

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Social media is an integral part of the lives of young people and it impacts how they communicate, relate to each other, communicate with themselves and engage in social interaction. This research paper explores the effects of social media on mental wellbeing, social interactions among young people and community involvement. It examines the implications of social media use, as well as its positive and negative impacts, such as social connectivity, emotional support, awareness and community involvement. Meanwhile, it examines possible issues related to overuse of social media, including anxiety, depression, feeling lonely, low self-esteem, cyber-bullying, and diminished in-person communication. The research will focus on the understanding of the effect of various social media usage patterns on the psychological health and social actions of young people. The analysis of the relationship between social media engagement and the impacts on youth experiences is done using a quantitative research approach. Using structured questionnaires, data was gathered from young people, and a statistical analysis was performed to determine the relationship between social media use, mental health outcomes, social relations, and community participation. The results indicate the double edged sword that social media has for youth. Although using this properly and in moderation can help to communicate better, build relationships, and be involved in social movements, overuse and abuse can have adverse effects on mental health and interpersonal relationships. The study highlights the need for digital awareness, safe social media practices and appropriate guidance of young people to help them reap the benefits of social media and lessen its risks. The findings of this research help to identify the relationship between digital platforms and youth development in society.

Keywords:

Social Media, Youth Mental Health, Social Relationships, Community Engagement, Digital Communication, Social Networking Sites, Psychological Well-being, Youth Behavior, Online Interaction, Digital Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become one of the biggest technological advances of the modern age and has changed the way people communicate,

interact and engage in society. Social media has become an integral part of young people's daily lives, offering them ways to express themselves, to share information, to enjoy entertainment and

connect with others. Youth use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Twitter to communicate in new ways, thus expanding the scope of relationships they can sustain and communities with which they can connect, beyond geographic limitations. Social media, as defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), are Internet based applications that allow users to create, share and exchange content in an interactive and participatory way. As these platforms have grown in popularity, opportunities and challenges have arisen, including with regard to youth mental health, social relationships, and participation in the community.

Social media has been growing in popularity among youth at an increasing pace and has been a concern regarding its impact on mental health. Adolescence and early adulthood are very significant developmental periods where individuals go through intense emotional, social and psychological changes. Overuse or problematic social media use can lead to poorer mental health, such as feelings of depression, anxiety, loneliness, stress, and low self-esteem. Twenge and Campbell (2018) proposed that the greater digital interaction young people have experienced has been linked to shifts in psychological health and a decline in physical social interaction. Likewise, Keles et al. (2020) discovered that adolescents' exposure to social media is associated with depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. The results emphasize the need to know the impact of online activities on the emotional wellbeing of young users.

But social media isn't all bad – when used properly, it offers a number of psychological and social advantages. Online platforms can provide emotional support, opportunities for identity development, available educational resources, and venues for young people to express their opinions and experiences. Best, Manktelow and Taylor (2014) put forward a strong argument for the role of social media in improving social relations for the young, due to its ability to facilitate communication with peers and support networks. Likewise, a study by Nabi, Prestin, and So (2013) revealed that online social networking

can have a positive effect on perceived social support and emotional well-being. Thus, the effects of social media are highly contingent on the intent, amount and type of social media use by youth.

Expansion of social media has also had significant impact on social relationships. Interpersonal communication has become more digital, enabling people to keep in touch with their friends, make new ones or join online communities. Social media can help to foster social connections as young people can communicate with one another at all times, creating a sense of belonging. But too much reliance on the internet can decrease in-person communication and impact the quality of in-person relationships. Online communication can have both positive and negative effects on adolescent relationships, depending on the type of interactions and the circumstances (Valkenburg and Peter, 2007). Digital and face-to-face communication is still a significant determinant for the overall impact of social media on social relationships.

Social media has changed the way that young people relate to communities and social issues alongside personal relationships. The use of digital platforms offers opportunities for youth in engaging in social movements, raising awareness, volunteering, and civic discourse. Youth can use social media to disseminate information, plan events, and participate in community activities addressing local and global issues. Networked communication environments enable young people to be involved in social spaces that are constantly evolving in relation to identity, community and the public domain, boyd (2014) argues. This new-found access has enhanced youth participation in community activities and social activism in a number of ways. Yet, social media continues to present its own set of issues such as reliance on technology, misinformation, online conflict, and cyber-bullying that impact youth experiences on social media platforms. Cyberbullying is a particular cause of concern as it may have an adverse effect on emotional health, social confidence and well-being. Hinduja and Patchin (2018) emphasized that youth who

experience cyberbullying have a higher risk of psychological distress and have a need for more awareness and prevention methods. They are concerns that highlight the importance of being responsible using social media and being digital literate.

There is a complex relationship between the use of social media, mental health, relationships and community and this needs to be explored further. Social media can be an important communication, support and participation platform but can also pose risks to young people's psychological and social wellbeing if used inappropriately or excessively. This relationship is crucial to foster healthy digital environments for educators, parents, policymakers, and young users alike. Hence, this study seeks to investigate the role of social media in the mental health, social relationship and participation of the youth and explore its benefits and challenges. The study helps to enhance the understanding of the impact of digital platforms for young people in the modern world.

Background of the Study

Digital technology has transformed society and how people communicate, interact and participate. In the technological era, social networking has emerged as one of the most powerful platforms, especially for the young population. Social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and other online communities have changed the way people communicate with each other, offering them a place to share information, express opinions, build relationships and engage in social activity. The social media platforms enable the user to produce and share content, create interactive digital environments and make communication more accessible and widespread (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

Youth are one of the largest social media users and they are a big part of their lives. Social media is used by young people to connect with friends, create online social groups, reach educational resources and get involved in social causes. It has also fostered new means of self-expression and of getting emotional support from one another for

young people. Best et al (2014) suggested that online communication has positive implications for youth development with regard to social connection and opportunities for interaction.

The use of social media, however, has also come with concerns about the effects of social media on social behaviors and youth mental health. Teens that use social networking too much have been linked to such psychological issues as anxiety, depression, loneliness, stress, and low self-esteem. Excessive and negative exposure to social media can lead to psychological distress among adolescents (Keles, McCrae, and Grealish, 2020). Likewise, Twenge and Campbell (2018) argued that greater exposure to the digital world could affect emotional health and lessen in-person social contact.

Problem Statement

Social media has been adopted among youth and has had both positive as well as negative effects on their psychological and social growth. Social media has been touted as a place for communication, learning, self-expression, and engagement, but the potential for its negative impact on mental health and relationships has raised concerns.

Young people engage with social networking sites for a considerable amount of time, and this can cause issues including social media addiction, emotional stress, anxiety, depression, cyberbullying and low self-esteem. In addition, overuse of online communication can affect communication in face-to-face relationships, by limiting face-to-face communication and elevating social isolation.

Although much research has been conducted on the use of social media, a deeper understanding of the impact of social media on various aspects of youth life, both mental health and social relations and community involvement, is needed. Hence, this research wants to explore the effect of social media on youth, the positive as well as negative effect of social media and how to promote positive use of social media.

Research Objectives

- 1.To look at how social media has affected adolescent mental health.
- 2.To examine the association between SMC and youth social relationships.
- 3.To examine how social media can be used to encourage young people in the community to participate.
- 4.To explore the benefits and disadvantages of social media on young people's mental and emotional health.
- 5.To examine relationships between the ways in which young people use social media and their behaviour and experience.

Research Questions

- 1.What are the impacts of social media on the mental health of youth?
- 2.How do youth social relationships relate to the use of social media?
- 3.What is the impact of social media on the involvement of young people in community work?
- 4.What are some of the pros and cons of social media on young people's health?

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is that social media is a vital component of the life of youth and continues to shape their psychological, social and community experiences. Knowing its impact can be useful in order to understand opportunities and challenges with digital communication. The results of this study would prove informative for students, parents, educators, policymakers, and mental health workers as a way to raise awareness of the impact of social media on youth. It can support teachers and parents to educate young people about their online behaviours and help them engage in responsible online activities. The study will also address multiple social media aspects like mental health, social relationships and community engagement, all of which will aid existing research. This study could help other researchers research the long-term impact of social media use and how to make social media environments safer and more supportive.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study aims to explore how social media could impact youth mental health, social relations, and social participation. The study primarily focuses on young people who are active on social networking sites and examines the psychological impact of their social networking experiences on their social and psychological relationships and social engagement. From this study, both positive and negative aspects of social media usage will be discussed, such as emotional support, relationship development, community participation, anxiety, stress, loneliness, and online challenges. The research seeks to give a balanced view of the impact of social media on youth experience in the modern society. But there are some limitations of this study. First, the study might have had a small sample size and/or participants for the study which might limit the generalizability of the results. Second, the information gathered from questionnaires can include personal opinions and the experiences of the person completing the questionnaire and may also have a bias. Third, the social media outlets and user behaviors are constantly evolving, so there may be other future trends in digital communication that have not been discussed here. The study offers some interesting findings in spite of these shortcomings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has become an important area of research due to its increasing influence on communication, psychological well-being, social interactions, and participation in society. Social media has changed the way young people communicate; it offers a space for them to express themselves, connect with each other, learn information and engage in community. Earlier research has included the examination of the role of social media in youth experience, either positive or negative. This literature review examines current studies that have investigated the link between using social media, mental health in youth, social relationships and community involvement. Social media are online platforms and applications that enable users to make, share,

exchange or interact with content with the help of virtual communities. Social media offers interactive and participatory environments where users can communicate instantly in spite of geographical distance, unlike traditional communication systems. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is the Internet-based applications based on Web 2.0 technologies that allow users to create and share content. These platforms comprise social networking sites, video sharing apps, online communities, and digital communication tools that have revolutionized human interaction in today's society.

Social media has also affected communication in that it has made it more convenient, timely and global. boyd (2014) notes that online spaces offer young people opportunities to build new identities, foster new connections, voice opinions, and engage in new forms of social discourse. The use of social media has enabled young people to be able to meet people from other communities, connect with information and participate in activities outside of their own communities. With the rise of digital communication, however, there are also concerns about privacy, online conflicts, misinformation and the psychological impact of extended online interaction. Young people are one of the most active group of social media users globally. Social media use has increased dramatically among teens and young adults due to the rise of smart phones, low-cost Internet connections, and sophisticated digital technology. Social media like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Twitter have become a part of everyday youth activity, impacting their communication, socialization, and information-gathering processes. According to Lenhart (2015), social

media is often used by teens to connect with friends, share personal information and engage in online communities.

Social media has come into being and is present in the life of young people, which has brought both opportunities and challenges. These platforms offer the young people learning space, creative space, emotional support, and social space and connection, on one hand. On one hand, these platforms offer the young people space and opportunities to learn, create, and to connect and feel emotionally supported. However, frequent use can lead to adverse psychological effects and unhealthy behaviors. Twenge and Campbell (2018) reported that there have been some links between the higher levels of digital engagement in the younger generation and shifts in social behavioral experiences, emotional experiences, and interpersonal communication patterns. They found that spending too much time on digital platforms could have a negative impact on social interaction and well-being.

Overview of Social Media and Youth Usage

Social media has emerged as one of the most powerful digital tools that impact communication, social interaction and information sharing in the modern society. The social media platforms offer users the chance to create, share and engage with the digital content through online communities. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is a type of application that provides users with opportunities to create and share content in a web-based environment. These will range from Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter and other social networking applications that have revolutionized the way people communicate.

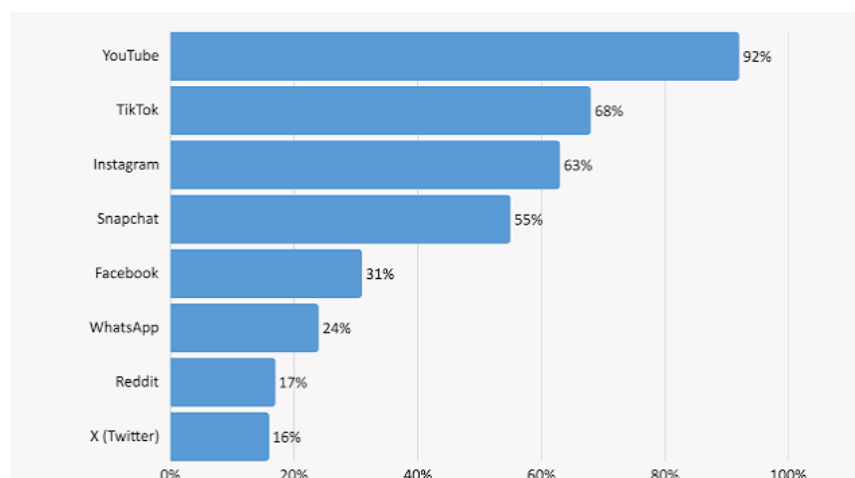


Fig 2.1 Overview of Social Media and Youth Usage

One of the most active social media groups of users is young people. As mobile phones, internet access and digital technology has made its way to the lives of adolescents and young adults, so has the prevalence of social networking sites. Lenhart (2015) notes that the main reasons young people use social media are to keep up with their friends, share personal experiences, find out information, and engage in online communities. Youth and social media use is now deeply embedded in many young people's daily lives, affecting their communication patterns, self-concept and social interactions.

Social media use offers several opportunities for young people such as being educated, creative, entertained and socially connected. These can be used to connect with people from all over the world, and there are a variety of ways to learn through them. Best, Manktelow and Taylor (2014) proposed that online communication may facilitate youth development through the enhancement of opportunities for interaction and in turn social networks.

Despite this, the more young people rely on social media, concerns have been raised about excess use, and its potential implications for psychological and social development. Twenge and Campbell (2018) pointed out that the hyper-digital interactions in young people have had an impact on their patterns of communication and emotional experiences. Time on social networking sites can be excessive, decreasing face-

to-face social interaction and leading to mental health and social relationship issues.

Social Media and Youth Mental Health

With a heightened focus on mental health issues among youth, the association between social media usage and youth mental health has emerged as a significant area of research interest. Adolescence and early adulthood are developmental phases that are highly susceptible to emotional and psychological growth, and engage in the process of establishing a sense of self, social self-confidence, and coping skills. Social media can have an impact on these developmental processes, as they can affect the ways young people communicate, assess themselves and relate to others.

Studies have demonstrated the potential of both positive and negative effects of social media on mental wellbeing. Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020) undertook a systematic review of the link between social media and adolescent mental health. Their results showed that high levels of social media use were linked to higher levels of depression, anxiety and psychological distress among adolescents.

There are various ways that social media can impact mental health, such as through social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), online interactions, and exposure to negative content. Vogel et al. (2014) suggest that people's self-esteem can be adversely affected and they can

become less content by comparing themselves to others on social media sites. For the same reason, an excessive focus on online approval, likes and comments can have an impact on the emotional health of young people.

Negative Impacts of Social Media on Mental Health

There are several positive psychological benefits to social media if used appropriately and responsibly. One of the biggest benefits of a social networking site is the emotional support they offer and the avenues they offer young people to share their experiences. The use of online communities can help to connect with others who share similar interests, background, challenges or experiences, thereby minimizing feelings of loneliness.

Social media can enhance youth social connectedness by enabling them to maintain social relationships and build supportive networks, Best et al. (2014) noted. For those who

have difficulties in a traditional social setting, this type of platform can be especially useful as it offers options for social interaction and connection.

Young people also express themselves and build their sense of identity through social media. Online surfing spaces enable young people to express opinions, creations, personal experiences and accomplishments. (boyd 2014). This process can work to build confidence and promote growth.

Negative Effects of Social Media on Mental Health

Although it has many positive effects, overuse of social media has been linked to some negative mental health effects in young people. Some issues that could arise from problematic social media use include anxiety, depression, loneliness, stress, low self-esteem, and emotional dissatisfaction.

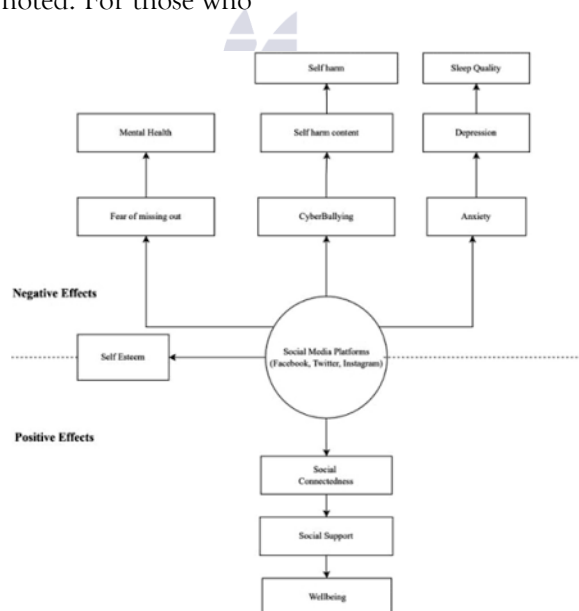


Fig 2.2 Negative Effects of Social Media on Mental Health

Living in an environment that constantly exposes them to unrealistic lifestyles and edited images as well as positive accounts of others' lifestyles could lead them to feel bad about themselves and make comparisons with others. Vogel et al. (2014) found that self-esteem can be lowered and

negative emotions raised through social comparison via social media.

Another major issue is social media addiction or excessive reliance on social media. Excessive use of social networking sites by young people can affect their ability to carry out activities in "real life" and in their relationships. Andreassen

(2015) proposed that the use of social media can become problematic, and can take on addictive behaviors which can impact emotional control and psychological well-being.

Social Media and Social Relationships

Social media has changed the relationship-building process for young people. Social media has had a major impact on how young people are forming and sustaining social relationships. Users can talk to each other instantly, share experiences and stay in touch with friends, no matter how far away they are. The changes have introduced new types of social interaction, which are in addition to the traditional ones that occur in person.

Valkenburg and Peter (2007) proposed that online communication has the potential to positively impact adolescents' relationships by providing more opportunities for disclosure and interaction. Social media helps young people to build or maintain friendships, make new friends and join groups with similar interests.

Social Media can, however, have an impact on relationships if the interaction is of a good quality and for a good reason. Digital communication can be beneficial to relationships, but too much can decrease face-to-face communication. Przybylski and Weinstein (2017) have concluded that digital technologies and online distractions during social interactions might affect the quality of a relationship and levels of intimacy.

Influence of Social Media on Family and Peer Connections

Social media has had an impact on how youth communicate with family and friends. Digital platforms can be used to keep in touch with loved ones, particularly those who live far away. These apps for messaging, video chatting, and social networks allow youth to stay in touch with family and continue to build emotional connections.

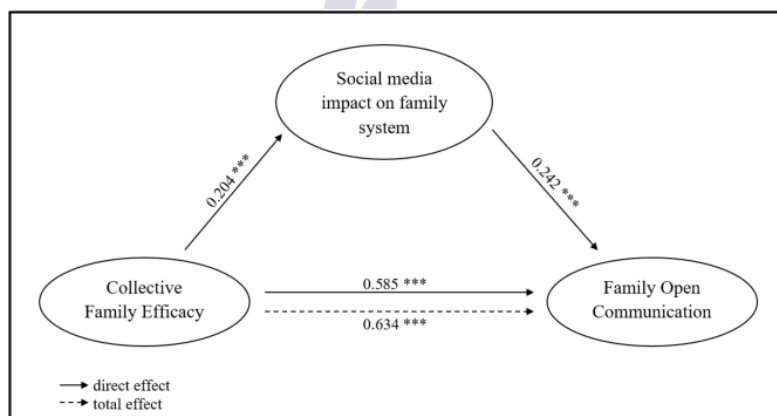


Fig 2.3 Influence of Social Media on Family and Peer Connections

Social media is also a crucial part of peer relationships. These platforms are commonly used by young people for social support, communication with peers and sharing of activities. Valkenburg and Peter (2007) found that online communication can help build friendships by providing more interactions and more personal disclosure.

But too much on social media can have negative consequences on family relationships, by cutting down on in-person interaction. Overuse of digital devices may lead to family communication

difficulties and reduce quality interaction. Likewise, relying on peer validation online can have an impact on self-assurance and emotional stability among youth.

Thus, the effects of social media on family relationships and friendships are subject to user behavior. The positive aspects of the role can build relationships, but the negative aspects of the role can erode traditional forms of social interaction.

Social Media and Community Engagement

Social media has emerged as a powerful platform for mobilising youth for community engagement and social issues. Digital platforms can be used to obtain information, arrange events, circulate awareness campaigns, and engage in discussions about social issues among young people. These opportunities have revolutionized the forms of civic engagement.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012) have a different explanation for the transformation of collective action with the advent of digital communication, arguing that people now engage in social movements via online communication networks. Social media provides opportunities for young people to help campaigns, to advance a community initiative, and to engage with organizations striving for social change.

Social media also raises awareness about social, environmental and political matters. Networked communication spaces offer opportunities to support youth in their participation and their feeling of social belonging, boyd (2014) noted.

Digital engagement can be undermined, however, by issues of misinformation and conflict online, as well as by restricted offline engagement. As such, social media can enhance community involvement through responsible use and when used in conjunction with offline involvement. As a whole, the literature suggests that social media can be used to increase youth participation, but can also demand awareness and responsible online usage among youth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology for conducting the research to explore how social media affects youth mental health, social relationships and community involvement. It is used to describe the method of research, design of the research, population in the study, sampling, method of collecting data, research instrument, variables and data analysis technique in the study. The methodology is a systematic approach to gathering and analyzing data to accomplish the goals of the research.

Research Approach

This study will use quantitative research methods to explore the relationship between the use of social media and its impact on youth mental health, social relationships and participation in the community. The quantitative method is appropriate since data in the form of numbers would be gathered and patterns, relationships and trends would be sought between different variables. The study will use statistical analysis to gain an understanding of the psychological and social experiences of youths who use social media.

Using the quantitative approach, the researcher can use structured questions to measure the perceptions, behaviors, and experiences of participants of social media. This method will yield objective outcomes and enable the results to be compared to past research on digital communication and youth development.

Research Design

The study is of cross-sectional research design, which is used to gather information from the respondents at one point in time. This design is suitable since the research is designed to explore how social media use relates to youth mental health, social relations and community involvement. Survey based research design is used to collect first hand information from the user, who are small children. The design will enable the researcher to explore various facets of social media consumption such as frequency of usage, why one uses social media, psychological impact on social media, changes in relationships, and involvement in community activities.

Population of the Study

The population of this study is young users of social media. The target audience is adolescents and young adults who are using online networking applications like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter and more. The population is youth because they are among the most active groups of social media users and are very sensitive to digital communication contexts. The study aims to explore how social

media have an impact on their psychological health, social interactions and socialization.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The respondents for this study are young persons on the social media, who form the target population in this study. Convenience sampling is used to data gathered from participants that are easily accessible and willing to participate in the research.

The research is on individuals who have active experience of using social media, making convenience sampling the most suitable option. The participants are chosen according to their availability, willingness and relevance to the research goals.

Data collected from the selected sample offers insight into youth's experiences of social media and the impact of social media on mental health, relationships, and engagement with the community.

Data Collection Method

The data collection technique employed in this study is structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will aim to gather data on the social media use of participants, their psychological experiences, their relationships and their behaviours in their communities.

The questionnaire is administered to youth who are active on social media. Participants are asked to answer honestly in regards to their experiences. The collected data is then presented and processed and analyzed to look for patterns and relationships between the research variables. Secondary data is also collected from the existing research studies, academic articles and published literature as a basis for back casting the background and interpretation of the findings.

Research Instrument

Research instrument used in collecting data is the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire has several sections based on the research purpose.

The first section collects demographic information of participants, including age, gender, education level, and social media usage experience. The second section involves usage

patterns of social media such as frequency of use, social media usage time and purpose. The third section explores the effects of social media on mental well-being such as stress, anxiety and self-esteem. The fourth section examines the effect of social media on social relationships and family or peer relationships. The last section looks at the impact of social media on community engagement and involvement in social activities. Participants' opinions and experiences are measured by a Likert scale. The question items are rated on a scale of 7 points, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis Techniques

For the study, independent and dependent variables have been used to look into the relationship between social media usage and experiences of the youth.

Social Media use is the independent variable for the study and these variables are the frequency of social media use, duration of use, type of platforms used and purpose of social media use.

The outcomes measured are youth mental health, social relationships and community participation. Emotional well-being, anxiety, stress, loneliness and self-esteem are indicators of mental health. Social relationships are explored through communication, friendship formation and family/peer interactions. The indicator for community engagement involves participation in awareness campaigns, social activities and being active in the online community.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected is statistically analysed to uncover relationships between the use of social media and its impact on youth. Participant responses are summarized using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

Inferential statistical techniques also can be used to explore relationships among variables and to test research hypotheses. Using correlation analysis, the relationship between the use of social media and mental health outcomes, social relationships and community involvement can be determined.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter summarizes the findings and results that have been derived from the data obtained from the structured questionnaires. This chapter aims to examine the effect of social media on the mental health, social relationships, and involvement within the community of young people, as well as to analyse the data collected. Demographic analysis, patterns of social media use and statistical assessment of the relationship between social media use and the selected variables of the research study are presented. The

findings offer insights into the social media use and its impact on psychological health, social relationships, and social participation of young people.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic characteristics of respondents give an overview of participants involved in the study. Demographic information is significant because age, gender, education, and social media experience can impact individuals' perceptions and behaviors related to social media use.

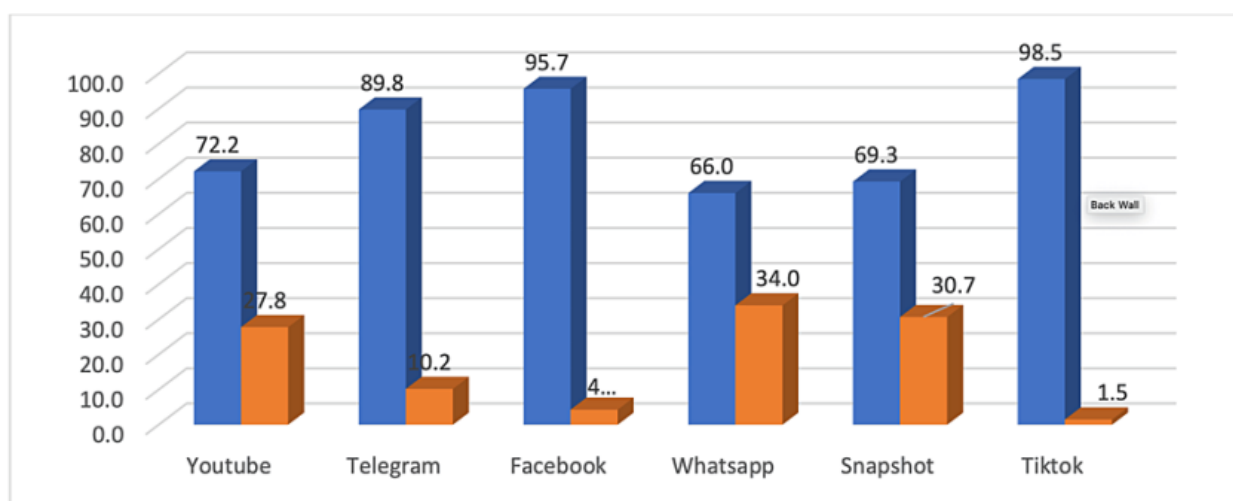


Fig 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study data were gathered from young people who actively use social media platforms and basic demographic data was taken. They included a diverse group of youth as the respondents,

representing a range of ages, educations, and experiences, which enabled the study to explore the effects of social media among a variety of youth.

Table 4.1 Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	78	52%
Female	72	48%
Total	150	100%

Most respondents were in the younger age group, which is the most active age group in using digital platforms. This reflects the role of social media in their everyday life and communication among youth. Both males and females were selected as respondents, ensuring a balanced perspective of

the experiences related to social media across genders.

Respondents' education ranged from students to young people who were at different academic levels. This variety proved beneficial in the understanding of the influence of social media on youth irrespective of the educational

differences. In general, the demographic results show that the respondents were appropriate to represent the target population which regularly use a social media platform and have direct experiences with online communication.

Social Media Usage Patterns Among Youth

The analysis of the social media use pattern showed that social media has become a part of the youth's life now. The majority of respondents indicated that they use social networking sites on a frequent basis for communication, entertainment, sharing information, and to stay in touch with friends.

Table 4.2 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
15–18 years	35	23.3%
19–22 years	68	45.3%
23–26 years	32	21.4%
Above 26 years	15	10%
Total	150	100%

The outcomes showed a high prevalence of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat and Twitter among the participants. The high use of social media by youth was

evident in many of the responses given, with several respondents indicating that they spent several hours a day on social media.

Table 4.3 Educational Background of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
High School	40	26.7%
Undergraduate	75	50%
Graduate	25	16.7%
Other	10	6.6%
Total	150	100%

The main intentions behind social media usage were to communicate with friends, follow the news, watch entertainment content, find

educational resources and to engage in online communities.

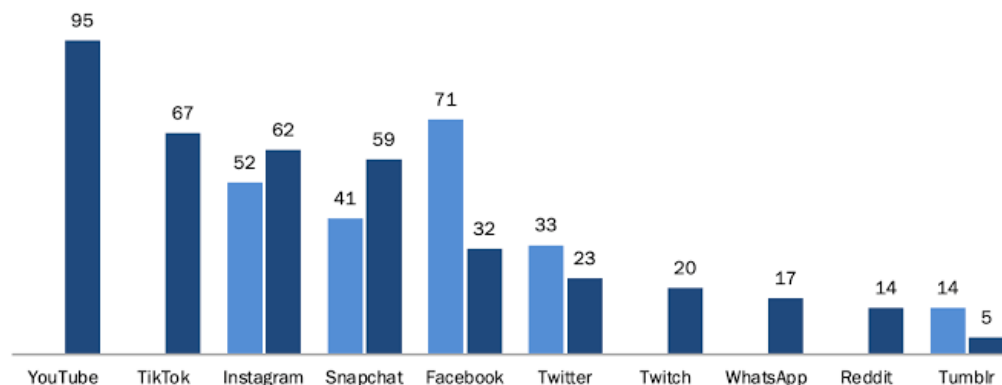


Fig 4.2 Social Media Usage Patterns Among Youth

The results indicate that social media is a medium with more functions than just communication and is a medium that has

become as a valuable source of information and social interaction.

Table 4.4 Daily Time Spent on Social Media

Usage Duration	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	18	12%
1-3 hours	55	36.7%
3-5 hours	52	34.7%
More than 5 hours	25	16.6%
Total	150	100%

But the findings also revealed that some of the respondents had trouble in managing the time of their social media usage. A few participants reported excessive use of digital platforms, which could lead to dependency and higher exposure to digital content. This result is consistent with earlier studies that indicated that excessive and unrestricted social media use might have a psychological impact and on the routines of youth.

Impact of Social Media on Mental Health

The results of the study suggest that social media can impact the mental health of youth both positively and negatively. Social media offers opportunities for emotional expression, social support and mental health related information was reported by respondents. Participants had generally positive experiences of how online communities enabled them to feel connected and supported, especially when facing challenging times.

Table 4.5 Most Frequently Used Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platform	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Instagram	45	30%
TikTok	38	25.3%
Facebook	25	16.7%
Snapchat	22	14.7%
Twitter/X	20	13.3%
Total	150	100%

Young people can use social media to share their personal experiences, ask for advice and connect with others who share similar interests or issues.

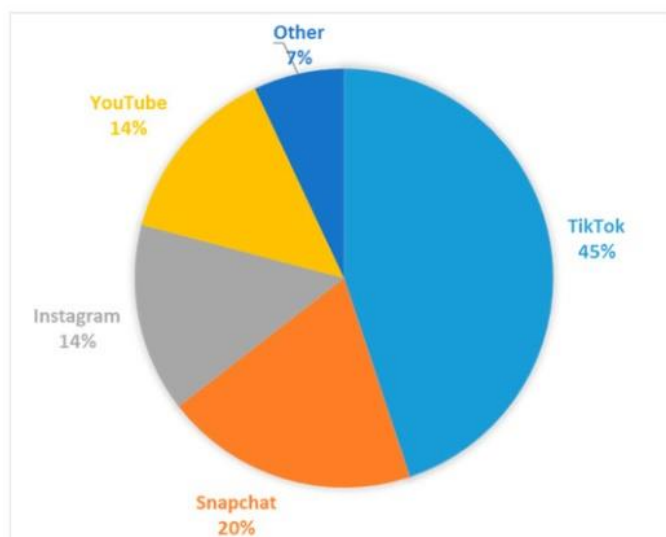


Fig 4.3 Impact of Social Media on Mental Health

These interactions can have beneficial effects on emotional health, as they can provide emotional support and alleviate loneliness.

Table 4.6 Social Media Influence on Mental Well-being

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Social media provides emotional support	65%	20%	15%
Social media increases stress and anxiety	58%	22%	20%
Social media affects self-esteem	62%	23%	15%
Social media causes feelings of loneliness	55%	25%	20%

But, some negative psychological impacts of overuse of SMM were also found. Many respondents said they felt stressed, anxious, less focused, and emotionally stressed because of their online activities. A few participants reported that negative self-confidence and self-esteem were experienced due to the comparisons with others on social media platforms.

The results also revealed that unrealistic lifestyle practices, filtered images and continuous comparison with others can be a cause of dissatisfaction and negative emotional responses in youth. In addition, issues of cyberbullying and

negative internet interactions were found to be an area of concern that would impact on psychological well-being.

Impact of Social Media on Social Relationships

The results reveal that social media has had a notable impact on social development of youth. The majority of the respondents stated that social media has helped them maintain their relationships even when physically distant, they communicate more often and they are able to stay connected with their friends.

Table 4.7 Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Mental Health

Response	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Strong Positive Impact	25	16.7%
Positive Impact	60	40%
No Significant Impact	30	20%

Negative Impact	35	23.3%
Total	150	100%

The participants said that online platforms enable them to communicate with friends and share experiences, ideas and deepen friendships. Social media is also an opportunity to build new relationships with people who have similar interests and backgrounds.

These obstacles also emerged from the results: too much reliance on digital communication. A few respondents commented that sometimes it was less face-to-face with family and friends because of more online interaction. Participants shared concerns about real-life relationships being negatively impacted due to time spent on social media.

The results showed that social media has a positive impact on connectivity but it is not a substitute for personal communication. It is important to have a balance of online and in-person interaction when building healthy and meaningful relationships.

As a result, social media can have a double effect on the social relationship of youths. It can

enhance communication and connection when it's used wisely and connection when used too much.

Impact of Social Media on Community Engagement

The findings have shown that social media has an important role in enhancing the youth participation in social and community activities and social issues.

The majority of the respondents felt that digital platforms enable them to get to know social issues, engage in awareness-raising campaigns and disseminate information on community-level initiatives.

With social media, young people have the chance to get involved in conversations regarding key issues, take part in charity events, and join social movements. These platforms, respondents noted, enhance the access to social events information and helped in collective actions.

Table 4.8 Effect of Social Media on Relationships

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Social media helps maintain friendships	75%	15%	10%
Social media improves communication	70%	18%	12%
Social media reduces face-to-face interaction	60%	25%	15%
Social media creates new relationships	68%	20%	12%

The results also indicate that social media can enhance youth participation by providing online safe environment for youth to voice opinions and engage in collaboration. Online communities provide young people with a way to connect with organizations, engage in campaigns and advocate for positive social change.

But certain constraints were identified. Many participants responded that online engagement does not necessarily translate into physical engagement. People may "like" and comment on social issues or share them, but not actively involved in practical community activities. In summary, the results indicate that the use of social media can positively influence youth

community involvement and participation in awareness and involvement. But genuine community engagement can only be achieved by a blend of online and offline engagement.

Hypothesis Testing / Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out to analyse the relationship between the use of social media and the influence of social media on mental health, social relationships and community engagement among the youth. The analysis then centered on whether the use of social media significantly affected the dependent variables: the selected dependent variables were the ones that the analysis centered on.

Table 4.9 Social Media Participation in Community Activities

Activity	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Awareness Campaigns	70	46.7%
Social Causes	55	36.7%
Online Discussions	80	53.3%
Volunteer Activities	35	23.3%

The results reveal significant association between social media use and psychological and social experiences of the young people. The findings indicate that there is a relationship between

social media engagement and positive and negative outcomes, depending on the intent of use and the social media behavior.

Table 4.10 Role of Social Media in Increasing Social Awareness

Response	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	45	30%
Agree	70	46.7%
Neutral	20	13.3%
Disagree	15	10%
Total	150	100%

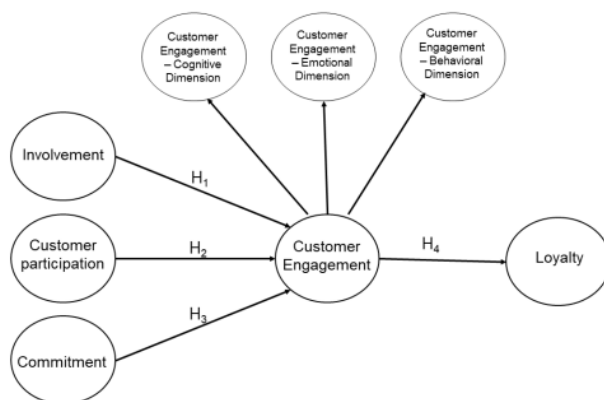


Fig 4.4 Impact of Social Media on Community Engagement

Hypothesis 1: Social media usage has a significant relationship with youth mental health.

The results supported this hypothesis, that is, that the use of social media affects the mental

health of youth. It can help foster emotional well-being when it is used in a positive way, such as having someone be supportive and talk to you, and less well when it's overused, which is linked to stress, anxiety, and lower self-esteem.

Table 4.11 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship Tested	Result
H1	Social media usage → Youth mental health	Supported
H2	Social media usage → Social relationships	Supported
H3	Social media engagement → Community participation	Supported
H4	Excessive social media usage → Negative psychological effects	Supported

Hypothesis 2: The use of SNS has a significant effect on the social relationships of youth.

The results corroborated this hypothesis, as they indicated that social media have an impact on the communication process and relation building process. Social media enhances relationships by allowing people to communicate with one another on a regular basis, but can hurt relationships when it is used in place of physical interaction.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between social media engagement and youth community involvement.

The findings confirmed this hypothesis as it showed that social media fosters awareness, information sharing and engagement in community activities. Digital platforms give youth the chance to engage in social issues and group actions.

Hypothesis 4: Overuse of social media can have a negative impact on the psychological health of adolescents.

These results confirmed this hypothesis, revealing social media-related negative psychological effects, such as feelings of anxiety, loneliness, emotional stress, and low self-confidence.

Table 4.12 Correlation Between Study Variables

Variables	Correlation (r)	Significance Level (p)	Result
Social Media Usage & Mental Health	0.62	<0.05	Significant
Social Media Usage & Social Relationships	0.58	<0.05	Significant
Social Media Usage & Community Engagement	0.65	<0.05	Significant

The overall statistics show that social media has a considerable effect on youth experiences. The effect will vary according to usage patterns, behaviour and the purpose for which social media platforms are used. The findings underscore the need to foster a more balanced approach to digital use to reap the rewards while minimizing any risks.

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and explains the main results of the study in the context of the research questions and other relevant research. This chapter aims to explain the results from the analysis and to gain insights into the impact of social media on the mental health, social interaction and social engagement of youth. The results of the present study are discussed in relation to the other literature to highlight similarities, differences and implications for a wider audience.

Interpretation of Major Findings

The results of the study reveal that social media has become an important component of youth's daily life and has a significant impact on various aspects of their personal and social development. The findings show that youth are using social

media for a range of activities such as communication, entertainment, finding information, learning activities, emotional support, and online communities.

The results of this study show that social media has a double edge effect on youth experiences. It offers relationships to be nurtured, information to be shared, opinions to be expressed and social activities to be enjoyed. It is a chance to nurture relationships, to provide information, to share opinions, and to engage in social activities. However, overuse and misuse can lead to psychological problems, poor face-to-face interaction and adverse online experiences.

The findings show that the influence of social media is not simply dependent on the amount of time spent online, but also on the purpose and quality of the social media engagement. The effects on youth who use social media for positive communication, learning, and social support are more positive than those who use it in an excessive manner that includes constant scrolling and social comparison.

The results further indicate that digital awareness and responsible digital usage are factors that can help minimize potential risks with social media. To make the best of digital platforms, and

support their psychological and social health, youth must practice healthy digital habits.

Relationship Between Social Media and Mental Health

The results of this study are important because they show that there is an important relationship between the use of social media and youth mental health. The outcomes suggest that social media has a positive and/or negative impact on emotional health. Emotional support, opportunities to express oneself and access to supportive communities were cited by many respondents as being provided by social media. The results indicate that online activity can have a positive impact on psychological wellbeing when it is accompanied by the positive engagement and meaningful communication.

Several negative impacts of excessive use of social media were also uncovered in the study. Participants shared experiences of stress, anxiety, decreased self-esteem, loneliness and emotional pressure. This can happen when people compare themselves to others, see content they don't believe they should see, feel a sense of missing out, or feel bad about someone online.

The results corroborate those of Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020), who reported that high amounts of social media use were related to heightened levels of depression and psychological distress among adolescents. Likewise, Twenge and Campbell (2018) proposed that greater digital interaction could have a "negative effect on emotional experiences" among youth and lessen opportunities for face-to-face social interaction.

The findings also reveal that there is no inherent danger in social media per se. Rather, the psychological effect is to be determined by the ways people interact with digital platforms. Valuable experiences, positive interactions and information online can help boost emotional wellbeing. So using social media is a necessary part of youth mental health if it's used in a balanced and meaningful way.

Impacts on Youth Social Relations

The study results indicate that the use of social media has greatly impacted the communication and relationship-building practices of youth. Social networking sites enable young people to keep in touch with friends, communicate with others in real time and make new connections with others from different backgrounds. Geographical distance no longer limits interaction opportunities, widening the social connection opportunities.

The outcomes show that many participants believe that social media is effective for maintaining relationships with peers and friends. Internet communication allows for regular contact, sharing of experiences and emotional support. These results correspond to those of Valkenburg and Peter (2007), who proposed that the online communication could help strengthen relationships between adolescents by providing more opportunities for disclosure and interaction.

Yet these benefits come with their own set of drawbacks, as the study also reveals that there are issues with overuse of digital communication. Some of the respondents noted that they felt their time on social media could be taking away time from them and their direct communications with family and friends. While online interactions are crucial for developing deeper interpersonal relationships, they can lead to issues if these experiences are excessive.

The study results indicate that the use of social media should not be interpreted as an alternative, but as a complement to the face-to-face social interaction. It is important to have a balance act between online and offline communication to support positive and meaningful relationships between youth.

Role of Social Media in Community Participation

According to the study results, the use of social media is important in the view of nurturing the participation of the young people in community activities and social causes. Young people have access to information, the opportunity to raise

awareness, to organise, and to engage in social issues discussions through digital platforms.

The findings indicate that a group of youth is leveraging social media to educate themselves about community issues, participate in awareness campaigns, and social movements. From these findings it is concluded that social media has been a way to increase traditional participation by providing digital spaces for collective action, which are accessible to all.

They provide support for the explanation by Bennett and Segerberg (2012) that digital communication has transformed the nature of social participation, with people being able to participate in group activities via online networks. Social media will allow youth to engage in social issues even if they cannot engage in the issue physically.

The study does, however, highlight some constraints with regard to participation in online study. Others may get involved in social causes by "liking" and sharing content on social media without taking any actions in the community. Thus, social media is helping to raise awareness and motivate participation, but there is a need for both online and in person participation for meaningful community engagement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and offers recommendations. It provides an overview and highlights key results on the consequences of social media use on youth mental health, social relationships and community involvement. Additionally, chapter insights on promising approaches to promoting healthier social media use and directions for future research are given.

Conclusion

The current study explored the influence of social media on the mental health, social relationships, and the involvement of youth in their communities. The results reveal that social media has become a key aspect and has impacted how young people communicate, engage in relationships, get information and attend social

events. The study reveals the positive and negative effects of social media in accordance with the purpose, frequency and ways of use.

Social media offers a number of advantages to youth and the findings indicate that these include enhanced communication, emotional support, educational opportunities, self-expression and social participation. Digital platforms enable young people to socialise with friends, keep in touch with people and engage in social causes and community activities. Youth have new avenues to post their ideas, interact with peers and engage in discussions on key social topics through social media.

The study also points to some negative effects of overindulgent and out-of-control social media use. The findings showed that frequent use of social networks can be a risk to mental health, as it can lead to feelings of anxiety, stress, isolation, low self-esteem, and pressure. Young people can suffer psychologically when exposed to unrealistic online content, when they make comparisons to others, when they experience cyberbullying and when they rely on online validation.

The study also finds that social media has had a significant impact on the social relationships of young people. Technology can also help to keep friendships alive and boost communication opportunities, but overreliance on technology can lessen in-person communication and impact the quality of personal relationships. So, a balance between online and offline interaction matters in creating healthy social relations is crucial.

Recommendations

Several recommendations are put forward based on the results of the study in order to promote healthful and effective social media use by youth. First, young people need to cultivate a healthy social media usage and know how to control the time they spend on social media. Establishing sensible social media boundaries can contribute to minimizing overreliance and motivate opportunities for traditional socializing, bodily contact, and personal growth outside the digital realm.

Second, a digital literacy initiative needs to be implemented in schools to educate young people about responsible use of social media. Pupils should be taught about the importance of keeping personal information secure whilst online, how best to prevent cyberbullying, misinformation and the importance of keeping digital behaviour positive.

Third, parents and educators should offer advice and help when it comes to social media. They must not completely ban digital platforms, but provide opportunities for communication and educate young people on the proper and healthy use of social media.

Fourth, social media companies need to do more to help users stay safe, and protect against harmful online activities like cyberbullying, harassment and misinformation. Making digital environments safer can help safeguard youth mental health.

Fifth, it is important for young people to use social media in a positive way, for learning, being creative, developing skills and for sharing in their community. Digital platforms can provide support to educational activities and social causes, thereby enhancing their positive impact.

Lastly, the promotion of mental health awareness should leverage social media to ensure that youth receive accurate information, support and resources when facing mental health issues. Encouraging positive online communities can help to alleviate feelings of loneliness and promote emotional health.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research is useful for understanding the relationship between social media use, mental health of young people, social relationships, and community involvement, however, there is still a need for further research to help understand this topic.

For future studies, larger and more diverse samples from various geographical, cultural and age groups should be studied and reported for generalizability. A larger sample would give more insights into the impact social media has on each group of youths.

Longitudinal study designs can also be used in future studies to investigate the long-term consequences of social media use on psychological and social development. Digital platforms are constantly developing and changing and can be studied over time to gain insight into shifts in online behaviour. The effect of specific social media platforms, e.g. TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat etc., can be further explored as various platforms may lead to different psychological and social experiences. When assessing the impact of platforms, knowing what kinds of effects occur can offer more granular information on youth digital behavior.

Other factors that could impact the connection between social media use and mental health outcomes could be included in future studies, such as personality, family support, socioeconomic status, and coping mechanisms. These factors could be part of the reason some people see a positive result and others see a negative result.

Further studies into the impact of digital well-being initiatives, social media literacy programs, and educational strategies for fostering healthy online behaviors among the youth are possible. These research can contribute to creating practical solutions to minimize risks and enhance benefits of using social media.

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