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The Social Media Paradox: Exploring its Impact on Health Problems among College Students

N.Rajeswari [1] & Dr. M.Vakkil

[1] Research Scholar, Department of Education, Periyar University, Salem
nrajarajeswari88@gmail.com, Orchid ID: https://orchid.org/ 0009-0006-8450-2674
[2] Associate Professor, Department of Education, Periyar University, Salem
mvakkiledu@periyaruniversity.ac.in, Orchid ID: https://orchid.org/0000-0003-3385-1031

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Abstract
Social media has become a vital aspect of life for individuals of all ages. Numerous platforms allow users to navigate the digital landscape, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Over the last ten years, social media has significantly transformed how people communicate and engage with one another. A study involving 105 college students utilized a questionnaire with 30 items across five dimensions to assess the impact of social media on mental and physical health issues. The results indicated a notable significant difference between social media usage and health problems among college students, revealing that higher social media engagement is associated with an increase in health problems.
KEYWORDS: students, social media, health problems

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the swift rise of social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace has significantly transformed how individuals communicate and engage with one another. However, it remains uncertain whether these transformations might influence typical human behaviours and lead to mental health issues. Research has suggested that extended use of social networking sites, particularly Facebook, could be linked to symptoms of depression. Furthermore, some researchers have pointed out that specific activities on these platforms may correlate with health concerns, particularly among teenagers and young adults. Conversely, other studies have reported positive effects of social networking on mental and physical health. The connection between social networking site usage and mental health issues continues to be a topic of debate, with research encountering various obstacles. Facebook, the largest social networking platform, currently boasts over one billion active users, and projections suggest that this figure will rise considerably, particularly in developing nations. The platform serves both professional and personal communication needs, offering many benefits such as enhanced connectivity, idea sharing, and opportunities for online education. However, recent studies have linked online social networking to several mental health concerns, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, and diminished self-esteem.

As social networks are a relatively recent development, numerous questions about their possible effects on mental health are still unresolved. Conversely, given the widespread use of these online platforms among the general public, any established link between them and mental health disorders could represent a significant public health issue (Igor Pantic, 2014). However, it remains uncertain whether some of these changes might influence typical human behaviours and lead to psychiatric conditions. Research has suggested that extended engagement with social networking sites (SNS) may be associated with indicators of depression. Social media encompasses a variety of online and mobile platforms that enable users to connect with others in a virtual environment, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn. These platforms facilitate the sharing, co-creation, and exchange of diverse digital content, including information, messages, images, and videos (Ahmed et al. 2019). Research indicates that individuals with various mental health conditions, such as depression and psychotic disorders, engage with social media at rates similar to those of the general population, with usage rates ranging from approximately 70% among middle-aged and older adults to over 97% among younger users (Aschbrenner

et al. 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pantic et al. (2014) recently modified The Internet Addiction Questionnaire to assess Facebook dependency among students. In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, social media has emerged as a significant force in people's lives, to the extent that going a single day without a smartphone has become nearly unnoticeable. The phrase "social media" typically describes online platforms that enable individuals and communities to connect and communicate, share information, ideas, personal messages, images, and various types of content, and in some instances, collaborate with others in real-time (Lee Ventola, 2014).

Kraut et al. (1998) conducted one of the earliest studies demonstrating that overall Internet usage has a considerable impact on social connections and community engagement. In our recent research involving high school students, we discovered a statistically significant positive correlation between depressive symptoms and the amount of time spent on social networking sites (SNS). The authors of this study noted that greater online activity is associated with decreased communication with family and a shrinking social circle, which may contribute to heightened feelings of depression and loneliness.

Cross-sectional studies have consistently indicated that students experiencing issues with social media use (SMU) report various mental health challenges, including depressive symptoms and other emotional difficulties, with moderate to large effect sizes (Pontes, 2017). However, it remains uncertain whether problems related to SMU are a precursor to or a consequence of poor mental health. It is possible that SMU issues contribute to declining mental health, as adolescents with these problems often exhibit addiction-like behaviours, unlike their peers who may simply engage in high levels of social media use. Specifically, young people with SMU issues frequently struggle to control their impulses related to social media, prioritize it over other activities, become preoccupied with it, feel a persistent need to be online, and experience negative feelings such as stress or anxiety when they cannot access social media (Apaolaza et al., 2014).

OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

- To comprehend the distribution of responses and the dependability of the average estimates.
- To enable a comparative evaluation of the aspects of health issues.

SUBJECTS AND METHOD

The current research involved 110 college students, who were selected using a Simple Random Sampling Technique. Before the study commenced, participants were informed about its purpose and provided their consent. After an initial review, five questionnaires were discarded due to insufficient data, resulting in a final analysis based on 105 completed responses. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items across five dimensions, utilizing a five-point Likert scale. Responses were collected and organized, and the data was analysed using SPSS**.**

RESULTS

Table 1 provides a concise overview of one-sample statistics for five different variables, evaluated in a sample of 105 individuals. The variables examined are VISION PROBLEMS, MOOD SWINGS, EATING DISORDER, CYBERBULLYING, and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). For each variable, the table includes the mean, standard deviation, and standard error of the mean, which are crucial for grasping the central tendency and variability of the data.

Table.1

DIMENSIONS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VISION_PROBLEM	105	3.0397	.43946	.04289
MOOD_SWING	105	2.9444	.42596	.04157

EATING_DISORDER	105	2.9413	.44457	.04339
CYBERBULLYING	105	3.0238	.43757	.04270
FOMO	105	2.9667	.44721	.04364

For VISION_PROBLEMS, the average score is 3.0397, which reflects a moderate level of concern or experience regarding vision problems among the participants. The standard deviation of 0.43946 indicates that the responses show relatively low variability, suggesting that most participants' scores are near the average. The standard error of the mean, calculated at 0.04289, demonstrates the accuracy of the mean estimate, highlighting a strong level of reliability in the average score.

In a similar vein, the variable MOOD SWINGS has an average value of 2.9444, suggesting a somewhat reduced average degree of mood changes in relation to vision issues. The standard deviation of 0.42596 reflects a similar consistency in the responses, and the standard error of 0.04157 further supports the dependability of this average estimate.

For EATING DISORDER, the average score is 2.9413, indicating that participants express a comparable level of concern about eating disorders as they do about mood swings. The standard deviation of 0.44457 reflects a bit more variability in the responses, while the standard error of 0.04339 further reinforces the reliability of the average.

The variable CYBERBULLYING has an average score of 3.0238, reflecting a moderate level of concern about experiences related to cyberbullying. With a standard deviation of 0.43757, the responses show low variability, and the standard error of 0.04270 points to a dependable estimate of the mean.

Finally, the average score for FOMO is 2.9667, indicating a moderate degree of anxiety associated with the fear of missing social events or experiences. The standard deviation of 0.44721 points to a somewhat greater variability in responses than the other variables, while the standard error of 0.04364 suggests that the mean is reliable.

In summary, the findings indicate that participants show a moderate degree of concern across all five variables, with minimal variability observed in most instances. The standard errors imply that the average estimates for each variable are dependable, offering a strong basis for additional analysis and interpretation within the scope of the research study.

Table 2 displays the findings from a one-sample t-test performed to assess different psychological and physical constructs in comparison to a test value of zero. Each row represents a distinct variable, and the accompanying statistics offer insights into the significance and extent of the mean differences identified.

Table.2

DIMENSIONS	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
VISION_PROBLEMS	70.877	104	.000	3.03968	2.9546	3.1247
MOOD_SWINGS	70.831	104	.000	2.94444	2.8620	3.0269
EATING_DISORDER	67.794	104	.000	2.94127	2.8552	3.0273
CYBERBULLYING	70.811	104	.000	3.02381	2.9391	3.1085
FOMO	67.975	104	.000	2.96667	2.8801	3.0532

For the variable "VISION_PROBLEMS," the t-value is 70.877, accompanied by 104 degrees of freedom, resulting in a p-value of .000. This demonstrates a highly significant deviation from the test value, with a mean difference of 3.03968. The 95% confidence interval for this mean difference spans from 2.9546 to 3.1247, indicating that the actual mean difference is expected to lie within this range, further supporting the conclusion that participants face considerable vision-related challenges.

In a similar vein, "MOOD SWINGS" presents a t-value of 70.831, accompanied by 104 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000, which signifies a statistically significant difference from zero. The mean difference for mood swings is 2.94444, with a confidence interval between 2.8620 and 3.0269. This finding suggests that participants in the study experience significant mood variations that are well above the baseline level.

The variable "PROEATING DISORDER" shows a t-value of 67.794, accompanied by 104 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000, indicating a statistically significant difference from the test value. The mean difference is noted at 2.94127, with a confidence interval ranging from 2.8552 to 3.0273, suggesting that participants are likely exhibiting disordered eating behaviors that are considerably higher than a neutral baseline.

In the realm of "CYBERBULLYING," the t-value stands at 70.811, accompanied by identical degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000, indicating a notable difference. The mean difference of 3.02381, paired with a confidence interval ranging from 2.9391 to 3.1085, implies that the participants frequently encounter experiences of cyberbullying, significantly surpassing the test value.

Finally, the variable "FOMO" (Fear of Missing Out) shows a t-value of 67.975, accompanied by 104 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .000, suggesting a significant deviation from zero. The mean difference is 2.96667, with a confidence interval between 2.8801 and 3.0532, emphasizing that participants demonstrate a notable degree of anxiety concerning the possibility of missing social events or experiences.

In general, the findings for all variables reveal substantial mean differences from a test value of zero, indicating that the participants in this research face considerable difficulties associated with vision issues, mood fluctuations, eating disorders, cyberbullying, and fear of missing out (FOMO). The persistent statistical significance across these areas highlights the necessity of tackling these psychological and physical challenges within the studied population.

DISCUSSION

The appeal of social media is particularly strong for those who worry about missing updates in their social circles (Przybylski et al., 2013). Individuals who rely on social networks for daily communication may experience anxiety when they lose touch or miss important information. This anxiety can lead to increased engagement with social media platforms (Gezgin et al., 2018). Abouzar Nazar (2023) found a notable correlation between social media usage and deteriorating mental health. A study by Li (2007) indicated that 20% of students had engaged in cyberbullying. Research involving university students in Turkey revealed that approximately 25% had bullied someone online at least once (Dilmaç, 2009), while another study (Arıcak, 2009) reported that 20% of students had participated in cyberbullying at some point in their lives.

Hançer and Mişe (2017) reported that approximately one in every 22 preservice science teachers engaged in some form of cyberbullying. Additionally, Kowalski and Agatston (2008) noted that social media platforms and text messaging are frequently utilized for cyberbullying activities. Mohammed Ibrahim et al. (2018) found a significant correlation between daily social networking site (SNS) usage and various adverse health issues. Daily users of SNS experienced notably higher rates of visual problems, eye strain, appetite issues, postural pain, and headaches ($p<0.001$).

CONCLUSION

Humans are inherently social beings, and platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn serve as valuable tools for meeting their social needs by enabling instant connections. This study assessed social media and the effects of excessive online engagement on the physical and mental well-being of college students. The findings indicate that more time spending on social media can cause more health problems such as vision problems, eating disorders, cyberbullying, mood fluctuations, and fear of missing out (FOMO). Consequently, it is essential to raise awareness among students regarding the responsible use of social media to enhance their overall health.

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