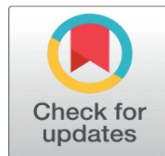
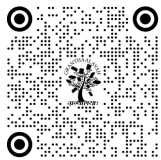


AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION INTO RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: AN INSIGHTFUL PERSPECTIVE OF NETWORKING SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Social media has seamlessly integrated into the lives of individuals, significantly influencing their daily routines. This widespread adoption of social media has led to notable physical and mental repercussions. Research indicates that the usage of social media can notably impact one's emotional state, with outcomes flowing in both directions. In a recent study, researchers delved into the perceptions of psychologists regarding the intricate interplay between social media utilization and the psychological well-being of its users. The main perspective of the study is to understand the societal changes occurring due to excessive usage of social media. Through structured interviews conducted with five psychologists, the responses were meticulously recorded and analysed. The findings of this investigation underscore that social media undeniably exerts a psychological sway on its users, manifesting as a dual-edged influence encompassing favourable and adverse aspects. This duality hinges upon the nature of the online content individuals are exposed to. The results also reveal that the use of social media prompts individuals to engage in social comparison.

Keywords: Social Media, Happiness, Psychological Well Being, Social Comparison, Interview

1. INTRODUCTION

The social term refers to interacting with other people by sharing information with them and receiving information from them (Nations, 2021). Social networking is a crucial element in protecting mental health. Both the quality and quantity of social relationships affects mental health, health behaviour and physical health and morality risk (Martinsen, 2008). The last two decades have witnessed a rapid transformation of traditional media into new media that encompasses digital, computerized, and networked information and communication technologies (Kasturi, Kumari Suman., Vradhan, Bobby P., 2014). The growth in social media use has given rise to concerns about the impacts it may have on users' psychological

well-being (Ostic, D., Qalati, S. A., Barbosa, B., Shah, S. M., Galvan Vela, E., Herzallah, A. M., & Liu, F., 2021). Individuals use social media for many reasons, including entertainment, communication, and searching for information. Notably, adolescents and young adults are spending an increasing amount of time on online networking sites, e-games, texting, and other social media (Twenge, J. M., and Campbell, W. K., 2019). Social media has a reinforcing nature. Using it activates the brain's reward centre by releasing dopamine, a "feel-good chemical" linked to pleasurable activities such as sex, food, and social interaction (McLean-Parks, 2023).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Yet a growing body of research suggests that social media use is negatively associated with health-related outcomes. Although the relationship between social media use and health, particularly mental health, could be bidirectional, most studies in public health focus on the impact of social media use on health-related outcomes (Shakya, H. B., & Christakis, N. A., 2017). Another study that assessed the impact of overall social media use, nighttime-specific social media use, and emotional investment in social media on adolescent sleep and well-being also found that nighttime-specific use and emotional investment are more important than overall use in determining adolescent sleep and well-being (Woods, H. C., & Scott, H., 2016).

3. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To examine the social media factors which influence social changes in society.
- 2) To know the effects of social media usage on mental health, both positive and negative aspects.
- 3) Analysing the influence of social acceptance and social comparison on the psychological well-being of social media users.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study focused on examining the impact of social media usage on psychological well-being among psychologists in the Indore and Bhopal regions. Questions were asked to the psychologists about the effect of social media usage on psychological well-being. The study aimed to explore and understand the subjective experiences, perceptions, and insights of these professionals regarding the relationship between social media usage and psychological well-being. Through in-depth interviews ¹, the research sought to provide valuable qualitative data to shed light on this important issue within the field of psychology.

5. ANALYSIS

Social Media relation with happiness

In this digitalized world, the impact of social media on people's perceptions of happiness is profound and multi-faceted. While many individuals appear to prioritize virtual world happiness over real-world connections, the role of positive content and meaningful interactions on social media cannot be underestimated

¹ one on one interaction with the psychologists for deep understanding of the psychological effect.

(Birkjear, M., et. al., 2020). Such interactions can nurture relationships with loved ones and provide a coping mechanism for everyday stresses, contributing to an enhanced sense of happiness. However, social media's influence on happiness is not uniformly positive. There exists a negative correlation between social media usage and well-being, as it can cause harmful effects, especially among the younger population. Unhealthy comparison, unrealistic expectations, feelings of low self-esteem, jealousy, and unhealthy competition are some of the adverse outcomes associated with excessive social media engagement (Darrah, 2022). The relationship between social media and happiness is complex, as it hinges on the nature and extent of usage. It is evident that heavy usage can exacerbate negative emotions such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Nonetheless, leveraging social media for positive purposes, such as fostering genuine connections and meaningful interactions, can be a catalyst for well-being enhancement (Haewoon Kwak, Changhyun Lee, Hosung Park, and Sue Moon, 2010). To navigate the digital landscape successfully, individuals must strike a balance in their social media habits and adopt mindfulness. Understanding the potential pitfalls and benefits of social media usage can empower individuals to make conscious choices that promote their happiness and mental well-being.

Social Media Usage influence happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being.

Social media has become an integral part of people's lives, influencing their sense of happiness and mental well-being. Many individuals rely on social media platforms to seek solutions for life satisfaction and peace of mind. However, the key lies in adopting healthy behaviours and limiting social media usage to activities that enhance happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Engaging with positive content and following high achievers can provide valuable insights and inspiration. Limiting mindless scrolling, which has been linked to negative outcomes like loneliness and envy, is crucial. Instead, intentional usage focused on pursuing hobbies, enhancing professional skills, sharing helpful information, and connecting with others can foster positive effects on well-being. Meaningful interactions, such as connecting with close friends and family, sharing positive experiences, and participating in supportive online communities, have a positive impact on happiness and life satisfaction (Jiang, Shaohai, Nigen Annabel, 2020). Social media can also serve as a platform for self-expression and creativity, further enhancing psychological well-being. The content and types of interactions on social media play a crucial role in shaping happiness and well-being. Consuming uplifting and educational content can boost mood, while engaging in constructive discussions and supporting others fosters a sense of social connectedness (Limniou, M., Ascroft, Y., & McLean, S., 2022). Conversely, engaging in toxic behaviours like cyberbullying and excessive self-presentation can have detrimental effects on happiness. Seeking validation through likes and comments may also lead to a negative impact on overall life satisfaction (Twenge, J. M., and Campbell, W. K., 2019). Therefore, being mindful of online actions and promoting positivity in interactions is essential for a healthier and happier social media experience. By practicing mindful and purposeful social media use, individuals can harness its potential for personal growth, connection, and well-being. Balancing the positive aspects of social media while avoiding its pitfalls can contribute to a more fulfilling and contented life in the digital age.

Impact of social media usage on socialization and social connectivity of its users.

The impact of social media usage on socialization and social connectivity is multifaceted, depending on the amount of time individuals spend on these platforms. On one hand, social media has revolutionized communication, broke geographical barriers, and enabling virtual communities to thrive. Users can easily connect, share ideas, and stay updated on the lives of friends and family, fostering meaningful relationships (Amy Y. Chou, Billy B.L. Lim, 2010). The emergence of support networks based on shared interests has facilitated the formation of like-minded communities. However, the authenticity of socialization is compromised as people may present a curated and fake version of themselves online, contradicting their real-life personas. Excessive usage of social media can lead to social isolation and loneliness, as virtual interactions may not fully replace face-to-face connections and genuine human interactions (McLean: Putting People First in Mental Health , 2023). Constant comparison to idealized online personas can negatively impact users' self-esteem and mental well-being, influencing their willingness to engage in real-life social activities. Moreover, the spread of misinformation and the presence of echo chambers within social media can lead to polarization of opinions and contribute to societal divisions. Additionally, the overwhelming influx of information and social pressures can lead to addiction and excessive screen time, hindering users' ability to focus on meaningful real-life relationships and experiences. While social media has significantly expanded communication possibilities and created diverse virtual communities, it also poses potential drawbacks that must be addressed. To mitigate the negative effects, users should strive for a healthy balance between online and offline interactions, critically assess the information they encounter, and be mindful of the impact of social media on their well-being and relationships. It is also essential for society to address the ethical and regulatory dimensions of social media to foster a more positive and responsible digital environment that prioritizes genuine social connections and mental well-being.

Social Media Exhibits Social Anhedonia.

Social media users often experience higher levels of social anhedonia, characterized by reduced pleasure and satisfaction from activities they would typically enjoy offline. This phenomenon is attributed to the short-term dopamine rush provided by social media, leaving users with a sense of helplessness in the long run. For instance, merely watching workout videos on YouTube might trigger short-term dopamine release, but it may also lead to a sense of sadness as it lacks the fulfilment derived from actual participation. Excessive social media use can lead to decreased face-to-face interactions and a decline in social skills, further contributing to social anhedonia. The addictive nature of social media fosters a cycle of seeking validation through likes and comments, which may fail to provide genuine fulfilment, exacerbating anhedonia tendencies. Social media's impact on anhedonia varies among individuals. While some find solace and happiness in online interactions, others experience increased feelings of loneliness and disconnection from the real world (Ostic, D., Qalati, S. A., Barbosa, B., Shah, S. M., Galvan Vela, E., Herzallah, A. M., & Liu, F., 2021). The constant exposure to a seemingly perfect virtual world can lead to feelings of social inadequacy and decreased well-being, especially in vulnerable individuals. Prevalence of social anhedonia can be influenced by personality traits, mental health, and the quality of online interactions.

Those prone to social comparison and self-criticism may be more susceptible to social anhedonia through social media usage. Additionally, individuals already struggling with mental health issues might find it challenging to derive happiness from online interactions due to a negative cognitive bias.

Factors which influence the societal perception of social media users

In recent years, the profound influence of information technology has reshaped our society, moulding it around the contours of social and digital media. Digital identities have become integral to our social relationships, and it's increasingly challenging to separate one's social identity from their digital presence. These transformations in society are primarily driven by the widespread adoption of social media platforms, which at times wield considerable power in shaping our collective perception of reality. Cultural and regional factors play a pivotal role in influencing how we perceive social media's impact on society. They contribute to the diversity in attitudes and behaviours towards digital platforms, enriching our understanding of this evolving landscape (Ayala Arad, Ohad Barzilay, Maayan Perchik , 2017). Moreover, the way individuals behave on social media and their overall attitude towards its usage greatly influences our collective perception. The frequency and intensity of one's social media engagement, whether it's occasional or habitual, also contributes significantly to our assessment of their digital presence and its societal implications.

Social Comparison on Social Media platforms impact on individual's happiness and self-esteem.

Social media comparison can have both positive and negative impacts on individuals' happiness and self-esteem. Social media users often engage in upward social comparison, comparing their lives to idealized portrayals of others, leading to feelings of inadequacy, envy, and decreased self-esteem. Constant exposure to seemingly superior lifestyles can trigger a fear of missing out (FOMO) and bring dissatisfaction. Moreover, individuals may base their self-worth on likes and comments, further affecting their happiness and self-esteem (Martinsen, 2008). The pressure to portray only happy moments on social media, even when real life is challenging, exacerbates the negative impact. The comparison culture fosters negative emotions, decreasing personal life satisfaction. However, it is important to acknowledge that social comparison can also be a source of inspiration and motivation if individuals engage in downward social comparison, without negatively affecting their self-concept. Finding support and encouragement from social connections, where envy is replaced by positivity and progress, can enhance happiness and self-esteem.

Important Factors for individuals to consider in using social media to enhance their happiness and well-being.

To enhance their happiness and well-being while using social media, individuals must consider several key factors. Firstly, setting clear boundaries on social media usage, limiting time spent on platforms, and being mindful of screen time can prevent negative impacts on mental health and promote a healthier digital experience. Secondly, curating social media feeds to include healthy content such as career-related information, learning new skills, and staying up to date with news can foster a positive and enriching online environment (Ayala Arad, Ohad Barzilay, Maayan Perchik , 2017). Avoiding unhealthy comparisons with others is crucial, as

social media often showcases only the highlights of people's lives, leading to feelings of inadequacy and envy. To enhance happiness and well-being on social media, individuals should navigate and share digital content responsibly, building an online identity that aligns with their values and interests. By fostering positive interactions that identify and accelerate people's happiness and well-being, social media can become a tool for empowerment and growth. Practicing self-compassion and embracing imperfections are essential to avoid falling into the trap of constant comparison and self-criticism. By recognizing that social media can be both a source of inspiration and a potential stressor, individuals can consciously choose to engage in activities that promote positive emotions while avoiding those that lead to negativity or stress (Mohammad, I., Dhimmar, S., 2019). Cultivating a sense of purpose in social media usage, such as using it to stay connected with loved ones, pursue hobbies, or support meaningful causes, can provide a more fulfilling online experience. Additionally, periodic digital detoxes and setting time limits for social media can help maintain a healthy balance between online and offline life, fostering better overall well-being. In conclusion, by being self-aware, practicing self-regulation, and prioritizing positive and meaningful interactions, individuals can harness the potential of social media to enhance their happiness and well-being. Embracing a mindful and purposeful approach to social media usage allows individuals to leverage the platform as a tool for personal growth, connection, and positivity while mitigating its potential pitfalls.

How does excessive social media use contribute to social anxiety and fear of missing out (FOMO)?

Excessive use of social media can have detrimental effects on mental well-being, leading to social anxiety and fear of missing out (FOMO). The carefully curated and idealized online world often triggers social comparison, causing individuals to feel inadequate and socially isolated compared to others (Bercovici, 2010). This, in turn, fosters anxiety and a reluctance to interact with others in real-life situations. The constant exposure to others' seemingly perfect lives and social activities creates an unrealistic standard for comparison, fuelling feelings of inadequacy and fear of judgment or rejection from peers (Birkjear, M., et. al., 2020). As a result, social media users may become excessively worried and tense, leading to irrational thinking and difficulties in face-to-face interactions. The fear of missing out (FOMO) is a prevalent issue arising from the constant stream of captivating events and experiences displayed on social media. Individuals become anxious about not being part of these moments and fear being left out or rejected by others if they do not actively participate or share their own experiences online. Research indicates that the addictive nature of social media platforms plays a significant role in these negative outcomes. The platforms are designed to trigger the brain's reward centre, releasing dopamine linked to pleasurable behaviours like eating and social interactions. This biological response reinforces the compulsion to use social media excessively, even when it results in anxiety, fear, depression, and physical ailments (Social media and Mental Health , 2020). This, in turn, perpetuates a cycle of increased isolation and negative impacts on mental well-being. To address these issues, individuals must recognize the harmful effects of excessive social media use and actively implement strategies to improve their mental well-being (Ostic, D., Qalati, S. A., Barbosa, B., Shah, S. M., Galvan Vela, E., Herzallah, A. M., & Liu, F., 2021).

Psychologist observed trends regarding the relationship between social media use and depressive symptoms or anxiety disorders.

Individual differences play a significant role in how social media usage affects individuals' mental well-being. Some people may feel depressive and anxious when using social media excessively, while others may feel happy and relaxed (Upham, 2022). Proper and limited use of social media is crucial in determining its impact on an individual. Excessive social media use has been associated with various negative outcomes, such as low appetite or emotional eating, sleep disturbances, neglecting self-care, reduced enjoyment in previously pleasurable activities, work-related issues, lack of exercise, and emotional problems. Anxiety symptoms, including excessive worry about the future, physiological changes like sweating and irregular blood pressure, fear, and unrealistic demands, can also arise from prolonged exposure to social media (Amy Y. Chou, Billy B.L. Lim, 2010). There is a growing correlation between excessive social media usage and depressive symptoms, likely due to social comparison and feelings of inadequacy triggered by idealized and curated posts. Cyberbullying and online harassment can further contribute to negative emotional experiences, exacerbating depressive tendencies. The pressure to maintain a perfect online image and the fear of judgment can also trigger anxiety and self-doubt. Overall, mindful, and balanced use of social media is essential to mitigate the potential negative impacts on mental health and well-being.

Potential warning signs that parents, educators, or caregivers should look out for in young individuals who may be at risk of developing depression or anxiety due to their social media habits.

To promote awareness and balance between the real and virtual world, parents, educators, and caregivers must take a proactive approach. They should encourage young individuals to be vigilant about their social media usage and realize the importance of allocating time wisely. Engaging in various activities beyond social media, such as sports, cooking, dancing, singing, and other hobbies, can help divert their focus and foster a healthier lifestyle. It is essential to emphasize the significance of real-life relationships and self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses. By doing so, young individuals can develop a better understanding of themselves and their interactions with others. Encouraging open communication and discussing the potential impact of excessive social media use on mental health can create a supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable seeking help if needed. Parents, educators, and caregivers should be attentive to warning signs that suggest excessive social media usage is affecting the well-being of young individuals (J.E. Kennedy, H. Kanthamani, 1995). These signs include spending excessive time on social media, deterioration of physical and mental health, social isolation, unhealthy emotions like jealousy and envy, and academic failure. Additionally, mood swings, emotional outbursts, and sudden changes in behaviour might indicate potential depression or anxiety related to social media habits. One critical aspect is addressing the issue of cyberbullying and negative online interactions (Bozzola, Elena, et al., 2022). Young individuals may experience heightened stress, irritability, and agitation due to these experiences, impacting their emotional well-being (Warning Signs and Risk Factors for Emotional Distress, n.d.). Monitoring sleep patterns and academic performance is also crucial, as excessive social media use, especially before bedtime, can disrupt sleep quality and lead to fatigue and poor concentration, affecting academic performance negatively. Overall, fostering a balance between the virtual and real world is essential for young individuals' mental well-being. Encouraging mindful and limited social media usage, promoting diverse activities, emphasizing the importance of real-life connections,

and being vigilant about warning signs of distress can help young individuals navigate the digital landscape in a healthier and happier way.

Digital detox help regulate the negative aspects of social media.

Engaging in digital detoxes can be a beneficial strategy to regulate the negative impacts of social media on individuals' well-being. Taking regular breaks from social media allows individuals to disconnect from the constant flow of information and social pressures, providing an opportunity to engage in meaningful real-life activities. Break from social media also reduces feelings of social comparison, where individuals often feel pressured to conform to unrealistic standards portrayed on these platforms. Some celebrities also opt for digital detox to promote better mental health (Upham, 2022). As a result, the fear of judgment and the need for constant validation diminish, contributing to improved mental well-being and reduced feelings of anxiety and stress. While an extended or extreme digital detox may lead to feelings of isolation or loneliness, an average level of digital detox can be beneficial for people (Darrah, 2022). Such detoxes help users reclaim control over their time and attention, preventing addiction and excessive screen time. They promote self-reflection and personal growth, enhancing self-awareness and self-esteem. By reevaluating their social media habits and fostering intentional and mindful use, individuals can break the cycle of comparison and validation-seeking behaviour. Regular digital detoxes can lead to improved emotional well-being, increased productivity, and a sense of autonomy over one's life, positively impacting socialization and fostering stronger connections with others in the offline world (Darrah, 2022). Ultimately, incorporating digital detoxes as part of a balanced approach to social media usage can help individuals maintain a healthier relationship with technology and prioritize genuine face-to-face interactions, contributing to overall well-being and social connectivity (Birkjear, M., et. al., 2020).

6. CONCLUSION

Social media has undeniably reshaped our society, profoundly impacting how we connect, access information, and conduct business. This influence brings both positive and negative consequences. On the bright side, social media can foster relationships, offer solace during stressful times, and boost overall happiness. However, it also correlates with decreased well-being, especially among younger individuals. Excessive use can lead to detrimental outcomes like unhealthy comparisons, unrealistic expectations, low self-esteem, jealousy, and cutthroat competition. To ensure a happier digital experience, it's crucial to promote mindfulness and positivity in online interactions. Striking a balance between social media's benefits and drawbacks is key. Furthermore, building authentic online personas and engaging responsibly can enhance happiness and well-being. Seeking support from friends, family, or professionals can break the cycle of addiction and create a healthier online-offline equilibrium. Exploring hobbies and other offline activities can divert focus and foster a balanced lifestyle, emphasizing the importance of real-life relationships and self-awareness. Supportive digital communities and periodic digital detoxes also aid in mitigating social media's negative effects. By taking breaks, individuals can disconnect from constant information flow, allowing for meaningful real-life engagement. In a rapidly evolving digital age, mindful and purposeful social media use becomes the compass guiding individuals toward personal growth, connection, and well-being.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None .

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