IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE LIFESTYLE OF YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of social media has significantly influenced the lifestyle, mindset, and behavior of today's youth. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have transformed ways of communication, reshaped social bonds, affected learning habits, and influenced cultural norms. At the same time, they bring challenges such as overuse, decline in face-to-face interactions, academic interruptions, and concerns about mental well-being. This study examines both the positive and negative impacts of social media on young people, with particular focus on education, health, personal development, and interpersonal connections. The findings highlight its dual nature—serving as a tool for empowerment and global engagement while also posing risks to psychological stability and lifestyle balance. Understanding these effects is essential for encouraging mindful and responsible use of social media among the younger generation.

 INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, social media has emerged as a dominant force that significantly shapes modern life, particularly among young people. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat have completely transformed patterns of communication, interaction, and perception. Unlike earlier generations, who relied on newspapers, television, or direct conversations for news and entertainment, today's youth primarily turn to digital platforms for expression, connection, and engagement. The widespread appeal of social networking among young users stems from its accessibility and multifunctional nature. With smartphones becoming affordable and internet services widely available, a large share of the youth population spends extended hours online. For them, these platforms are not just tools of communication but also spaces for learning, professional growth, activism, and identity building. Social media has created a virtual arena where cultures, ideas, and lifestyles are shared instantly, shaping daily decisions, habits, and ambitions. This increasing dependence on digital platforms has brought about visible lifestyle transformations. On the positive side, young individuals are able to stay informed about global events, participate in collaborative education, highlight their skills, and establish career networks. These platforms also nurture creativity, promote involvement in social issues, and provide access to diverse viewpoints,

thereby enhancing awareness, knowledge, and personal growth. At the same time, excessive use brings notable drawbacks. Spending too much time online often reduces physical activity, disrupts healthy sleep routines, affects academic focus, and contributes to psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, and poor self-image. Constant comparison with idealized portrayals of others can lead to unrealistic expectations, dissatisfaction, and emotional struggles. Moreover, prolonged reliance on screens tends to reduce in-person communication, weakening realworld social relationships. In today's digital landscape, social media holds a central role in shaping the lifestyle and mindset of young people. While it offers vast opportunities for creativity, learning, and social engagement, it also presents risks linked to overdependence. For youth in this critical stage of development, social media can act as both an empowering and challenging force, making it essential to approach its use with balance and mindfulness.

BACKGROUND REVIEW

Social media has become a central part of daily life for young people, changing the way they communicate, learn, express themselves, and engage with culture.

In the early days, social media mainly focused on connecting people and building personal profiles. Today, it includes features like short videos, live streams, private messages, and content recommendations based on algorithms. This transformation has made social media an all-encompassing environment that affects how young people behave, think, and make choices throughout the day.

From a developmental viewpoint, late adolescence and early adulthood are times when young people explore their identities, build relationships, and gain new skills.

Social media plays a role in these areas by offering spaces to try out different ways of presenting themselves, get feedback, and join special-interest communities. Likes, comments, and follows act as quick ways to show approval, which can help a person feel connected, but they can also lead to overthinking and seeking approval from others.

The effects of social media are visible in multiple areas:

Health and Wellbeing: Social media can spread fitness tips, mental health advice, and campaigns that boost knowledge and encourage people to seek help.

Yet, using these platforms late at night and the blue light they emit can affect sleep, and content focusing on appearance may make body image concerns worse. The impact usually depends on the type of content, when it is used, and how vulnerable a person is.

Family, school, and community settings continue to be important factors.

Clear rules about how and when devices are used, like phone-free study times and bedtime routines, along with supportive relationships, can reduce harmful patterns without ignoring the good that social media brings in terms of connection and discovery. Programs that teach critical thinking about content, privacy practices, and ethical content creation help young people turn their online time into lasting skills.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased reliance on social media for socializing, learning, and entertainment, making video communication and virtual communities the norm.

After the pandemic, many of these habits have continued, with young people maintaining a mix of online and offline routines. This suggests that lifestyle changes are not temporary but part of a broader shift in how social infrastructure is organized.

OBJECTIVE

- To examine how using the social media affects physical health and sleeping patterns.

- To analyse the effects of social media on mental health and emotional well-being.

HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

- There is no significant impact of social media on the lifestyle of youth.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁):

- Social media has a significant impact on the lifestyle of youth.

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Positive Effects of Social Media		
Access to Information and Education	**Community Building and Support Networks**	**Opportunities for Self-Expression**

1. Access to Information and Education

Social media has become an important channel for gaining knowledge and staying informed, particularly for young people. It provides quick access to learning materials, global news, and multiple viewpoints on social, cultural, and academic issues. Educators, institutions, and organizations frequently use these platforms to share educational content, promote learning opportunities, and engage students in meaningful discussions. Professional networks such as LinkedIn and knowledge-sharing platforms like Twitter also allow experts to post insights and experiences that can guide and inspire learners.

2. Community Building and Support Networks

Another key benefit of social media is its capacity to create connections and build communities. Young individuals can find others with similar passions, challenges, or backgrounds, forming virtual networks that promote belonging and support. Online groups focused on areas such as mental health, gaming, literature, or creative pursuits provide safe environments where youth can exchange ideas, seek guidance, and build friendships that may not have been possible offline.

3. Opportunities for Self-Expression

Social media platforms encourage creativity and personal expression by giving young people a space to share their art, music, writing, or life experiences. This visibility allows them to showcase their skills, receive feedback, and connect with wider audiences. The process of expressing themselves online often aids in self-discovery and emotional growth, offering therapeutic value and helping them navigate personal experiences in a constructive way.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA		
Mental Health Concerns	**Cyber bullying and Online Harassment**	**Impact on Body Image and Self-Esteem**

1. Mental Health Concerns

Although social media can connect people and provide a sense of belonging, overuse often harms mental well-being. Research shows that spending too much time online is linked to higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Constantly viewing filtered or "perfect" posts can make individuals feel inferior, leading to low self-confidence and dissatisfaction with their own lives.

2. Cyber bullying and Online Harassment

Online platforms have made bullying easier and more widespread. Unlike traditional bullying, which usually happens in person, online harassment can follow a person everywhere, at any time. This can

cause victims to feel overwhelmed, isolated, and emotionally drained. In many cases, it also affects their social life and academic achievements, making recovery even more difficult.

3. Impact on Body Image and Self-Esteem

Social media often promotes unrealistic beauty ideals through influencers and celebrities. Young people who constantly see such images may start comparing themselves negatively, which can result in poor body image, unhealthy eating habits, and low self-esteem. Over time, this pressure may even lead to serious problems such as eating disorders. To address this, it is important to encourage body positivity, self-acceptance, and media literacy so that youth can learn to question false portrayals and appreciate diversity in appearance.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

A. Research Design
This study follows a descriptive research design, which primarily involves surveys and fact-finding inquiries. The main aim of descriptive research is to provide an accurate account of the existing situation, as it currently stands. In this type of research, the investigator does not manipulate variables but instead observes and reports on what has occurred or is presently occurring.

B. Sampling
The respondents of this study included young individuals, both male and female, selected from colleges, higher secondary schools, and workplaces such as offices and companies in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Due to practical challenges in approaching and securing the participation of respondents, a stratified convenience random sampling method was applied. Stratification was done based on age groups to ensure representation across different categories of youth. The total sample size for this study was fixed at 250 respondents.

C. Source of Data Collection
Data for the study was gathered using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on literature reviews, previous studies, and information related to social networking sites, youth, and their lifestyle patterns. This ensured that the instrument was aligned with the objectives of the research.

D. Data Collection Process
The questionnaire method was employed as the main tool for primary data collection. All questions were structured carefully to meet the objectives of the research. A total of 250 young respondents completed the survey, providing insights into the influence of social media on their lifestyle.

RESEARCH GAP

The study of social media's influence on young people is growing, yet several areas remain underexplored. Existing research often emphasizes both its harmful and beneficial outcomes, such as its link to anxiety, depression, bullying, and low self-esteem, alongside opportunities for identity formation, creativity, and online communities. However, gaps still exist in understanding how these effects differ across age groups, cultural contexts, and levels of usage. In addition, findings are sometimes

inconsistent, making it necessary to investigate emerging patterns and long-term consequences more deeply.

DATA ANALYSIS

The participants were asked about how they start their day using Social Networking Site.

ACTIVITY	RESPONSES	
	N	**PERCENT**
Updating the profile status	42	12.0%
Making comment on your friends post	49	14.0%
Playing game	22	6.3%
Listening music or video	54	15.4%
Check out what is going on with my friends	74	21.1%
None	109	31.1%
Total	**350**	**100.0%**

It is clear from the table I that most of them do not have a habit of starting the day with any of these activities on social networking sites. Among the 350 responses from 250 participants, 109 (31.1%) shows that they do not have a habit of begning their day with any of these activities on SNS.74 (21.1%) of them were starting their day with checking out what is going on with their friends.

SUGGESTIONS

Since Social Networking Sites (SNS) play a significant role in the personal and social development of young people, it is essential to explore their full potential while addressing their limitations. Based on the findings, the following suggestions are proposed to enhance the positive use of SNS and minimize their drawbacks:

- ✓ Time Management: Excessive time spent on social networking is one of the major concerns among youth. Hence, young people should consciously regulate the number of hours they spend on these platforms. Creating awareness about digital well-being and promoting time management tools can help reduce overuse.
- ✓ Privacy Protection: Privacy concerns are another critical issue associated with social media usage. Youth must ensure that they properly use privacy settings to limit access to their personal information. At the same time, SNS companies should strengthen their security measures to safeguard user data and prevent misuse.
- ✓ Value-Based Engagement: Social networking platforms can be used to encourage positive behavior among young people. By sharing meaningful content such as motivational messages,

educational resources, and socially responsible campaigns, SNS can inspire the development of a value-driven generation.

- ✓ Encouraging Creativity and Talent: These platforms already provide opportunities for self-expression and creativity. However, youth should be encouraged to explore this further by sharing their art, innovations, or skills. Social media companies can also introduce features that highlight creative work and promote young talent globally.
- ✓ Opportunities for Entrepreneurship and Branding: Since social media strongly influences youth lifestyles, businesses can use SNS for more engaging advertisements. At the same time, young people with creative and entrepreneurial ideas can take advantage of these platforms to market their own products or launch fan pages to build a wider audience.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that a large portion of young people avoid using social networking sites as the first activity of their day, with 31.1% reporting no engagement in the morning. At the same time, 21.1% admitted to beginning their day by checking updates about friends, showing that maintaining social ties is a key motivation for early use. Other activities, including status updates (12.0%), commenting on posts (14.0%), watching videos or listening to music (15.4%), and playing games (6.3%), were reported less frequently. These findings suggest that while social media does form part of the daily morning routine for many youths, most still choose not to rely on it at the start of the day, reflecting a balance between dependence and self-control in everyday life.

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