

Research Paper

The Relationship between Social Networking Usage and Mental Health among College Students in Bangalore: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to understand the relationship between social networking usage and mental health among college students and examine differences between undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG). The study uses quantitative correlational analysis to find relationships between social networking use and mental health utilizing information from 65 participants. Social networking usage and mental health continuum short form (MHC-SF) standardized tools were used for assessment. Findings show a strong positive correlation, demonstrating a good relationship between increasing mental health scores and increased social networking usage. The study also reveals a weak positive correlation between UG and PG students' use of social networking. UG students display higher use of social networking sites than their PG students. The study also identifies a slight difference in mental health between these student categories, with UG students reporting slightly better mental health. These results support earlier research that examined related relationships and offered higher education institutions and mental health professionals insightful information. This current study might have significant implications for specific interventions, methods, and support mechanisms to preserve and boost college students' overall well-being by illuminating these intricate relationships. Therefore, an experimental research study is recommended.

Keywords: *Social Networking Usage, Mental Health*

Social networking sites (SNS) are platforms where users can share information, opinions, personal views, messages, pictures, videos, and other media (Ahmed et al., 2019). In the current era, SNS has integrated itself into our daily lives in a significant and unavoidable way. Due to their widespread acceptance and addictive qualities, these websites have found their way into people's hands. Popular SNSs to begin or maintain social connectivity with others include Instagram, Facebook, WeChat, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Twitter, TikTok, QQ, and more (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). With 2740, 2291, and 2000 million users each, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the top three SNSs (*Biggest Social Media Platforms 2023* | Statista, 2023). Facebook is now without a doubt the most popular of them, providing a multipurpose platform for people to live a virtual life while fostering their social identities (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2016).

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In India, where a sizeable portion of the population regularly uses SNS, this rapid integration of SNS into daily life is clearly apparent. Statista predicted that there were 467.0 million social media users in India in January 2023, which accounted for 32.8% of the country's total population (Kemp, 2023). The number of social media users in India is predicted to increase by 22.4 percentage points between 2023 and 2028 (Statista, 2023a), continuing the current trend. Instagram has emerged as the most popular platform for users between the ages of 18 and 25 in India, where 80% of young people regularly use social media (Acumen, 2022). According to a Forbes Advisor India projected, that 74.70% of Indian internet users would choose Instagram as their preferred social media platform in 2023 (Social Media in India - 2023 Stats & Platform Trends - OOSGA, n.d.), maintaining Instagram's current dominance.

However, the rapid digital transition has repercussions for young adults in India's mental health. According to A. Sharma et al. 2022, Instagram use is associated with detrimental mental health consequences like colorism and social comparison. For women and young girls who are frequently taught to value their physical beauty over other qualities, social media platforms, notably Instagram, have been related to encouraging harmful desires for social comparisons (Masthi et al., 2018). Furthermore, research by Faelens et al. (2021) and others has brought attention to the detrimental effects of excessive social media use on the psychological health of young Indians.

According to Manwell et al. (2015), mental health is an intricate state that includes having a positive perspective of oneself, growing emotionally and intellectually, and developing spiritually. However, it can be vulnerable to a range of social, economic, and personal circumstances that might result in psychological suffering (Islam & Adnan, 2017). The intricacy of mental health issues is exacerbated by neglect, poverty, social isolation, socioeconomic discrimination, stigma, grief, and the lingering consequences of chronic stressors. According to 2018 research on mental health by Dattani (2023), 13% of people globally struggle with one or more types of mental health concerns.

A contentious debate has been generated by the meeting point of these two powerful forces—the pervasive usage of SNS and the delicate nature of mental health. Research has presented a variety of opinions on the complex association between SNS use and mental health (Best et al., 2014). While SNS might present special opportunities for defining one's identity and fostering social connections, excessive usage of websites like Facebook has been associated with unease, depression, and the worry of receiving unfavorable comments (Buda et al., 2020). Young people may be more susceptible to psychological problems as a result of their frequent use of SNS, according to numerous research (Aschbrenner et al., 2018; Brunette et al., 2019; Naslund et al., 2016). These platforms can exacerbate mental health issues through social comparison, perceived wrongdoing, and the adoption of harmful behaviors in SNS interactions (Best et al., 2014). The risks of anxiety, abuse, social isolation, and cyberbullying can be extremely serious for people who use social media heavily (Best et al., 2014).

A systematic review published in the Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine found that the prevalence of mental disorders among people in India ranged from 6.5% to 58.2%. (Sagar et al., 2020). It's interesting to note that, despite the negative effects these platforms have had on mental health, other types of online interaction, like email, instant messaging, and video conversations, have demonstrated the ability to reduce depression symptoms.

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Additionally, Orben and Przybylski (2019) found a negative correlation between young individuals' use of digital technology and their mental health. Notably, people who have mental health issues frequently use SNS to get information and interact with others who have experienced similar circumstances (Bucci et al., 2019; Naslund et al., 2016) in order to find information about mental health and treatment options.

The theoretical framework that suits this study is the widely used sociopsychological theory known as Social Identity Theory, which was created by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, and examines how people classify themselves and other people into different social categories. According to this concept, people use their membership in social groups to define their identities and derive a portion of their self-concept from these groups (Haslam et al., 2008). The applicability of Social Identity Theory to the study shows how helpful a theoretical framework it provides for comprehending the relationship between SNS use and mental health. The theory emphasizes how social group memberships contribute to people's feelings of identity and well-being. It supports the study's emphasis on SNS's benefits, such as connection and support, and it also offers a theoretical framework for comprehending the drawbacks of excessive SNS use, particularly when users participate in social comparisons. By applying this theory, the study recognizes the vital role represented by social identity in influencing people's experiences and feelings in the world of social media, helping to provide a deeper understanding of how SNS affect mental health.

The direction of causality of these correlations is uncertain, and there is a complex interaction between social networking use and mental health. While some studies claim that using social media causes mental health concerns, others claim that those with mental health problems are more likely to use social media ("Health Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence," n.d.). Despite the increasing number of studies on the topic, there is a significant knowledge gap on the specifics of this association among college students, particularly the distinction between undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) students. The existing literature mainly focuses on broad demographic groupings, and the particular influence on college students, a distinct and important population, is still understudied. This study seeks to close this knowledge gap by adding to the body of knowledge already available in this field by offering a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the correlation between SNS usage and mental health in the college student population, particularly UG and PG students.

Problem of statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate the complex and intricate relationships that exist between college students' use of social media and their mental health. A increasing concern about the possible impact of social networking platforms on young people' psychological wellbeing has emerged as a result of the ubiquitous integration of these platforms into their life, particularly those who are pursuing higher education. Academic challenges, personal development, and the development of social networks characterise college life for students as a key time of transition and growth. It is crucial to investigate how students' use of these platforms affects their mental health given the popularity of social media and its influence on their everyday lives.

Relevance/significance of the study

This study is significant because it explores the complicated correlation between college students' use of social networking sites (SNS) and their mental health. This study advances

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our understanding of the effects of SNS use on college students' well-being by addressing and balancing conflicting claims of both positive and negative effects seen in prior research. Due to their distinct developmental stages and similar academic environments, undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) students were selected as the study's population. These students serve as a relevant group for researching the relationship between social networking use and mental health, which is essential given its potential effects on academic success and data collecting. The findings of this study address a knowledge gap and provide insights that will help educational institutions, mental health experts, and policymakers improve digital well-being. This will eventually improve students' quality of life and academic experiences.

METHODS

Sample Size

To investigate the relationship between college students' use of social networking sites and mental health, this research will use a cross-sectional. Employing quantitative correlational study design among 200 participants however to meet the objectives of the research UG and PG population will be used for research purposes.

Sampling method

Stratified random sampling will be used in conjunction with convenience sampling for this investigation. Participants will be chosen by convenience sampling from easily accessible sources such as university campuses, online posts, and social media groups. To ensure representation from various academic disciplines and educational institutions, stratified random sampling will be used. This technique will aid in minimising any bias and enhance the generalizability of the results.

Inclusion criteria

Participants who fulfill the following requirements will be included in the study:

- Students who are currently enrolled in colleges and universities.
- Students who are at least 18 years old.

Exclusion criteria

Participants who meet any of the following exclusion criteria will not be included in the study:

- People who aren't enrolled in college right now.
- Students who are under the age of 18.
- College students who don't utilize social networks.
- Students who are unable or unwilling to give consent despite being informed.

Research question:

1. Is there a significant relationship between social networking usage and mental health among college students?
2. Is there a significant relationship in social networking usage among UG and PG students?
3. Is there a significant relation in mental health among UG And PG students?

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Objectives:

1. To identify the relationship between social networking usage and mental health among college students.
2. To investigate the relationship in social networking usage among UG and PG students
3. To investigate the relation in mental health among UG and PG students.

Hypothesis:

1. There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and mental health among college students.
2. There is no significant relation in social networking usage among UG and PG students
3. There is no significant relation in mental health among UG and PG students.

Variables of the study:

Independent variable:

Social networking usage: This is the primary independent variable. This variable represents how frequently college students utilize social networking sites in aspects like socialization, informativeness, entertainment, education, social cause and shopping.

Dependent variable:

Mental health: This the primary dependent variable. This variable is used to assess the mental health status or mental well-being of college students. The mental health continuum short form (MHC-SF) is used as the instrument for assessing.

Control variables:

- Demographics: Controlling Factors
- Demographic Variables: In order to account for any confounding factors and to distinguish between UG and PG students, controlling specific demographic variables is necessary. These demographic elements consist of:
 - Age: Divided into groups of 18–25, 26–35, 36–45, and 45 and over.
 - Gender: Male, female, or other
 - Level of education: UG and PG students

Tools used:

Social networking usage questionnaire:

Description: The social networking usage questionnaire is a standardized tool used to measure social networking usage. Utilizing reliable psychometric procedures, the scale was developed and validated. The questionnaire assesses individuals' usage patterns on social networking sites.

Reliability and Validity: With a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.840, the questionnaire demonstrated strong internal consistency and reliability.

Scoring procedure: Participants rate their usage frequency on a scale that consists of 20 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with each statement (Always=5, Often =4, Sometimes=3, Rarely=2, and Never=1).

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Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF):

Description: An assessment tool for mental health is the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF), which is self-reported. The scale is based on the long form (MHC-LF), which has a total of 40 items and includes 7 items for emotional well-being, 18 for psychological well-being, and 15 for social well-being. The 14 items that constitute part of the MHC-SF were chosen to represent each well-being fact. Emotional, social, and psychological well-being are the three components of mental health that are measured by the scale.

Reliability and validity: With a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.80, the MHC-SF has demonstrated excellent internal consistency, indicating its dependability and discriminant validity.

Scoring procedure: participants rate their mental health on a 5-point Likert scale that consists of 14 items, with each statement (Never - 0, once or twice - 1, about once a week - 2, 2 or 3 times a week - 3, almost everyday - 4, every day - 5.)

Procedure

Students from colleges and universities participated in the study, making up a broad and representative sample. The period of collection of data in 2023 was from June to August. To ensure compliance with the highest ethical standards and to protect the rights and welfare of the participants, the study strictly complied with ethical considerations and received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning.

The recruiting of participants was the first of many important phases in the data collection procedure. A multifaceted strategy was used to carry out this recruitment, involving both offline recruitment on college and university campuses and online recruitment via social media sites like WhatsApp, Instagram, and email. This study used stratified random sampling to guarantee a representative sample. Eligible individuals were asked for their informed consent before being given the Social Networking Usage Questionnaire and the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) tool. The study's aim and objectives were given before taking the assessment. This took approximately 10-15 mins for each participant. These questionnaires could have been finished in person, online, through provided links, or both. Additionally, demographic information about the participant's age, gender, and level of education was gathered to better understand their characteristics.

To preserve the participants' privacy, all data was collected, safely stored, and handled in tight confidence. In order to apply appropriate statistical techniques and tests that were consistent with the objectives of the research and hypotheses, the data analysis phase made use of the statistical program Jamovi. To guarantee the reliability and authenticity of the data gathered, the study's execution was undertaken in a methodical manner that complied with strict ethical guidelines. The highest ethical standards were upheld throughout the research procedure by protecting the participants' confidentiality and privacy.

Data analysis

Using Jamovi, the data analysis for this study was completed. Descriptive statistics was applied for the presentation of the demographics of the participants. Due to the variables under examination being seen to deviate from normality, Spearman's correlation coefficient was used. A Spearman correlation study was carried out to investigate the correlation between college students' use of social networking and their mental health. This approach

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was chosen because it does not imply that the variables have a normal distribution, which makes it appropriate for variables with data that is not normally distributed.

RESULTS

The sample size for the current study was sizable (N=65), and it was evenly distributed across participants in each group. Online surveys made with Google Forms were used in this study's data collection strategy. Due to its consistency with the content, which included questionnaire items relating to social networking usage and mental health, this method was found to be quite appropriate for the study. The data collected were then examined using statistical tools, such as Jamovi.

Table 1: Descriptives and statistics of social networking usage and mental health.

	SNU TOTAL	MHC-SF
N	65	65
Missing	934	934
Median	66	33
IQR	12.0	11.0
Minimum	38	15
Maximum	91	55
Skewness	0.0336	0.163
Std. error skewness	0.297	0.297
Kurtosis	0.607	0.0127
Std. error kurtosis	0.586	0.586
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.989	0.981
Shapiro-Wilk P	0.822	0.411
Cronbach's Alpha	0.719	0.726

Table 1 descriptive statistics provide details about the data. Notably, the interquartile range (IQR) for SN is 12.0 and the median is 66. The data has a somewhat right-skewed distribution based on its mild positive skewness (0.0336) and moderate kurtosis (0.607). With a p-value of 0.822, the Shapiro-Wilk test reveals normality for the SN variable.

The IQR for MH is 11.0 and the median is 33. The data for MH have low kurtosis (0.0127) and a little positive skewness (0.163), which point to a more normal distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk test ($p = 0.411$) further supports the MH variable's normality.

Correlational analysis (Hypothesis 1)

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between social networking usage and mental health among college students.

In order to better understand the relationship between college students' use of social networking sites and their mental health, a correlation study was conducted. Table 1's correlation matrix illustrates the correlation between these two variables.

Table 2: The relationship between social networking usage and mental health.

	MH Total	SNU Total
MH Total	—	
SNU Total	0.408***	—

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According to the results of the correlation study, there is a statistically significant correlation between college students' use of social networking sites and their mental health ($r = 0.408$, $p .001$). This positive correlation shows that as social networking usage among students increases, so do their mental health scores. This indicates that the hypothesis was rejected.

Correlation analysis (Hypothesis 2)

This study aimed to understand if there is any significant relation in social networking usage among UG and PG students.

Table 3: The relationship between social networking usage among UG and PG students.

	UG (SN)	PG (SN)
UG (SN)	—	
PG (SN)	0.188*	—

According to Table 3 findings, there is a weak positive connection between UG and PG students' use of social networking sites ($r = 0.188$, $p .05$), which suggests that UG students typically use social networking sites more frequently than PG students.

Correlational analysis (Hypothesis 3)

This study aimed to understand if there is any significant relation in Mental health among UG and PG students.

Table 4: The relationship between mental health among UG and PG students.

	UG (MH)	PG (MH)
UG (MH)	—	
PG (MH)	0.109	—

In Table 4 results show that there is a weak positive correlation between UG and PG students' mental health ($r = 0.109$, $p .05$). According to this, UG students often display marginally better mental health than their PG students.

DISCUSSION

The current study examined the relationship between social networking usage and mental health among UG and PG students. The study concentrated on two main factors: mental health (MH) and the use of social networking sites (SN). The major results revealed that Social networking usage and Mental health showed a positive correlation ($r = 0.408$, $p .001$). This suggests that as college students use social networking sites more frequently, their mental health scores also increase. In other words, increased social networking usage seems to be associated with improved mental health. The results of this study are consistent with previous studies in this area, such as the one carried out by Karim et al. (2020). This study looked into the correlation between university students' use of social networking sites and mental health. They found in their research that there is a correlation between using social networking sites and having good mental health. This implies that the mental health scores of students tended to increase as their participation in social networking increased.

This study measured social networking use and mental health using standardized questionnaires and a sizable sample of 438 university students. Additionally, their data showed that social networking use was negatively connected with reported stress and

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positively associated with perceived social support. This study lends credibility to the concept that social support can be enhanced on online social networks, which would therefore benefit students' mental health. As a result, our study is consistent with the body of existing literature that highlights the contribution of online interactions to the advancement of better mental health outcomes.

The concept of social support and connectivity made possible by online interactions serves as a theoretical framework for this observation. (Bagroy et al., 2017) Social networking sites can give people a platform to connect with others, exchange experiences, and get social support, all of which can enhance the results of one's mental health. The relationship between social networking use and mental health is complicated and may depend on a number of variables, including the type of social networking site used, how frequently and how long it is used, as well as individual personality differences and social support requirements.

The findings of the study to determine whether there was any correlation between undergraduate and postgraduate students' use of social networking sites was shown. The findings, as shown in Table 3, suggest a weak positive relationship between these two student groups' use of social networking sites ($r = 0.188$, $p > 0.05$). In particular, this result shows that undergraduate students use social networking sites more frequently than PG students. Regarding the weak positive relationship between undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) students' use of social networking sites, the study by S. Sharma and Behl (2022) offers important information that can support and contextualize the findings of the current study. Although S. Sharma and Behl (2022) concentrated on the connection between social networking site use and academic achievement, their findings are consistent with the idea that different student groups may have varied social networking usage habits.

The study's findings show that there is an association between social networking site use and poor academic achievement implying that students' use of these platforms can affect their priorities and activities. This approach is consistent with the hypothesis that UG students may use social networking more frequently, as suggested by the weak connection, which may have an impact on their ability to concentrate and perform well in class. The study also highlights the nature of the correlation between social networking site use and academic achievement, demonstrating that it is influenced by a number of variables. Similarly, the current study here reveals that disparities in social networking usage between UG and PG students may be influenced by a variety of personal, intellectual, and environmental factors rather than just their level of education. Both findings highlight the complexity of students' social networking behaviors. The concept of self-regulated learning is the foundation of the theoretical framework for examining the connection between undergraduate and postgraduate students' use of social networking sites. (Meece, 2022) The capacity of students to control their own learning is essential for academic achievement. The use of social networking sites could assist or hinder this process. It can act as a diversion, which might hinder self-regulated learning and result in subpar academic performance, but it can also offer an environment for academic interactions, such as connecting with peers, exchanging resources, and receiving academic support, which ultimately leads to better academic performance.

The findings of the study to investigate the relationship in mental health among UG and PG students were a concern. The study results came from the correlation study that was done to

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determine whether there was a relationship between undergraduate and postgraduate students' mental health. The mental health of these two groups has a weakly positive connection ($r = 0.109$, $p .05$) shown in Table 4, which suggests that UG students generally have slightly better mental health than PG students. This finding implies that there is little difference in mental health between undergraduate and graduate students, with UG students likely having slightly better mental health. According to the Wyatt and Oswalt study, there is a marginally positive correlation between the mental health of undergraduate and postgraduate students. They discovered that UG students reported greater rates of emotions and actions linked to poor mental health, such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Their study compared mental health difficulties among UG and PG students in the United States. These results are consistent with the conclusion that UG students have marginally better mental health, which is in line with the weakly positive connection.

CONCLUSION

With this study it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between social networking usage and mental health. There is a weak positive connection between UG and PG students' use of social networking sites and there is a weak positive correlation between UG and PG students' mental health.

Implication:

1. **Positive Association Between Social Networking Usage and Mental Health:** This research shows that greater social networking usage within this particular group may be associated with better mental health. It implies that social networking can be a tool for promoting good mental health.
2. **Relationship Complexity:** Your research emphasizes how intricate the connection between social networking and mental health is. It emphasizes that not all social media use is harmful to well-being and that there are factors to take into account when analyzing this connection.
3. **Collaboration across Disciplines:** The fact that social networking and mental health are positively correlated emphasizes how interdisciplinary this field of study is. To properly comprehend the consequences of these discoveries, collaboration within the domains of psychology, education, and technology may be helpful.

Limitations:

1. **Sample specificity:** College students were the focus of the research conducted. The generalizability of these findings to other demographic groups, including older adults or teenagers, may be constrained by this peculiarity. Future studies could look into these populations to see if there are any relationships that are comparable.
2. **Survey Methodology:** Using data from an online form for a survey can result in problems with sample and non-response bias. To reach a larger sample of college students, future studies may use more varied data collection techniques.
3. **Correlation and causation:** the research found associations between social networking use and mental health, but it was unable to demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship. It's possible that these associations are being driven by unrecognized external causes.
4. **Confounding variables:** The outcomes may be impacted by unresearched confounding variables. Social networking use and mental health may be influenced by variables including the users' level of offline social support, personality attributes, or media consumption patterns.

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Scope for future studies:

1. Longitudinal Studies: To monitor changes in social networking usage and mental health over time, future studies can use longitudinal designs. The direction of causation and the long-term consequences of social media on well-being would be more clearly established in this way.
2. Qualitative Research: To gain a deeper understanding of how social networking affects mental health, qualitative research techniques (such as content analysis of online interactions or interviews) can be used in conjunction with quantitative studies.
3. Experimental Research: By varying social networking usage and evaluating the effects on mental health, experimental designs can assist in demonstrating causal relationships.

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