

# IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH

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## ABSTRACT

This paper offers a comprehensive study on the impact of social media on mental health . It aims at assessing both the negative as well as positive aspects of its effect on day to day life , especially on the younger generation (youth and children) .

In today's world , social media has been deeply influencing individuals personality , behavior, thinking capacity and uniqueness. Additionally, it affects mental well-being by causing anxiety , lower self esteem , body image , social connectivity and depression . This study dwells into the psychological facet of social media use by examining existing literature and conducting empirical studies as well as offers an insight for further exploration and approaches on the topic .

## INTRODUCTION

The rise in usage of social media over the past decade has both positively and adversely affected the mental wellbeing of individuals . It has become an integral part of today's day to day life causing a huge impact on our physical and psychological health .Since our topic concerns the psychological aspect of impact of using social media we will go through its effects descriptively. The widespread growth of social media such as Instagram ,Facebook , X [TWITTER] and it's likes on one side has given opportunity to connect , interact ,find communities , build networks and self express , on other hand has drastically developed disruption in sleep schedule,social anxiety , built negative body image of self , lowers self esteem and depression. Social media deeply influences the ways in which an individual interacts, communicates and apprehends himself and others .From personal relationships to professional interactions, social media has brought about a drastic change in ways people connect and communicate which has led to the need for research and study on this particular dimension of modern society. Adolescents and young adults are more likely to be adversely affected by usage of social media due to peer pressure and need to be socially approved , which in turn can cause social anxiety and depression . While older generations are less likely to have such an impact , they might be affected with issues such as digital illiteracy , exposure to misleading information and a higher risk of being scammed . As social media continues to evolve and have a major role in modern society day to day life , it is essential to have proper knowledge and develop strategies to promote healthy social media practices and ensure mental wellbeing

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid growth and exposure towards usage of social media and its increasing dependency for day to day activities has caused an enormous impact on mental well-being of individuals of this generation. It has both positively and negatively affected psychological health in today's modern society. Brief description on each of the dual impacts is given below.

## Positive Impact

**Social connectivity :** You can keep in touch with your friends and family in any part of the world and get updated on the happenings of their life and vice versa through social media platforms. It can help individuals feel connected and supported , experiencing love and affection . This sense of connectedness can reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, thereby promoting positive emotional well-being (Naslund et al., 2016).

**Self expression :** In this era people express themselves and share their thoughts and feelings in social media which they perhaps couldn't have done otherwise , individuals see the platform as non judgemental or harmless and use it to let out their inner feelings and thoughts.(Michikyan et al., 2014)

**Education and awareness:** Social media has become an inclusive platform where people are getting educated and spreading awareness on mental health . Individuals try to get support or bring about changes in their lifestyles to improve their mental health by educating and making themselves aware (Berry et al., 2017).

**Social support:** Individuals can find groups or professional personalities who can assist them with their mental health on these platforms , they might also get exposed to new friends who would support and encourage them on certain choices and aims in life, understand the individual and provide positive affirmations which they might not get by their offline friends and family . This may boost his morals and build his confidence (Naslund et al., 2016)..

**Build Networks :** Through social media opportunities are provided to connect to people and groups who are like minded and have similar goals . This may make the individual and his endeavors validated by providing him with a positive environment and help with the growth in his careers and goals which may boost self confidence and self esteem.

**Lifestyle and Behavioral changes :** Exposure to contents may cause individuals to develop healthy habits and make lifestyle changes that cause a positive impact on their psychological well being . For instance they may view a lot of videos or connect to people who may speak of topics related to healthy food habits , meditation , good sleeping habits and such which may cause the person to implement it in his daily routine leading to an improved mental health. (Keles et al., 2020).

## Negative Impact :

**Social anxiety :** Watching the lifestyle and appearance of people and constant exposure to such contents create certain social expectations which may lead to inferiority complex leading to social anxiety. For instance watching people travel and eat at expensive restaurants may make an individual feel economically inferior to be socially accepted as he couldn't afford such a lifestyle .(Vannucci et al., 2017)

**Negative body image :** Social media can subconsciously develop negative body image of self as a result of constantly viewing individuals who appear to be of the socially approved beauty standard . This can create an adverse image of self leading to inferiority complex , lower self confidence and social anxiety .(Perloff, 2014).

**Low self esteem :** Constantly observing the lavish lifestyle , successes and every such positive aspects of people's life that they portray on social media can unknowingly lower the individual's self esteem and hinders the growth of the individual while causing a negative impact on the psychological well-being of the person. (Woods & Scott, 2016)

**Depression :** There can be various aspects of using social media which may lead to depression As discussed earlier people always showcase an idealized version of themselves on social media leading to lower self esteem , negative body image and inferiority complex . Individuals on social media may also be prone to cyber bullying and harassment which could take a toll on his/her mental health . Although social media is for socializing perhaps its addiction can cause isolation and less socialization with real world people in the individual's life . Addiction to social media can also cause sleep deprivation leading to higher risk of depression . Furthermore,

the pursuit of social validation that comes through likes and comments on social media can create dependency on external validation . Less likes, negative comments and feedback may ruin the mood and lower self worth .All the above aspect of using social media can lead to depression. (Lin et al., 2016).

**Sleep deprivation :** Increased use of social media can lead to addiction which in turn may cause sleep deprivation causing insomnia , decrease memory retention, increases stress and anxiety , prolonged sleep deprivation can cause mood disorders and depression . (Levenson et al., 2016).

**Mobile Addiction:** Increased use of social media can lead to addiction which can cause disturbance in sleep routine , social isolation , anger issues , lower productivity and emotional fatigue , impacting overall health of the individuals .(Andreassen et al., 2012)

## EMPERICAL EVIDENCE

As a student of psychology there is a need to dive into the negative aspects of the impact of social media on mental health to create awareness and help people tackle the adverse effects of it . Various studies have been conducted for this very purpose and some of those are stated below.

Quantity of social media use is an important factor, as highlighted in a survey of young adults ages 19 to 32, where more frequent visits to social media platforms each week were correlated with greater depressive symptoms (Lin et al. 2016). More time spent using social media is also associated with greater symptoms of anxiety (Vannucci et al. 2017) .

According to Mary Ann (2014) During the past decade, online social networking has caused profound changes in the way people communicate and interact. Numerous studies have indicated that the prolonged use of social networking sites , such as Facebook, Instagram , X and other such sites may cause symptoms of depression. In addition, some authors have indicated that certain social media site activities might be associated with low self-esteem, especially in children and adolescents. Other studies have presented opposite results in terms of the positive impact of social networking on self-esteem. The relationship between SNS use and mental problems to this day remains controversial, and research on this issue is faced with numerous challenges.

Also another Research study conducted by Kraut R, Patterson M, Lundmark V, showed that use of the Internet was associated with declines in young adult's communication with family members in the household, declines in the size of their social circle, and increases in their depression and loneliness.

The above studies indicate the correlation between social media usage and mental health. Therefore, in today's world where there is a rapid increase in the consumption of social networking sites there is a necessity to educate and aware the masses regarding this .

While various studies have examined either the positive or negative effects of social media on mental health, there is a lack of holistic research exploring the dual impacts that coexist and influence overall psychological well-being, particularly among teens and young adults.

Addressing this gap is crucial to better understand the impact of social media on the overall psychological well being of individuals.

Therefore , according to the needs and concerns of today's world in this particular aspect of livelihood , and as a part of this research survey was conducted . details of which are discussed further below.

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Research Design

This research adopts a quantitative, descriptive design aimed at assessing the impact of social media usage on the mental health of teenage and young adult individuals . The study analyses both the positive and negative effects on mental health, with a focus on emotional, psychological , behavioral, and cognitive well-being.

### Objectives

- To explore the positive psychological effects of social media, including social connection, self-expression, and mental health awareness.
- To examine the negative effects, such as social anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and sleep deprivation .
- To examine how social media use affects psychological wellbeing in teenagers and young adults irrespective of gender , occupation, culture and region .

## Population and Sample

The target population includes individuals aged 13 to 35 years, across all genders.

A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to reach participants.

The final sample consisted of [21] respondents, primarily students and young professionals, who volunteered to participate in the study.

## Data Collection Method

Data collection was done via an online questionnaire developed using Google Forms.

The survey link was circulated through digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and email to ensure accessibility and broad participation.

The questionnaire included:

- Demographic questions (age, gender, occupation and qualification )
- Likert scale items for studying emotional responses to social media
- Multiple-choice and short-answer questions on social media use regularity , content exposure, and self-reported effects

## Data Analysis

Responses were exported from Google Forms and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were applied to interpret patterns and trends,using:

- Frequency and percentage analysis.

- Visual aids such as pie charts and bar graphs to illustrate key findings.

Data was grouped under thematic categories including positive effects, negative effects, and behavioral tendencies related to social media use.

### Ethical Considerations

The data collection for the study was done ensuring that the ethical standards were precisely followed. Participants were informed beforehand the purpose of research and gave informed consent for participation. No personal information of the participants were collected, and all responses remained anonymous and confidential. The study was conducted solely for academic purposes.

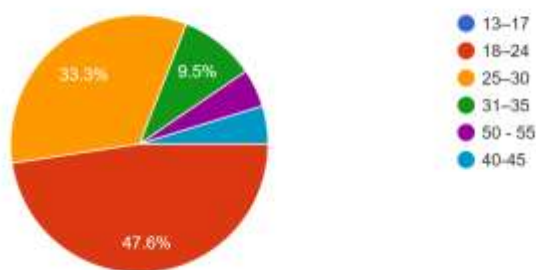
## Results and Discussion

### 1. Demographic Overview

The survey recorded responses from **21 participants**. The majority of the respondents were young adults and teenagers regardless of gender and occupation fulfilling the criteria of the study. This questionnaire provides insights into the impact of social media on mental health. The demographic distribution of the respondents is discussed below.

- **AGE DISTRIBUTION.**
  - Most of the participants were young adults and teenagers. The result indicates that the sample aligned to the requirement of the study.

AGE DISTRIBUTION  
21 responses



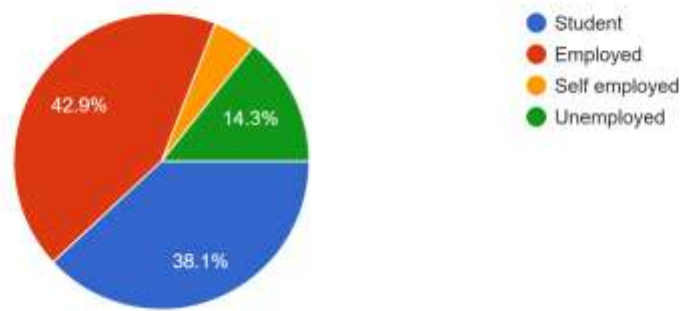
- **Gender:**
  - **14 females and 7 males**

Female respondents made up 2x the male gender as per the results. Although the survey was open for all genders .



- **Occupational Status:**

Occupation  
21 responses

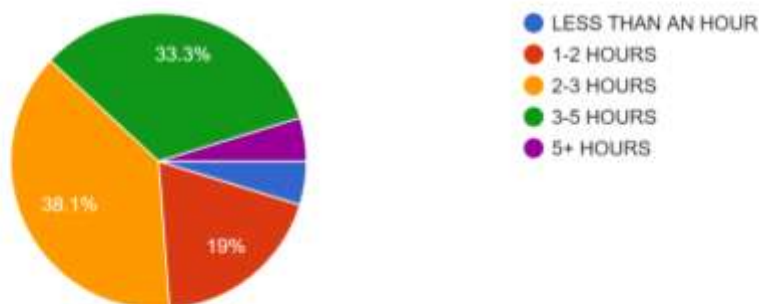


- Students and employed young adults contributed the larger number of the survey as per the above chart

## 2. Social Media Usage Patterns

- **Time Spent Daily:**

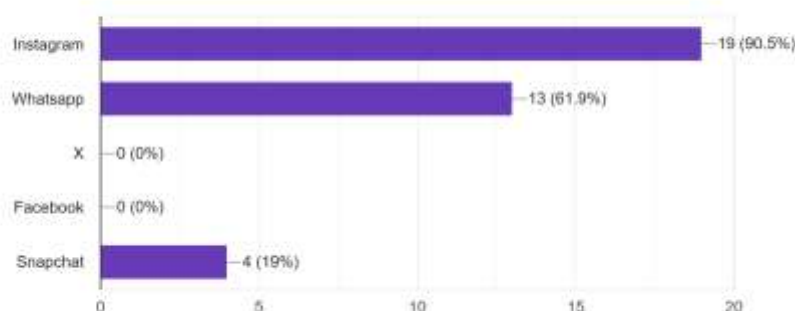
Number of hours spent on social media daily  
21 responses



A predominant number of the participants on average spend 2-5 hours on social media daily, which shows that the participants are highly active consumers of social media. The result suggests that the participants' relevance for the research is well established.

- **Frequently Used Platforms:**

Platforms used regularly  
21 responses

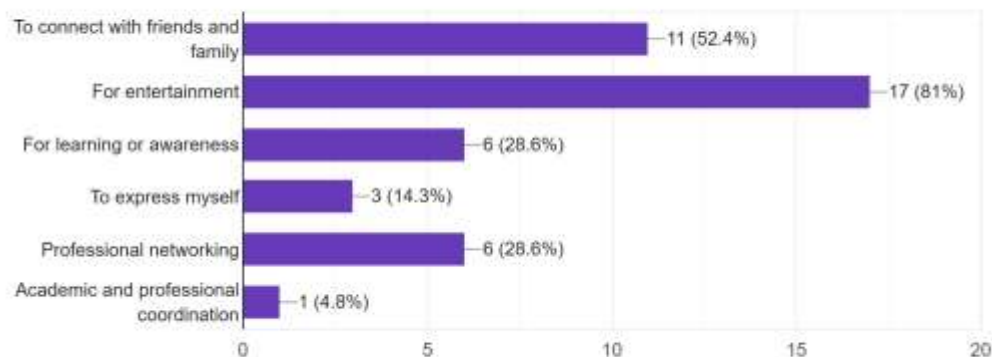


- Almost all of the respondents use Instagram and more than 50% of the respondents are Whatsapp users indicating that social media is more likely to be used by the respondents for entertainment purposes and to connect to friends and family . Social media sites like Facebook or Twitter were not mentioned as per the results .

- **Main Purpose of Use:**

Purpose of using social media

21 responses:



- **Entertainment** was the most common purpose.
- Other purposes included **connecting with friends and family**,( more than 50% ) **self-expression, learning/awareness, and professional networking**.
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- High usage for entertainment purposes indicates passive consumption of social media by the users .

### 3. Mental Health Impact – Rating Insights

On a likert scale of 1-5 .

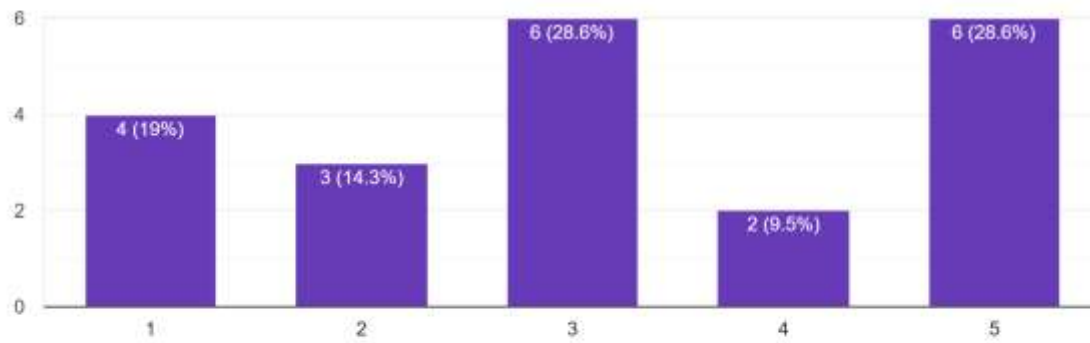
( Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.)

#### Positive Indicators:

- **Feeling connected to others:** The majority of the participants agreed to the statement, where more than half the participants gave the rating between ( 3-5 ) on a scale of 1-5.

Social media helps me feel connected to others.

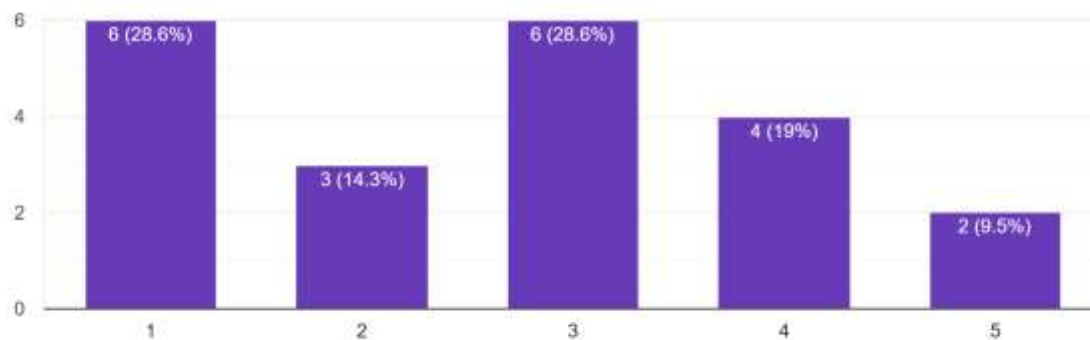
21 responses



- **Increased mental health awareness:** Most of the respondents agreed with the statement that social media increased their awareness on mental health .
- **Motivation for a healthy lifestyle:** About half of the subjects rated 3 or more. This indicates the

I've become more aware of mental health because of social media.

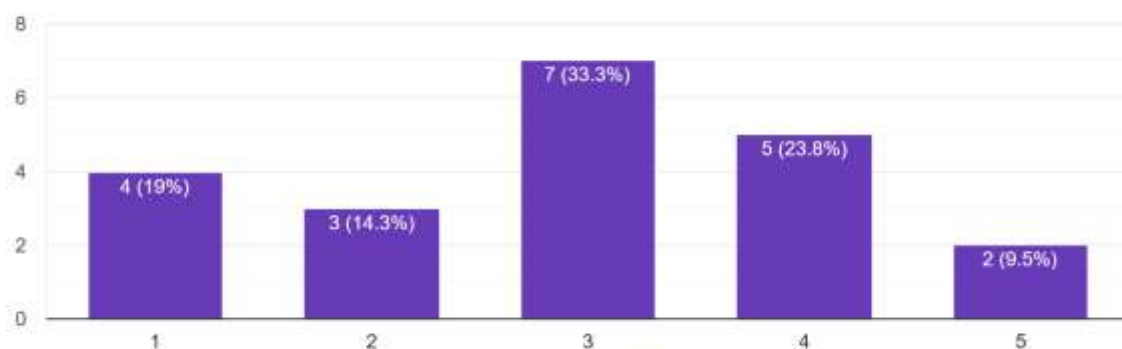
21 responses



agreement of more than 50% of the participants on the particular statement.

I've received encouragement/support from people on social media.

21 responses

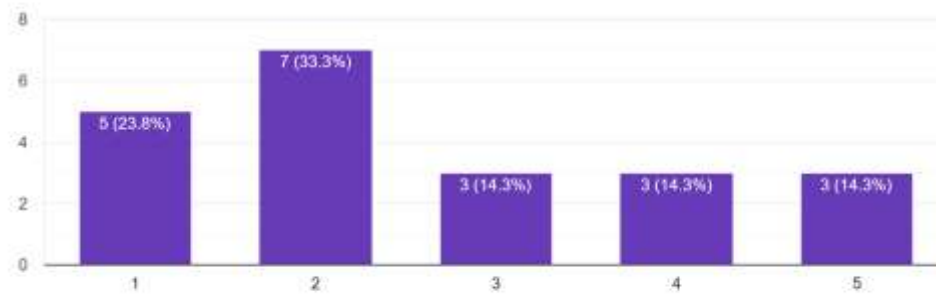




- **Expression of thoughts and feelings:** Majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement as per the result given below.

It allows me to express my thoughts and feelings.

21 responses



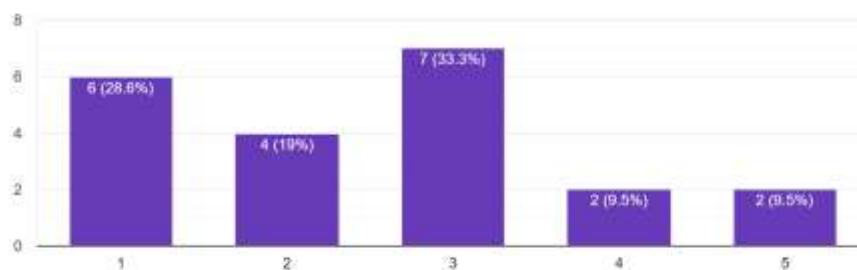
## Negative Indicators:

- **Feeling anxious in social situations due to social media:**

A large number of the participants stayed neutral or disagreed with the statement of feeling anxious due to social media in social gatherings as per the result shown above .

I feel anxious in social situations due to social media.

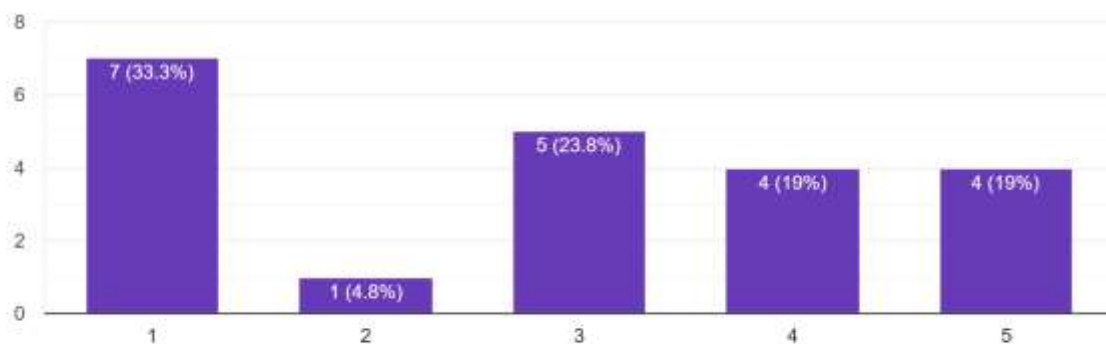
21 responses



- **Comparison with others:** Majority of the subjects disagreed or stayed neutral to the statement.

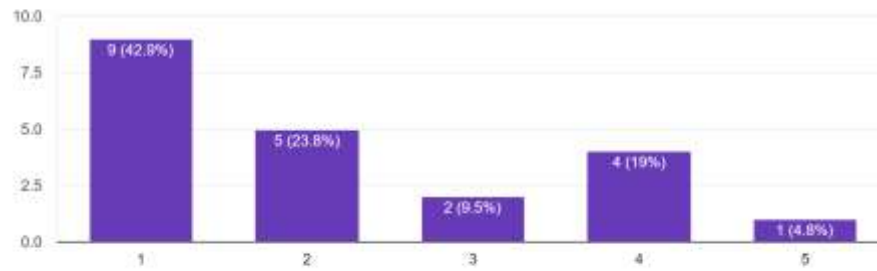
I compare my looks/body with people online.

21 responses



- **Lower self-esteem:** A significant number of participants disagreed with the statement with only few agreeing of the fact that social media lowers their self esteem.

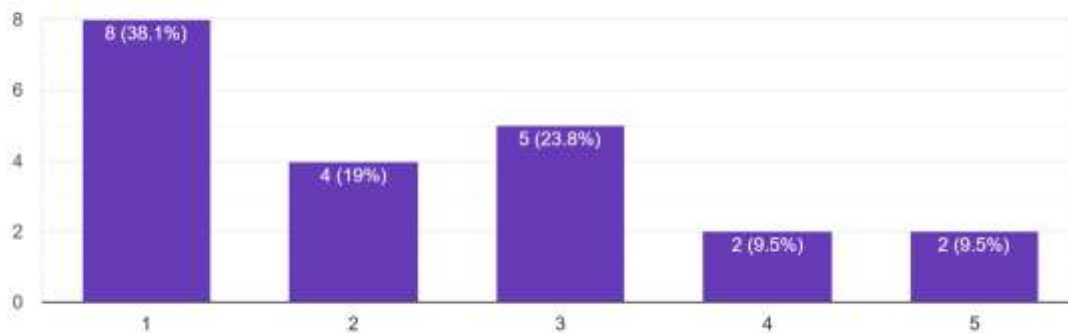
Social media lowers my self-esteem.  
21 responses



- **Sadness or depression after use:** Most of the respondents disagreed or stayed neutral on this particular statement .
- **Sleep loss due to social media:** The result indicates that majority of the participants agree with the fact

I feel sad or depressed after using social media.

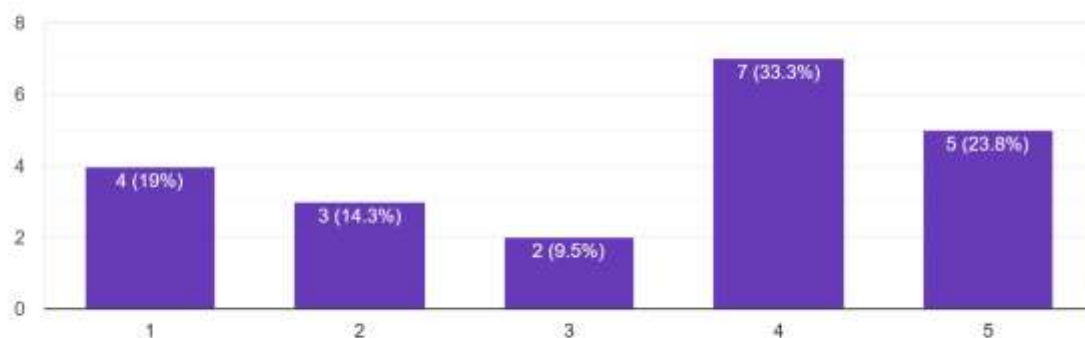
21 responses



that social media contributes to their sleep disruption.

I lose sleep because of using social media.

21 responses



- **Addictive behavior** (difficulty stopping use): This particular statement got a mix of responses. However, A large portion of the subjects agreed with the term that it is difficult for them to control their usage of social media even if they want to.

## 4. Qualitative Feedback Themes

### Positive Impacts Reported:

- Increased **awareness** and **global exposure**
- Boost in **creativity** and **motivation**
- Encouragement for **healthy habits** or **professional goals**
- Finding a **community of shared struggles**

### Negative Impacts Reported:

- **Procrastination**, **screen addiction**, **distraction from studies**
- **Comparisons** leading to **self-doubt** or **body image issues**
- Feeling of **laziness**, **negativity**, or **mental fatigue**
- **Sleep disturbances** due to overuse at night

## 5. Coping Strategies Adopted

- A little less than half of the respondents said **Yes** to taking steps like:
  - Limiting screen time
  - Setting app timers
  - Avoiding comparison
  - Reducing scrolling
- More than half the respondents admitted to **not taking any steps**, indicating a need for more awareness or self-discipline.

## Overall Discussion

The results indicate a dual impact of social media on mental health. While it helps build connection, motivation, and awareness, it also contributes to sleep deprivation, overuse, and reduced attention span. Most users recognize these impacts but only a few take corrective action.

## Conclusion

This study assessed the impact of social media on psychological wellbeing through a survey conducted on individuals from age group 13-35 ( young adults and teens ) irrespective of gender and occupation by using a google form questionnaire.

The findings suggest that social media affects mental health both positively and negatively. While it helps users stay connected, aware, and be expressive, it also brings challenges like reduced self-esteem, sleep disruption, and addictive behavior. Educating users—especially youth—about **mindful digital habits, setting healthy boundaries**, and practicing **self-awareness** is essential for promoting mental well-being digitally .

Although some of the respondents reported taking steps to manage their screen time and social media use, the majority continue to struggle with overuse.

Overall the study concludes that while social media is an integral part of modern life, its influence on mental health depends largely on how it is used. A mindful and intentional approach is essential to ensure that its benefits outweigh its drawbacks

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire: Impact of Social Media on Mental Health

#### Section 1: Demographics

1. What is your age?
  - ☐ 13-17
  - ☐ 18-24
  - ☐ 25-30
  - ☐ 31-35
2. What is your gender?
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Non-binary/Third gender
  - ☐ Prefer not to say
3. What is your current occupation?
  - ☐ Student
  - ☐ Employed
  - ☐ Self-employed
  - ☐ Unemployed
  - ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2: Social Media Usage

4. How many hours do you spend on social media daily?
  - ☐ Less than 1 hour
  - ☐ 1-2 hours
  - ☐ 3-4 hours
  - ☐ 5 or more hours
5. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply)
  - ☐ Instagram
  - ☐ Facebook
  - ☐ Twitter (X)
  - ☐ TikTok
  - ☐ Snapchat
  - ☐ WhatsApp
  - ☐ Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your primary reason for using social media?
  - ☐ Staying connected with friends/family
  - ☐ Entertainment
  - ☐ Education and awareness
  - ☐ Networking and professional growth
  - ☐ Self-expression
  - ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 3: Positive Impacts

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Likert scale: Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree)



**Statement****1 2 3 4 5**

Social media helps me feel connected with others.

Social media gives me a platform to express my thoughts and feelings.

Social media has helped me become more aware of mental health issues.

I have found social support through groups or friends on social media.

Social media motivates me to adopt healthier lifestyle habits.

**Section 4: Negative Impacts**

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Likert scale: Strongly Disagree - Disagree - Neutral - Agree - Strongly Agree)

**Statement****1 2 3 4 5**

Using social media causes me to feel anxious in social situations.

I often compare my appearance to others on social media, which lowers my self-esteem.

Seeing others' achievements on social media makes me feel inadequate.

Social media use sometimes makes me feel depressed or sad.

I find it hard to sleep because I spend too much time on social media.

I feel addicted to using social media and find it hard to cut down.

**Section 5: Open-ended Questions**

In your opinion, what is the biggest positive impact social media has had on your mental health?

(Short answer)

What do you think is the biggest negative impact social media has had on your mental health?

(Short answer)

Have you taken any steps to manage or reduce the negative effects of social media on your mental health? If yes, please explain. (Short answer)

End of Questionnaire

Thank you for your time and honest responses!