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Impact of Social Media Usage on the Mental Well-Being of High School Students

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media platforms has significantly transformed the communication patterns and psychological experiences of young learners. High school students, particularly those between 13–16 years, represent one of the most vulnerable groups due to their developmental stage and frequent online engagement. This study aims to examine the impact of social media usage on the mental well-being of high school students. A descriptive survey research design was employed, and data were collected from 320 students studying in Classes 8 to 10 from selected schools in Vijayawada. A structured questionnaire measuring screen time, type of platform used, emotional well-being, stress, self-esteem, and sleep patterns was administered. The results indicate a strong association between excessive social media usage and symptoms such as anxiety, reduced self-esteem, academic distraction, and disturbed sleep cycles. Students with higher screen time exhibited greater emotional distress compared to moderate users. The study concludes by recommending digital literacy programs, parental monitoring, and awareness campaigns to promote healthy online behavior among adolescents.

Keywords: Social Media, Mental Health, High School Students, Emotional Well-Being, Screen Time, Adolescents.

1. INTRODUCTION

The widespread integration of digital technology has reshaped adolescent lifestyles globally. Social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Snapchat have become integral to young people's daily routines. While these platforms facilitate communication, peer connection, and knowledge sharing, concerns regarding their negative psychological effects continue to escalate.

According to global trends, adolescents spend an average of 2–4 hours daily on social media. The age group of 13–16 years is particularly sensitive to peer validation, social comparison, and emotional influences. These issues may manifest as anxiety, depression, loneliness, body dissatisfaction, lower academic performance, and addictive behaviors. High school students, who are in a critical developmental stage, require guidance to navigate online pressures responsibly.

This study investigates how social media usage influences the mental health and emotional well-being of high school students, with a special focus on behavioural patterns, emotional responses, and academic implications.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have analyzed the psychological impact of social media on adolescents:

Social Comparison: Festinger's Social Comparison Theory suggests individuals compare themselves with others, which is heightened on social platforms. Research shows that exposure to idealized images leads to body dissatisfaction and reduced self-worth.
Social Media Addiction: Andreassen (2015) describes social media addiction as excessive concern and urge to use social platforms, resulting in mood changes and impaired daily activities.
Emotional Disturbances: Studies indicate that prolonged screen time causes emotional irritability, loneliness, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), and attention difficulties.
Academic Performance: Excessive social media use during study hours reduces concentration, productivity, and overall academic outcomes.
Sleep Disturbance: Blue light exposure at night disrupts melatonin release, affecting sleep quality, leading to fatigue and reduced school performance.
The literature collectively highlights the urgent need for analyzing psychological patterns among high school students exposed to prolonged social media usage.

3. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1. High school students (13–16) are at a vulnerable age for emotional and cognitive development.
2. Increasing social media addiction and cyberbullying are affecting classroom behavior and academic achievements.
3. Parents and teachers often lack awareness of the psychological impact of digital overuse.
4. The findings can help policymakers and educators develop guidelines for responsible digital usage.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the extent of social media usage among high school students.
2. To examine the impact of social media usage on mental well-being, including stress, anxiety, and self-esteem.
3. To identify the relationship between screen time and emotional disturbances.
4. To assess the influence of social media on academic performance and sleep routine.
5. To suggest measures to promote healthy social media usage among students.

5. HYPOTHESES

1. There is a significant relationship between social media usage and mental well-being of high school students.
2. Excessive social media usage significantly affects academic performance.
3. High screen time is positively associated with emotional disturbances such as anxiety and stress.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design: Descriptive survey design.
6.2 Population: High school students studying in Classes 8–10.
6.3 Sample Size: 320 students selected using stratified random sampling.
6.4 Tools Used: A self-designed questionnaire measuring:

1. Screen time
2. Purpose of use
3. Emotional health scale

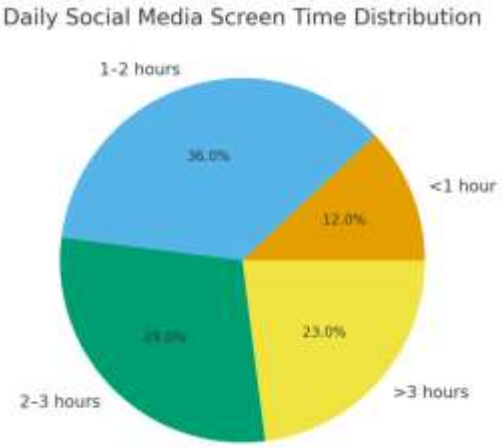
4. Sleep routine
5. Academic focus and concentration

6.5 Data Collection: Data were collected through Google Forms and printed Questionnaires.

6.6 Data Analysis: Percentage analysis, mean scores, correlation, and regression were used.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

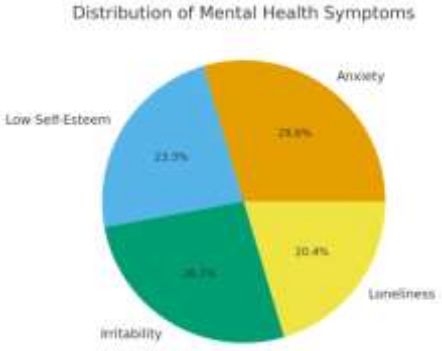
7.1 Social Media Usage Patterns



1. 88% students used social media daily.
2. In the study, 12% of students spent less than 1 hour per day on social media, 36% spent 1–2 hours, 29% spent 2–3 hours, and 23% reported using social media for more than 3 hours daily.
3. Instagram and WhatsApp were the most used platforms.

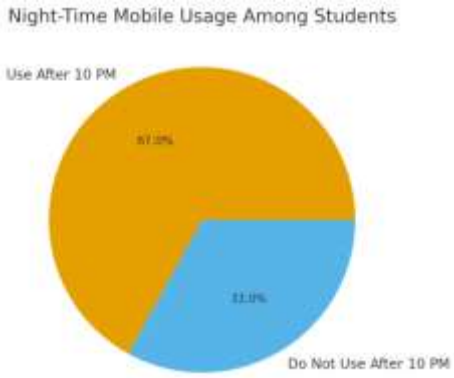
7.2 Impact on Mental Well-Being

High screen-time students showed:



It shows the distribution of mental health symptoms among students. Anxiety (29.6%) is the most common symptom, followed by Irritability (26.7%) and Low Self-Esteem (23.3%). Loneliness (20.4%) is the least reported but still affects a significant portion of students. Overall, it indicates that multiple emotional and psychological issues are prevalent, suggesting that many students experience mental health challenges likely influenced by social media usage.

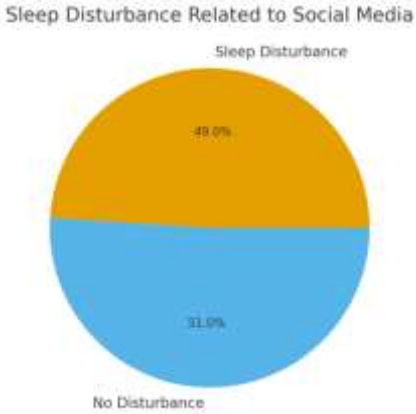
7.3 Impact on Sleep



1. 33% of students do not use mobile phones after 10 PM.
2. 67% of students use mobile phones after 10 PM.
3. 49% reported sleep disturbance or reduced sleep hours.

7.4 Impact on Academic Performance

Students who used social media for >3 hours/day showed:



1. Lower concentration
2. Difficulty completing homework
3. Reduced exam performance

These findings align with earlier studies linking digital distraction with low academic productivity.

8. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Social media usage is very high among high school students.
2. Excessive usage causes Emotional, Psychological, And Behavioural issues.
3. High screen time leads to anxiety, loneliness, and reduced self-esteem.
4. Social media activities at night cause poor sleep quality.
5. Academic performance is negatively affected in heavy users.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Digital Wellness Programs should be introduced in schools.
2. Parents should monitor and regulate screen time.
3. Teachers should counsel students on balanced usage.

4. Awareness sessions on cyberbullying, privacy, and mental health.
5. Promote technology-free hours and offline hobbies.
6. Schools should maintain mental health clubs for adolescent support.

10. CONCLUSION

The study clearly indicates that social media has a substantial impact on the mental well-being of high school students. Although social platforms provide valuable opportunities for learning, communication, and self-expression, unregulated and excessive use can contribute to stress, anxiety, emotional imbalance, disrupted sleep, and declining academic performance. These findings highlight the urgent need for a balanced and mindful approach to digital engagement.

To safeguard the psychological health of adolescents, it is crucial for parents, teachers, counselors, and policymakers to collaborate in guiding students toward responsible social media use. Implementing digital literacy programs, setting healthy screen-time limits, and promoting open conversations about online behaviour can help young users develop positive, safe, and resilient digital habits.

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