

Social Media and its Impact on Young Adults' Existence

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ABSTRACT

A qualitative research aimed to investigate social media and its impact on young adults' existence. Sample included 5 college students studying in engineering college. The age of the students varied between 18 and 20 years. The data was collected with the help of internet addiction test. The number of hours per week spent by these students on social media was also seen to be at least 26-35 hours. The main problem which the students shared was mostly addiction and an urge to make new friends on social media as they need constant approval and want to be visible, in order to make sure that they exist. Students have developed a fear of missing out when it comes to their visibility. Thus, it can be concluded that social media has a dual impact on students' academic performance as well as on their very own existence.

Keywords: *Internet Addiction, Visibility, Dependency, Low confidence, Virtual world*

Social media is a huge part of the lives of today's children and the youth. In fact, in other words, it can be said that the millennials are practically born with it. Applications like Instagram and Snapchat etc, which can be regarded as non-essential, have had a massive impact on the behavior of the youth because it helps them to live up their 'cool' image in their virtual world. The technology has made inroads even in the younger population so much so that kids these days forget about the table manners and toddlers wouldn't even eat without a tablet in their hands. This can be problematic for the young population especially to the youth because it has been shown by the studies, that prolonged usage of social media can cause them to be compulsive and lead to significant impairment in different aspects of their lives.

This discussion has been beaten like a dead horse by several experts and caused controversies in the fields of science, medicine and technology etc. It has also been found in several studies, that the social media usage and sleep disturbance have a remarkable impact on young adults' health and wellbeing. The ever rising pressure of being on social media sites and having an impressive profile is affecting the youth in a big way.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Regman et al (2016) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between internet addiction and psychological well-being among Kashmiri youth, as well as the differences in

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Social Media and its Impact on Young Adults' Existence

addiction and psychological well-being among Kashmiri youth based on gender and residential status. The study's findings revealed a significant negative correlation between internet addiction and psychological well-being among Kashmiri youth. Furthermore, it was discovered that there is a significant difference in internet addiction among Kashmiri youth based on gender, with males being more addicted than females, and no significant difference in internet addiction based on residential status. The findings also revealed an insignificant difference in psychological well-being between males and females.

Mensah and Nizam (2016) conducted a study in order to investigate the impact of social media usage on students' academic performance in the Tertiary Institutions of Malaysia. Four independent Pearson's correlation coefficients are correlated with student academic performance, while two are not. Using regression analysis, four variables are significant: time appropriateness, people-friend connection, nature of Usage, and health addiction, whereas time duration and security/privacy problems are not.

Raut and Patil (2016) discuss how social media has influenced the education sector. The study discovered a number of positive and negative effects of social media on education or students. It also emphasized measures to reduce the negative impact of social media on students' academic performance, such as moderating their access to social media sites and limiting the amount of time spent on social network sites.

According to Gilchrist (2017), Instagram is the most "harmful social media platform" for young adults' mental health. Bhat (2017) conducted a study to investigate social networking sites and how they impact mental health; the study's findings revealed that Instagram and social media addiction were both predictors of depression.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

A sample of 5 college students (18-20 years) was taken who were residing in the Ghaziabad city.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Five college students who were engaged to internet usage.
2. All college students pursuing their higher studies.
3. All college students were active members on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc.
4. Each subject had internet access at home.
5. Subjects who came within the range of 50-79 moderate internet addiction as measured by 'Internet Addiction Test' by Dr. Young.

Exclusive Criteria

1. No diagnosable psychopathology

Tools Used

1. **Internet Addiction Test (IAT)** – This test was developed by Dr. Young in 1998. It is a scale created by adapting DSM-IV criteria for pathological gambling. The Internet Addiction Scale is a modification of the earlier 8 item scale, Young's Diagnostic Questionnaire (Young, 1996 and Johansson and Gotestam, 2004). It views Internet addiction as an impulse-control disorder. All types of on-line activity are referred to by the term 'Internet'. The degree to which the Internet affects aspects of one's daily life (E.g., Daily routine, sleep pattern, productivity, social life,

Social Media and its Impact on Young Adults' Existence

feelings) is measured by it. Reliability for satisfactory person (.86) and item reliability (.99).

- 2. Motivational Interviewing**–Motivational interviewing assessment involves using non- confrontational, opened-ended questions and “rolling” with the client resistance. A comprehensive assessment of internet addiction behavior can be created by combining the information gained through these assessment methods and the information gathered from the IAT.

Procedure

Once the preliminary information regarding the demographic variables and the duly signed consent forms were obtained, and then data was collected with the help of internet addiction test. After that one-to-one personal motivational interviewing was done from those subjects who were within addiction range.

Individual interview sessions of all the subjects were conducted with the help of structured interview schedule. An effort was made to establish rapport with the subjects to make them comfortable. After collecting the needed information content analysis was done.

Case 1 (D) Male 18-year-old**

He started using internet around year 10 when he got his first phone. His parents had restrictions regarding mobile phones and internet before that. His usage per week with non-essential applications is about 35 hours. Maximum time he spent on Instagram (30-35Hour/week) followed by Snapchat (5-7Hours/week) and the least searched by him was Google which was only one hour/week. He likes Instagram because he feels connected with friends and just keep scrolling and finding new content and it makes him not want to leave. Using social media for so long has increased his screen time. His Parents complained a lot about the amount of time he spends on the internet. His addiction seems to stem from his incessant need to seek approval or a sense of achievement in the virtual world. Which affected his behavior and had consequences as he's lash out on people who bothered during these sessions and eventually scored low in his finals. The subject is ignorant towards his addiction and is unwilling to change even when his parents reprimand him.

Case 2 (S) Female 18 year old**

She started using internet on a computer when she was in the 7th grade, Eventually when she got her first phone in 8th grade she started using goggle, WhatsApp and all other popular applications. She'd use all these non-essential applications for about 28hours in a week. Most explored application was Instagram (21-28 Hours/week) followed by WhatsApp (12-15 Hours/week) and least used was Snapchat (4-5 Hours/week). The subject feels well connected over social networking applications like Instagram, Snapchat or WhatsApp rather than real world connections.

She like the fact that she's connected to people even if they're on the other side of the world and all it takes is an instant message. Internet has changed her life in a big way. According to her, internet taught her the difference between fake and real friends. She says “no one cares if you're doing great in your life or cares about the fact that you're depressed either, even if you're suicidal. I'd rather put on smiling face and hide all my problems and pretend like I'm on cloud 9 living the dream”.

The Problems that she'd face using social media is the urge to know about other people's lives even though it really doesn't make a difference. She's rather connect with everyone on

Social Media and its Impact on Young Adults' Existence

social media because she wants to be visible and stay relevant. She tried to overcome it by telling herself repeatedly that it doesn't matter but it only made her question about her existence. She says that when she's logged out of all applications she definitely feels much better as she's not using her fingers on a digital screen and zoned out of the real world.

It made her more aware of her presence. She further added that it's good to log off every now and then and go off the grid. Boredom and lack of other activities would compel her to have a relapse and use social media again. She does acknowledge that she's waste time texting or being online rather be productive or creative in an artistic way. She finds herself chatting online for ages with people who are hardly her friends in real life. This by osmosis has changed her language all together and had degraded her ability to use proper grammar.

Her writing in general especially her short stories are written without fore thought as she uses autocorrect to fix her mistakes. She'd fantasize about the characters that she'd read in short stories and hope that she'd find someone similar to have a platonic relationship with.

Case 3 (V) Male 20 year old**

He got his first phone at the age of 14 and like most of his peers would use social media apps on it all the time. He uses Instagram for about 35 hours in a given week followed by Spotify (21Hours/week) and YouTube and Facebook (14Hours /week) Least explored was Snapchat with (4-5 Hours/week). According to him "people say internet has changed and made their lives easier but for him internet hasn't changed his life one bit". If there was no internet, he would waste his time watching TV like he used to 4-5 years back.

So, life is the same for him. He'd waste less time on internet than he'd do watching TV". He'd have capricious mind about using the internet as he'd log off most of the time and feel better but also be intrigued by it finds himself logging back in which would make him more excited and happier. Like our previous subjects, social media did influence his studying preparation time and took a toll on his grades. Internet has certainly influenced his insecurities as he seeks approval from his friends and other acquaintances.

He even finds himself checking in online whilst in the midst of other activities be it recreational or sports. This has impaired his social and conversational skills drastically. He believes that the internet has wasted precious time his life and that it's an addiction/distraction that can severely impact one's health and career. He does try and overcome it by indulging in other activities and controlling his time for social media. In 2019 he has uninstalled all of the social media applications on his phone for the first time for a few months.

Case 4 (A) Female 19 year old**

She got her first phone at the age of 13 and like most of her peers would use social media apps on it all the time. she uses Instagram for about 30-35Hours/week followed by Snapchat 20-21 Hours/week. The Internet has changed her life in a huge way as earlier she wasn't so social and didn't know much about what goes around her, but now she's aware of all things social thanks to applications like Instagram. She connects with a tone of people around the world, which keeps her always in the know.

She watches video bloggers to gain valuable information that she wouldn't get to otherwise. Lack of hobbies and other engaging activities pulls her back into the chasm of social networking every time she tries to go offline. Naturally this sort of compulsive behavior

Social Media and its Impact on Young Adults' Existence

affected her grades in college and she'd regret doing so. she in particular feels that she hasn't made any real friends through social media as they are mostly superficial. This made her to be more cautious as to who she befriends or talks to over the internet, like most subject she too has made a concerted effort to stay offline by uninstalling apps that aren't really productive.

Case 5 (A) Male 19 year old**

He got his first phone at the age of 15 and like most of his peers would use social media apps on it all the time. He uses Instagram for about 25-30 hours in a given week followed by Tik-Tok 20-21Hours/week. Least explored was YouTube (1-2 Hour/week). The Internet has helped him to stay in touch with his friends, and even find new ones in other continents. He'd vicariously experience what it feels like to live in another country and learn about new cultures and experiences.

The subject does realize that social networking intact does make him less productive overall as he'd rather make something of himself using that time. He did get obsessive about using social media as he'd often check most of these apps incessantly even if he's up to date with all of the current events just to feed to anxiety of not missing out on anything. This behavior harmed him physically too as he suffered with a Severe neck pain for weeks at a time. Like most subjects, the root of these problems can be traced back to the sense of seeking approval and short term benefits.

He like most subjects did score lower grades as a result. His mother did criticize his behavior when she'd see him extend his screen time for a couple of extra hours most days and he did try to change his behavioral pattern by keeping his use on check. That like most people's methods didn't prove be beneficial as it basically boils down to self-control.

Analysis

The key findings of the studies were classified into various common domains of social media exposure such as existence, time spent, addiction, activity, regret, and the constant need for approval. Existence is defined for users who rely heavily on social media for validation. They engage with social media to flash their presence and when they don't they feel they are missing out or fear that they might be forgotten from the social media. Time spent is defined the amount of time is done by user on social media sites.

Addiction is referred to see how heavily the user is dependent on social media. Activity can be referred as the quality and quantity of users of interaction and engaging with social media applications and involvement with other users, that whether they are using it actively or passively. Regret is defined when users regret the use of social media sites sometimes or the other is when they have been duped for either friendship or in the interest of finding love. Users have also mentioned being cat fished that wasted their precious time.

Constant need of approval is defined when the users get an urge to post pictures, thoughts, life activities online to get a sense of approval from others. Likes or comments give them a sense of satisfaction and rush. They look themselves through others eye. They attach their identity with the number of likes or dislikes on their online content. As the technology grows, social media has become a part of each and every person's life. In the digital world, people are seen glued to some non-essential applications related to the new technology or features for most of their time.

Social Media and its Impact on Young Adults' Existence

All 5 cases showed moderate usage on non essential applications. The factors affecting their life are increase in their screen time, trying to meet new people on social media. They've developed their long-term dependency on social media applications, which makes them less productive in the real world. Digital world has a tight grip on their life whether they use television or social media on their phone its dependency is seen as same. Considering oneself as social person is good trait but becoming social only on specific social media applications is not solving the purpose in life.

They get angry or irritated when the applications are unavailable or temporarily suspended. They believe that the internet has changed their life for the better making them be ignorant as a result. They have a hard time on building trust or faith in people when it comes to social media, because a lot of subjects have shown incidents of being cat fished for friendship and these incidents have made their personalities be more cynical in nature. Because they believe that people lack empathy or are not compassionate towards them even if they are suicidal or depressed.

The constant need of approval on social media makes them develop zero patience and be meek or have low - self-esteem, lazy and unproductive. Seeking validation, the subject or students try to emulate influencers or bloggers in order to build up their own following on applications like Instagram or Snapchat. Students connect with heaps of people on social media to stay relevant and seek for people to know that they exist through the use of social media. It clearly affected their grades in college and studies. In their opinion the digital world has made things easier for them as there's no need to learn proper grammar or spelling as there's autocorrect.

Oddly enough most of them fantasize about platonic friendships and dating through social media. All of them regret making friends online that they haven't met only to realize they were spam all along but on the upside, they now know how to spot a catfish and are will be wearier on social media henceforth. The following table shows the common factors among the students.

Analysis Table

	Case1(D*) Male-18 YEARS	Case2(S*) Female-18 YEARS	Case3(V*) Male-19 YEARS	Case4(A*) Female-19 YEARS	Case5(A*) Male-19 YEARS
1. Age at which started	15 years (15-16 year)	15 years (14-15 year)	15 years (15 years)	15 years (14-15year)	15 years (15-16year)
2. Hours per week	28 hours (28-35 hours)	28 hours (28-35 hours)	28 hours (28 hours)	28 hours (28 hours)	28 hours (26- 28 hours)
3. Barriers/ Hurdles faced	Addiction	Addiction, Urge to talk to new people on social media	Addiction	Addiction, Urge to talk to new people on social media	Addiction
4. How to Overcome	Don't know	Limit the hours of usage, Engaging in other activities like sports	Limit the hours of usage, Engaging in other activities like sports, Control the addiction	Limit the hours of usage, Engaging in other activities	Limit the hours of usage, Control the addiction
5. Most used applications	Instagram	Instagram	Instagram	Instagram	Instagram

Social Media and its Impact on Young Adults' Existence

6. Consequences	Low grades, Constant need of approval	Low grades	Low grades, Constant need of approval	Low grades	Low grades, Constant need of approval
7. Effects on life	Making new friends on social media, Dependency, Regret, Low-confidence	Making new friends on social media, Regret, Low-confidence	Wastage of time, Regret, Low-confidence	Making new friends on social media, Regret, Wastage of time, Low-confidence	Making new friends on social media, Regret, Low-confidence

Summary

All 5 cases showed some common factors. All the students started using social media at the age of 15. The average screen time per week was 28 hours. The most used application among students was Instagram. Students believed social media takes up most of their valuable time and has plunged them into addiction. They have an urge to talk to new people and feel a constant need of approval from others.

The use of social media has an adverse effect on their grades which in turn causes them to regret and fret over it later. They deal with this addiction by getting involved in some physical activities or work that brings them out of this virtual world.

CONCLUSION

As the Technology is growing the social media has become the routine for each and every person, students are seen with more addicted with these applications every day. As Albert Einstein once said, "I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots." In the case studies it was found that students developed fear of missing out (FOMO) when it comes to their visibility as they want people to know that they exist.

And when they practice this ritual that hard that they forget the real world also exists around them and eventually social media throws an impact on their academic performance as well as on to their existence. More studies are needed to explore the prevalence of social media and its impact on young adults' existence.

Following are the Recommendations from the Case Studies

- Students need to be trained on better usage of the social media so as to minimize time wastage on chatting and other irrelevant engagements that are not of major importance in their lives.
- Parents should monitor activities of the children on social media in order to protect them.
- In order to communicate effectively to the student's college should adopt social media as one of their means of communication.

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Social Media and its Impact on Young Adults' Existence

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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