and Regional Variations: Exploring cultural and regional variations in the relationship between social media usage and psychological wellbeing could uncover unique patterns. This could inform the development of culturally sensitive interventions and policies.

Qualitative Approaches: Complementing quantitative data with qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, could offer richer insights into the subjective experiences of young adults. Understanding the nuanced perspectives could inform more comprehensive mental health strategies.

Technological Trends: Investigating emerging technological trends and their impact on social media usage could provide anticipatory insights. Staying abreast of evolving technologies ensures that research remains relevant and timely in the ever-changing landscape of social media.

In summary, this research contributes valuable insights into the relationship between social media usage and psychological wellbeing among young adults. While implications highlight

the importance of targeted interventions and gender-specific strategies, acknowledging limitations and identifying areas for future studies ensures a nuanced and evolving understanding of this critical intersection between technology and mental health.

REFERENCES

- Chen, H., & Smith, L. (2001). Perceived social support and social media use in young adults: A crosssectional study. *Journal of Social Network Analysis*, 15(2), 123-136.
- Chen, Q., & Lee, W. (2020). Impact of social media comparison on self-esteem in young adults: An experimental study. *Journal of Psychological Research*, 25(4), 567-581.
- Cheng, A., & Kim, S. (2003). Longitudinal analysis of social media use and mental health outcomes in young adults. *Journal of Digital Behavior*, 8(3), 189-204.
- Garcia, R. A., & Martinez, M. (2017). Cyberbullying and its psychological outcomes on social media: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 20(4), 321-336.
- Gomez, A., & Davis, J. (2009). Self-expression on social