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Navigating Social Networking: Understanding the Effects on Youth

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites (SNS) wield a profound influence on today's youth, offering a plethora of opportunities along with notable challenges and implications. These platforms facilitate instant communication, foster social connections, and provide access to a wealth of information, empowering young individuals in unprecedented ways. However, they also present challenges such as privacy concerns, Cyber bullying, and addiction risks, impacting youth's mental health and well-being. The implications of SNS usage extend to academic performance, identity formation, and societal interactions. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for stakeholders—policymakers, educators, and parents—to navigate the complexities of SNS engagement among youth effectively. By promoting responsible digital citizenship and addressing challenges proactively, society can harness the potential of SNS while safeguarding the welfare of its younger generation.

This research delves into the intricate influence of social networking sites (SNS) on the younger generation, exploring the diverse array of opportunities, challenges, and ramifications associated with their usage. Through an extensive examination of contemporary literature and empirical studies, this study aims to uncover the multifaceted impact that SNS wield over the cognitive, emotional, and social development of adolescents and young adults. It investigates the potential advantages of SNS, such as facilitating communication, fostering social connections, and providing access to information, alongside the corresponding hurdles, including issues of privacy infringement, Cyber bullying, and the phenomenon of digital dependency. Furthermore, this inquiry delves into the broader implications of SNS utilization on youth, encompassing effects on mental well-being, academic performance, and the construction of personal identity. By conducting a thorough analysis of these dynamics, this study seeks to furnish policymakers, educators, and parents with actionable insights to navigate the complexities of SNS engagement among the youth population, advocating for responsible digital citizenship and striving to optimize the positive impacts of these platforms while mitigating potential risks.

Keywords: *Social Networking Sites (SNS), Youth , Impact ,Challenges ,Measures.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

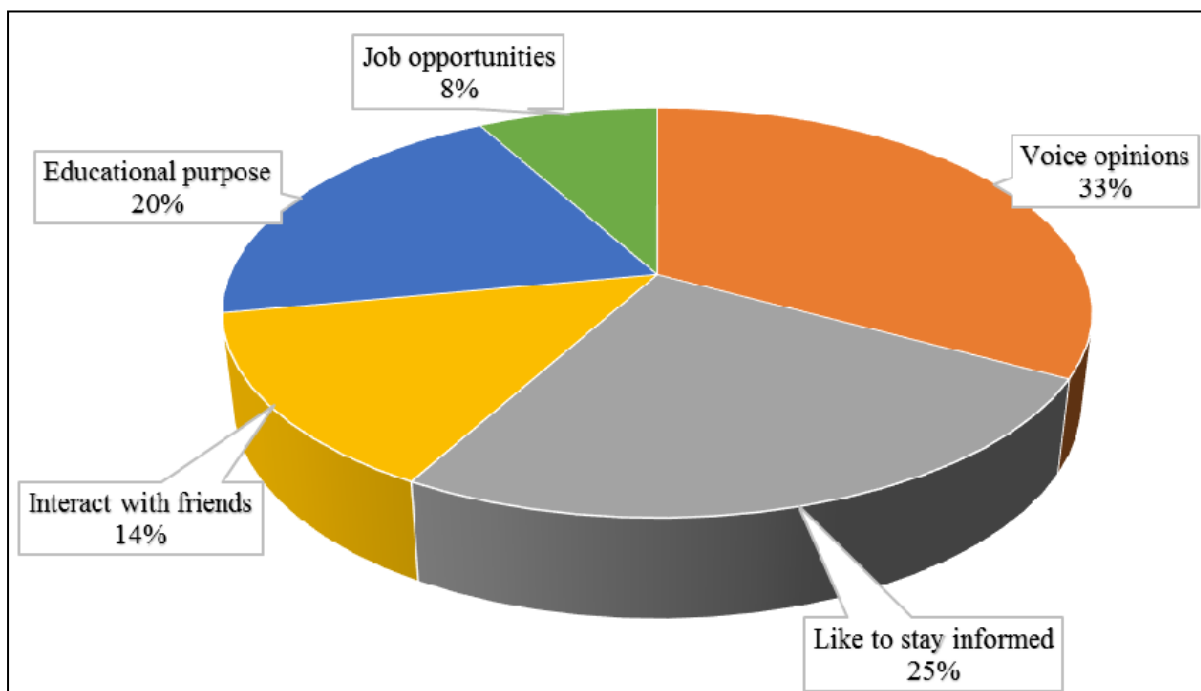
The pervasive digitization of contemporary society is an accelerating phenomenon. Consequently, one cannot evade the profound influence wielded by the compelling force of social media. People are attracted to these platforms because of their advanced communication features, ability to develop and expand social networks, ease in fostering interpersonal relationships, user-friendly interfaces, and their essential role in staying updated about dynamic global developments. Additionally, it is undeniable that online social media has negative effects, including time wastage, distraction of learners' attention, decline in learning habits, decreased offline communication, use of abbreviated language in chats and messages, adverse effects on health, cybercrimes, unauthorized acquisition of personal information by anonymous individuals, and other detrimental impacts. The empirical research that are discussed in this part focus on the detrimental influence that social media has on young people, namely how it affects the ways in which they behave, think, and feel:

Forty college students from various institutions in Guwahati, Assam were studied to determine the effect of social media on their education. It showed that Facebook was the most popular SNS among students, with Twitter coming in second place (10%); that students used SNS primarily to make new friends (55%), then to share ideas and learn from the experiences of other online individuals (50%), and to have fun (5%); that 40% of students spent less time studying because they were chatting with online friends via SNS; that cyber bullying and privacy concerns on SNS caused students to spend less time studying; and that 5% spent too much time on SNS.²

In a nutshell, social networking sites have diverted the attention of young people, primarily students, away from their academic pursuits and towards unsuitable activities such as skipping school and employment in order to spend more time on social networking sites. As a result, the educational outcomes and overall productivity of the pupils suffer as a direct result of these factors. The younger generation has developed a focus on themselves and is preoccupied with promoting themselves on social media.³

² June Ahn, "The effect of social network sites on adolescents' social and academic development: Current theories and controversies" 62(8) *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 1440 (2011).

³Madhur Raj Jain and Palak Gupta, "Impact Of Social Networking Sites In the Changing Mindset Of Youth On Social Issues- A Study Of Delhi-Ncr Youth" 3(2) *International Refereed Research Journal* 39 (2012).



The majority of young people's time is spent on Face book, Instagram , Snapchat etc. social networking websites. They literally cannot conceive of a life without it. Because it allows users to create personal portfolios, provide information, promote businesses, host images and videos, and more, Facebook and Instagram has unquestionably captivated the hearts and minds of today's young people. This is due to Instagram and Facebook's extensive list of services, which also include networking. WhatsApp, in contrast to Facebook, restricts communication between its users to the contact list of the user's mobile phone exclusively, and the app does not display any advertisements anywhere on the display screen. The kids today are more prone to addiction since they spend so much time on social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and others.⁴

Utilizing mobile phones, instant messaging, e-mail, and discussion forum on social networking platforms to intimidate or harm others constitutes a type of harassment termed cyberbullying.. According to studies, it can make those who use social media unhappy, which can lead to a disconnection from their peers. In addition, snapping a selfie and then uploading it to a social networking site has evolved into a widespread practise among young people in today's society. There have been cases of young people losing their lives while attempting to take selfies. On January 14, 2017, for instance, a college student named Debanjan Roy was killed while posing for a selfie in front of a moving train on a railway track on the Chandrakona Road of the West Midnapur district of West Bengal. The incident took place in the West Midnapur district of West Bengal.

⁴S Hinduja and J Patchin, "Offline consequences of online victimization: school violence and Delinquency" 6(3) *Journal of Social Violence* 95 (2007).

Nomophobia is the clinical term for FOBO, which refers to the fear of not having access to a mobile device. This condition is becoming more common among young people. It is a more sophisticated kind of FOMO, which stands for "fear of missing out." In this scenario, the person experiences anxiety if he or she is unable to contact with other people because they do not have access to a cell phone or the internet. The young of today utilise terms that have been fragmented on social media, which has a negative impact on their mastery of the English language. As a consequence of using improper words and making grammatical errors, the majority of them have poor writing skills. In the end, the negative effects of social media have stood as a block to the development of skills and personalities among younger generations.⁵

To summarise, it all depends on how young people feel about social media and whether they view it in a favourable or bad light. The use of social media can help young people feel more positive about themselves by increasing their awareness of their own value and enabling them to maintain their social relationships with their friends, family members, and other acquaintances. In addition, the creators of various social media should take the initiative to construct their platforms so that they can be used to disseminate information that is relevant in the field of education together with information about leisure activities. If today's kids are able to acknowledge the negative aspects and socio-psychological challenges posed by social media and find ways to use these challenges to build their sense of self-identity, then the path to the acquisition of new skills will not be too far out of reach for them.

II. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

The unwarranted use of these websites has a negative impact, not only on one's physical but also on one's mental health. The students consistently fail to eat their meals on time and do not get enough rest. The frequent usage of these locations on a daily basis has a number of negative effects on the students' physical and mental health, making them more sedentary and less eager to engage in face-to-face interactions with members of the general public. When their children use the internet, parents and guardians need to keep an eye on them and make sure they are safe. They need to be wary about whether or not the individual is making use of it for the appropriate amount of time. The companions and professors of the students should also help the students by making them aware of the negative effects and explaining what they are actually losing by sticking to these online long-distance interpersonal connection sites.

The use of social media, like the use of any other type of technology, comes with both positive

⁵Umar Toseeb and Becky Inkster, "Online social networking sites and mental health research" 6 *Public Mental Health* 220 (2015).

and negative aspects. And when it comes to the influence that social media has on teenagers, there are significant benefits and drawbacks that need to be taken into consideration.⁶

On the bright side, social media sites such as TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat can be saviours for adolescents who feel marginalised or alone, and this is especially true for LGBTQ adolescents. In addition, the use of social media by adolescents helped them feel less alone and more connected during the pandemic. However, the influence of social media on young people can also have a huge negative effect on their mental health. Particularly, the use of social media and depression in adolescents are intimately connected. In addition, excessive usage of the apps puts teenagers at risk for cyberbullying, problems with their body image, and addiction to technology. It also causes them to spend less time engaging in constructive, real-world activities. According to a poll conducted by Pew Research, the vast majority of parents believe they are aware of what their child is posting about them on social media. However, the results of a survey conducted on teenagers indicated that the majority of them hide their online behaviour from their parents.

(A) Effect on Mental Health

In a recent study assessing the impact of social media, half of the 1,500 teenagers surveyed emphasized the significance of receiving support and guidance, alleviating feelings of loneliness, expressing their creativity, and maintaining connections with friends and family via social media platforms.. And 43% of those who use social media to relieve stress, depression, or anxiety found that doing so. Five-two percent of LGBTQ young people reported feeling better after using social media to cope with their feelings. On the other hand, the survey found a significant correlation between the use of social media and the prevalence of depressive symptoms among adolescents. Young people who exhibited moderate to severe depression symptoms were approximately twice as likely to report using social media virtually frequently, as follows: In comparison, just 18 percent of young people who did not have depressive symptoms reported constant use of social media. However, one-third of depressed teens reported constant use of social media. In addition, the severity of their symptoms was correlated with the degree to which people experienced feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and depression after utilising social media. It is very clear that kids who are already feeling melancholy do not benefit from social media, and it appears to contribute to their pessimistic view.

This hypothesis has been confirmed out by a substantial body of research that, over the course

⁶ Philippe Verduyn and Ethan Kross, "The impact of social network sites on mental health: distinguishing active from passive use" 20(1) *World Psychiatry* 133 (2021).

of the past decade, has linked rising teen depression with increased usage of social media by adolescents. These studies demonstrate that there is a direct connection between the amount of time teenagers spend on social media and the state of their mental health. For instance, according to a study that was conducted in 2018, adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 who used social media for seven hours per day had a greater than twofold increased risk of being diagnosed with depression, receiving treatment from a mental health professional, or taking medicine for a psychiatric or behavioural condition during the previous year. This was compared to individuals who used screens for no more than around one hour every day.⁷

Many professionals are of the opinion that engaging in constant overstimulation through social networking puts the nervous system into a state of "fight or flight." As a consequence of this, conditions like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), teen melancholy, oppositional defiant disorder, and teen anxiety become even more severe. However, some study on social media and teen depression demonstrates that the causality runs in the other direction; specifically, that when teens are depressed, they look at social media more frequently. Researchers conducted a study with 600 young adults and discovered that while usage of social media did not predict depressive symptoms, greater severity of depressive symptoms did predict increased use of social media over time.

The effects of social media on young people can have a considerable negative effect on their mental health, putting them at risk for cyberbullying, problems with their body image, and addiction to technology, and causing them to spend less time engaging in constructive, real-world activities.

Some researchers theorize that the increase in social media and overall screen use between 2010 and 2015 could account for marked increases in teen depressive symptoms and suicide rates beginning in that same time period.

Anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and oppositional defiant disorder are some of the conditions that can be made much worse by persistent overstimulation from activities such as social networking. This theory is supported by a large number of experts.

On social media platforms, teenagers spend a significant amount of their time monitoring the lives and photos of their classmates. This leads to ongoing comparisons, which may be detrimental to both their sense of self-worth and their body image.

Teens can benefit from mental health treatment by acquiring the skills and self-knowledge

⁷ Elizabeth M Seabrook and Nikki S Rickard, "Social Networking Sites, Depression, and Anxiety: A Systematic Review" 3(4) *JMIR Mental Health* 50 (2016). DOI: 10.2196/mental.5842.

necessary to recover from the underlying reasons and detrimental effects that are connected with excessive usage of social media.

Here are some ways to handle the influence of social media on teenagers:

- Investigate the kind of entertainment, such as movies, television shows, video games, and celebrities that your youngster enjoys. Once we have a better understanding of what interest's people, we will be able to identify the images and messages that are having an effect on them.
- It is fairly simple for our teenagers to view videos on YouTube on their mobile devices, which means that we could not be aware of what he is watching. The parents have a responsibility to monitor what their adolescent child is taking in on the television or the internet, and they should also attempt to have a conversation about setting some boundaries and ground rules.
- Engaging in conversation about messaging is one of the most effective strategies to assist teenagers in navigating the challenges posed by the influences of the media. We could, for instance, have a conversation with the adolescent about female friendships, life choices, self-esteem, and sexuality if they are particularly interested in other young women.
- Monitoring the decisions made by teenagers does not mean we are prohibiting them from consuming any form of media. It is simply a matter of bringing to their attention the detrimental influences.
- We should also make the decision to restrict the use of certain applications, shows, and games. Please explain the rationale behind this action.
- We may also help our adolescent to understand media by posing some questions for them to ask themselves when they do so. Take a TV commercial or an advertisement from a magazine and pose questions to the teen about it, such as who is responsible for it, what the motive behind it is, how it makes them feel, what they need from it, and so on.
- We are able to accomplish the same thing with the role model for our teen. Encourage our teen to ask him questions such as why does he or she like that celebrity, do they follow him or her in real life, what values of the celebrity interest our teens, and other similar questions.

III. CONCLUSION

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement, social media has permeated the daily fabric of existence, leading to an unprecedented reliance on diverse technological forms. The impact of this ubiquitous presence varies significantly across domains. Notably, in the realm of education, students leverage social media platforms for heightened collaboration, fostering efficient and swift communication unparalleled in previous eras. Through these platforms, students can engage in real-time exchanges, share resources, and collaborate on projects, transcending geographical barriers. This dynamic interaction not only enhances the learning experience but also cultivates essential digital literacy skills, preparing students for the demands of a digitally-driven world.
