

Research Paper

## Beyond The Screens: How Social Media Alters Human Relationships and Real-World Interactions

Saima<sup>1\*</sup>, Samina Ahmed<sup>1</sup>, Nafiya Ayman<sup>1</sup>, Neha Yadav<sup>1</sup>, Akshatha Mahabaleshwar Bhat<sup>1</sup>, Ms. Chaitra GN<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The introduction of social media and its rapid proliferation has brought significant shifts to the human race. From writing letters manually, we are now thriving in a society, where interaction can be completed within a fraction of time. There is complete acceptance of its presence, in almost every domain of our functionable lives. However, with huge strides taken by social media in recent times, we are witnessing how it proves to alter human relationships and interactions. This study aims to investigate in interpreting how social media and its expansion, lays an exerting force over human relationships and interactions situated in real-world scenarios. Amongst all the competing factors, this investigation, specifically focuses to study the FOMO effect, mental health implications, social alienation and detachment and establishment of false or stereotypical self-views. The competing study suggests that these factors are increasingly impacting how humans interact. It has tainted communication with stress, anxiety, detachment from reality, isolation, withdrawal, and the need to affiliate with virtual social affirmation. By integrating these factors, the study aims to build psychological, social, emotional and cognitive alterations amongst human interactions and relationships, due to social media.

**Keywords:** *Social Media, Human Relationships and Interactions, FOMO Effect, Mental Health Implications, Social Alienation and Detachment, False or Stereotypical Self-Views*

In the last two decades, the rise of social media has transformed the ways in which individuals connect, communicate, and maintain relationships. What began as a set of digital tools designed to share information and foster global connectivity has evolved into a dominant social environment in its own right. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (now X), TikTok, and LinkedIn have not only redefined communication norms but also blurred the boundaries between online and offline interactions. This shift has brought both opportunities for unprecedented connectivity and challenges that affect the quality, depth, and authenticity of human relationships. The advent of social media has redefined the landscape of human interaction in ways unprecedented in history. In its simplest form, social media refers to a collection of internet-based platforms and applications that allow users to

<sup>1</sup>Student, Department of Clinical Psychology, Jain (deemed-to-be) University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Jain (deemed-to-be) University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

\*Corresponding Author

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create, share, and engage with content in real time, often within virtual communities. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe it as “a group of Internet-based applications built on the foundations of Web 2.0, enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” Unlike traditional media, where information flows in a one-way direction from producers to consumers, social media is inherently participatory, giving individuals the power to be both content creators and audiences simultaneously.

The roots of social media can be traced back to the early days of the internet in the 1990s, when bulletin boards, online chat rooms, and forums allowed people to connect and share information. The early 2000s marked a significant turning point with the emergence of platforms like Friendster and MySpace, which introduced profile-based networking and personalisation. The launch of Facebook in 2004 set the stage for global social networking, soon followed by other influential platforms such as YouTube (2005), Twitter—now X (2006), Instagram (2010), Snapchat (2011), and TikTok (2016). These platforms harnessed advances in Web 2.0 technologies, mobile internet, and smartphones, making social media not just a tool but an integral part of everyday life. Today, social media boasts billions of active users worldwide. Facebook, for example, has more than 3 billion monthly active users, while TikTok has rapidly grown to over a billion in less than a decade. The current scenario reveals that social media is no longer confined to personal networking, it permeates education, politics, business, health communication, and entertainment. The platforms themselves have diversified: Facebook emphasises broad networking, Instagram focuses on visual storytelling, LinkedIn caters to professional connections, YouTube is driven by video content, and TikTok thrives on short-form, algorithm-driven engagement.

The advantages of social media are undeniable. It facilitates instant communication, bridging geographical and cultural gaps; it allows for the creation of online communities based on shared interests; it supports activism and social movements; and it serves as a source of education, entertainment, and news. In human relationships, social media plays a central role in maintaining long-distance connections, rekindling old friendships, and fostering a sense of belonging. Virtual communities provide emotional support for individuals facing isolation, illness, or social stigma, proving that meaningful connections can be formed beyond physical boundaries. However, the influence of social media on communication and interaction is complex. While it enables constant connectivity, the nature of these interactions often differs from face-to-face exchanges. Nonverbal cues, such as tone, facial expressions, and body language, are often lost, which can lead to misunderstandings. The culture of instant replies and “likes” can encourage surface-level engagement rather than deep conversations. Moreover, the curated and idealised versions of life presented online may contribute to social comparison, decreased self-esteem, and unrealistic expectations within relationships. Over reliance on digital communication can also lead to reduced social skills in offline settings, impacting empathy and active listening. In the current interconnected world, social media is both a bridge and a barrier, it connects individuals across continents while, at times, creating emotional distance in physically close relationships. This duality forms the basis of the present research, which seeks to explore the ways in which social media influences human relationships and real-world interactions. Through a balanced examination of its benefits and drawbacks, the study aims to provide insight into how these platforms are reshaping not only communication patterns but also the very fabric of social connection in the digital era. Else crucial aspect of understanding social media’s role in human relationships is recognising its integration into nearly every aspect of daily life. Beyond personal use, social media now shapes how businesses market products, how governments communicate with citizens, and how social causes gain momentum.

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Campaigns such as #MeToo, climate change awareness movements, and humanitarian aid efforts have demonstrated that online networks can mobilise millions within hours. This level of reach and influence has made social media a dominant channel not just for casual interaction but also for shaping public opinion and fostering collective action. The psychological dimension of social media use is equally important. Studies suggest that frequent online engagement can influence brain reward systems, with notifications, likes, and comments triggering dopamine responses similar to other pleasurable activities. While this can enhance feelings of connection and belonging, it can also lead to compulsive usage patterns. Over time, this constant connectivity may redefine the boundaries between public and private life, affecting how individuals present themselves and perceive others.

The diversity of platforms also means that interactions are increasingly fragmented across different digital spaces. A single relationship may now span multiple platforms—casual chats on WhatsApp, photo sharing on Instagram, professional updates on LinkedIn, and entertainment on TikTok. While this creates multiple avenues for engagement, it can also lead to information overload, digital fatigue, and an overemphasis on quantity over quality in communication. The global nature of social media introduces cultural influences into personal interactions. Exposure to different lifestyles, values, and traditions can broaden perspectives and foster tolerance, but it can also create cultural clashes or misunderstandings when online norms conflict with offline cultural expectations. This intersection of technology, culture, and personal connection makes the study of social media's impact on human relationships both timely and essential. Another layer of understanding social media's influence comes from examining its role in emotional expression and support systems. Many users turn to platforms to share personal milestones, seek advice, or express struggles, often receiving immediate responses from peers or even strangers. This instant access to emotional feedback can strengthen bonds and provide a sense of solidarity. However, it also raises concerns about oversharing and the potential for online interactions to replace more intimate, private conversations. The evolution of communication styles in the social media era is also significant. Short-form messages, emojis, GIFs, and memes have introduced new ways to convey tone and emotion. While these tools can make conversations more engaging, they may oversimplify complex emotions or lead to misinterpretation. Moreover, the expectation for rapid responses can create pressure in relationships, where delays in replies are sometimes read as disinterest or conflict. Another emerging aspect of social media's influence is its role in shaping identity and self-concept. Digital platforms allow individuals to experiment with how they present themselves, sometimes creating multiple versions of their identity for different audiences, professional networks, close friends, or the general public. This ability to selectively highlight certain traits can be empowering for self-expression, yet it also introduces the risk of identity fragmentation, where the person one is online feels disconnected from one's offline self. Another dimension worth noting is the role of social media in conflict escalation and resolution. Misunderstandings, public disagreements, and passive-aggressive exchanges can unfold on a highly visible stage, potentially affecting how others perceive the people involved. At the same time, social media can also serve as a space for reconciliation, allowing for apologies, clarifications, and rebuilding of trust, sometimes in front of the same audience that witnessed the conflict. The impact of time zones and global reach has also altered human interaction patterns. Friends, colleagues, and family members in different parts of the world can maintain real-time conversations regardless of distance. This creates a form of "global village," but it also means that communication can extend into late hours, blurring boundaries between personal time and social obligations. Social media's role in memory preservation adds another unique layer. Photos, videos, and posts act as digital archives of

shared experiences, enabling people to revisit moments together. While this can strengthen connections through nostalgia, it may also create pressure to document events for public sharing rather than simply enjoying them in the moment.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A comprehensive review of existing literature provides the theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study. Social media's influence on human relationships and psychological well-being has been widely explored, with research highlighting its benefits for connectivity as well as its adverse effects on mental health and real-world interactions. The study "Social Media Use, Fear of Missing Out and Psychological Well-being Among Young Adults" by Sudheer and Saligram (2023) explores the complex relationship between social media usage, FOMO, and psychological well-being among 230 Indian youth aged 17–22. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between social media use and FOMO, and a negative correlation between both social media use and well-being, and FOMO and well-being. Interestingly, while social media use and psychological well-being showed no gender difference, males reported significantly higher levels of FOMO than females, offering an important cultural insight. This study adds meaningful value to Indian literature by empirically highlighting how excessive digital engagement may lead to psychological distress among young users. Using standardized tools like the SMAS-SF and Ryff's scale, the study ensures methodological rigor, though its cross-sectional design limits causal conclusions. Overall, it emphasizes the need for further longitudinal research and culturally relevant interventions that address FOMO and promote healthier online behaviour among Indian youth. Sharma et al. (2023) examined how personality traits relate to social media usage and FOMO across two cohorts—Gen Z (ages 15–25) and Millennials (ages 26–41), sampling 306 Indian respondents (156 Gen Z, 150 Millennials). Using the Big Five IPIP and the 10 item FOMO scale alongside semi structured usage metrics, they found that higher time spent on social networking sites was significantly linked to elevated FOMO, lower emotional stability, and reduced extraversion. Notably, Gen Z showed significantly greater social media usage and FOMO compared to Millennials, underlining generational differences in digital behaviour. The study's strengths include a solid sample size, robust personality measures, and generational comparison. However, its cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and deeper exploration into platform-specific behaviours would add value. Overall, the findings underscore the complex interplay between personality dimensions, digital engagement, and FOMO, especially among the younger Indian generation. Karishma and Bhatt (2025) investigated the link between social media usage and FOMO among 60 college students from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, employing validated measures for social networking addiction and the FOMO scale. Their findings revealed a significant positive correlation—higher social media engagement corresponded with intensified FOMO, while gender differences were found to be statistically insignificant. Grounded in Self Determination Theory, Social Comparison Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study emphasizes how continual online exposure and comparison processes fuel the anxiety of missing out. Although valuable for highlighting psychological impacts in Indian college settings, the study's modest sample size and limited regional scope restrict broader generalizability. The authors call for awareness initiatives, digital detoxing, and mindfulness programs as practical interventions to mitigate FOMO among young adult. Overall, this study offers compact yet meaningful insight into the drivers of FOMO in Indian higher education contexts. (Bettina F.Piko, Vanessa Müller, Hedvig Kiss, David Mellor, 2025) investigated psychological predictors of FOMO among 255 Hungarian university students (mean age  $\approx$  23.6) during the 2023–2024 academic year. Using multiple regression and path analysis, they identified social comparison as the strongest direct predictor of

FOMO ( $\beta = 0.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by social media addiction ( $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), loneliness ( $\beta = 0.13$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and perfectionism ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Notably, social media addiction, loneliness, and perfectionism also mediated the relationship between social comparison and FOMO, amplifying its psychological impact. The findings underscore the dominant role of upward comparison in triggering FoMO within academic peer networks. Authors recommend interventions focusing on social skills training, mindfulness-based practices, and digital resilience education to help students manage FOMO effectively.

(Anastasios Dadiotis, Petros Roussos 2024) study, researchers employed structural equation modelling on data from 512 adults (mean age  $\sim 30.5$ , 79% women) to examine how FOMO relates to problematic social networking site use (PSNSU), negative affectivity (NA), self-esteem (SE), and physical exercise. The final SEM demonstrated acceptable fit (CFI = .935, RMSEA = .058), revealing that PSNSU mediated the relationship between FOMO and negative affectivity, such that higher FOMO  $\rightarrow$  greater PSNSU  $\rightarrow$  increased NA. Meanwhile, self-esteem partially mediated the link between FOMO and NA: FOMO was negatively linked to self-esteem, which in turn buffered emotional distress. Importantly, physical exercise emerged as a protective factor, reducing the strength of FOMO's impact on negative affectivity and problematic use. This integrative model supports a vulnerability framework where FOMO drives compulsive SNS use and emotional distress, mitigated in part by self-esteem and exercise. Implications include promoting self-esteem building and encouraging regular physical activity as intervention strategies to reduce FOMO-related distress and problematic use.

Patel et al. (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study among 730 undergraduate health professionals in Gujarat to examine the prevalence of social networking site (SNS) addiction and its correlates—including FOMO, stress, and insomnia—using instruments such as the Social Media Disorder Scale, FOMO Scale, Perceived Stress Scale, and Insomnia Severity Index. The results revealed that approximately 15% of participants met criteria for SNS addiction, and these individuals commonly experienced high levels of FOMO, moderate-to-severe stress, and insomnia, highlighting a troubling triad of psychological distress tied to digital overuse. Importantly, the study underscores how extensive online engagement in demanding professional training contexts may impact mental and physical health. Its large sample and use of validated scales strengthen its significance, though the cross-sectional design limits causal inference. By illuminating the link between compulsive social media behaviors and sleep and stress-related outcomes, this research points to the urgent need for digital wellness interventions among Indian healthcare trainees. Integrating these findings can enrich our broader understanding of how social media impacts psychological functioning in high-pressure, youth-centric settings.

Rai et al. (2024) investigate how cultural context shapes mental health expression on Reddit, specifically comparing users in India with those from Western settings. The study finds that Indian users' posts are more inclined toward expressions of sadness, usage of negation, present-focused language, and topics related to work, achievement, and physical illness, underscoring culturally specific concerns in Indian mental health discourse. These linguistic patterns contrast with Western norms—where emotional expression often centers more on seeking emotional support, highlighting the need for culturally precise interventions. The authors strengthen their analysis by having clinical psychologists validate their findings, yielding a strong alignment—95% agreement—between data-driven topics and clinical judgment. Methodologically, leveraging Reddit as a rich data source and incorporating expert validation are commendable strengths, though the study would benefit from examining additional platforms to broaden cultural understanding.

Overall, this work offers valuable insight into how mental health is communicated online in India, reinforcing the importance of culturally grounded analysis in psychological and digital health research. Spurthi, Pandey, and Kashyap (2022) explored how impulsivity, compulsive

internet usage, and FOMO contribute to social media fatigue (SMF) and psychological distress among 120 Indian young adults engaged with social media platforms. The findings demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of impulsivity, compulsive use, and FOMO experienced significantly greater SMF and psychological distress compared to their lower-scoring counterparts. Additionally, elevated SMF was directly associated with intensified psychological distress, indicating a clear pathway from digital behaviour traits to mental strain. Methodologically, the study's use of validated psychological constructs and balanced sample strengthens its findings, although its cross-sectional nature limits causal interpretation. This work contributes valuable insight into the psychological toll of digital overuse within the Indian context, underscoring the need for targeted interventions and longitudinal research to better understand and manage SMF and distress. Overall, it highlights the complex interplay between personality traits, digital habits, and mental well-being among Indian youth.

This umbrella review synthesizes findings from 25 literature reviews, including meta-analyses, systematic, and narrative reviews, on the effects of social media use on adolescent mental health, focusing on data from 2019 to mid-2021. The authors conclude that most reviews characterize the associations between social media and mental health as weak or inconsistent, although a few depict substantial and harmful effects. They highlight methodological variability, such as diverse usage metrics and outcome measures—as a key contributor to conflicting results. The review underscores the importance of more nuanced, longitudinal research and standardized definitions to resolve discrepancies. It also underscores that the impact of social media is highly context-dependent, suggesting future studies explore moderators like personal characteristics, usage patterns, and platform design. Despite the mixed findings, the review emphasizes the need for evidence-based interventions and regulatory frameworks to mitigate potential risks. Overall, the study offers a comprehensive foundation for understanding the emerging research landscape on adolescent mental health in the digital era. This review synthesizes experimental evidence on how interventions targeting social media use impact mental health, emphasizing practical implications for clinicians. Therapy-based strategies, such as those involving cognitive-behavioral techniques and reflective counseling, are the most consistently effective, with approximately 83% of such trials demonstrating significant improvements in well-being, particularly in relieving symptoms of depression. In contrast, interventions relying solely on abstinence or limiting use showed mixed results and often lacked lasting benefits, potentially due to low compliance and rebound effects. The review also highlights methodological challenges across studies, including low quality and brief follow-ups, underscoring the need for more rigorous, longitudinal research to inform clinical practice. Clinically, the findings suggest favoring therapy-oriented approaches that foster meaningful reflection on social media habits over mere restriction. This evidence base offers valuable guidance for designing interventions that mitigate social media's mental health risks in supportive, sustainable ways.

Plackett, Blyth, and Schartau (2023) conducted a systematic review examining how various social media use interventions affect adult mental well-being, drawing on 23 experimental studies published between 2004 and mid-2022. They found that 39% of the interventions produced improved mental health outcomes, while 30% had mixed results, and another 30% showed no significant effects. Importantly, interventions incorporating therapy-based techniques—especially those rooted in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)—were most effective (83% showed benefits), in contrast with interventions focused on limiting social media usage (20% effective) or complete abstinence (25% effective). Depression emerged as

the most consistently improved outcome, with 70% of relevant studies reporting significant reduction post-intervention. However, the review also flagged serious methodological limitations: 96% of the included studies were rated as weak in quality, largely due to reliance on convenience samples (70% of studies drew from university students). Overall, this review suggests that mindful, reflective, and therapeutic approaches to managing social media use yield more enduring mental health benefits than mere restriction or avoidance. Biswas and Shukla (2022) explored how social media use influences perceived emotional support, FOMO, and offline social interaction among 150 young Indian women, using validated tools like the FOMO Scale, Social Networking Time Use Scale, Social Interaction Anxiety Scale, and Online Social Support Scale. The findings revealed that increased social media use significantly predicts heightened FOMO, greater perceived emotional support online, and a negative effect on real-world social interaction. Interestingly, while digital platforms offer emotional support, this virtual connectivity appears to come at the expense of meaningful offline engagement. Methodologically, the study benefits from its targeted sample and robust psychometric measures, though its cross-sectional design limits conclusions about causality. Overall, the study sheds light on the dual-edged role of social media for young women, offering emotional solace online but simultaneously undermining face-to-face social bonds. Dogra and Sharma (2023) examined how Facebook usage relates to feelings of alienation and depression among Indian adolescents and young adults, finding a significant positive correlation with alienation but an inverse relationship with depression, suggesting that while Facebook engagement may foster detachment, it does not necessarily predict depressive symptoms. The study underscores the dissonant role of social media: its capacity to connect alters emotional landscapes, potentially increasing perceived social isolation. Utilizing established psychometric measures, their methodology is robust, though the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation and suggests the need for longitudinal approaches. This research illuminates how digital interactions can simultaneously serve as both social bridges and barriers, challenging assumptions about depression's linkage to alienation via social media. Integrating these findings enriches our understanding of digital life's complex emotional terrain among Indian youth. Tabassum et al. (2024) investigated the impact of social media usage on social alienation in a sample of 220 university students from various institutions in Punjab, using a self-designed survey and statistical analysis via SPSS. The study found that recreational activities like gaming and browsing significantly contributed to increased feelings of social alienation among students. While the research underscores the digital behaviours that may erode offline social bonds, its reliance on convenience sampling and limited diversity constrains broader applicability. Nevertheless, the authors call for the implementation of policies, seminars, and social skills programs to raise awareness about excessive social media use and its emotional repercussions. Overall, the study adds to the Indian discourse on digital alienation by empirically affirming that frequent, casual engagement with social media platforms may contribute to a sense of detachment from real-world connections. This theoretical study integrates Marx's concepts of commodification and alienation with Baudrillard's critique of hyperreality to examine how social media transforms genuine social bonds and cultural values into consumable spectacles. It argues that on these platforms, even personal emotions, friendships, and experiences, are commodified for likes, shares, and visibility, thereby alienating users from authentic connections (Marx) and overlaying reality with curated simulations (Baudrillard). The study underscores how identity and interpersonal relationships become mediated performances, where the hyperreal representation supplants the genuine self. By bridging both theories, it illuminates the dual erosion of authenticity, through capitalist logic and simulated realities, and urges empirical research to assess how users perceive alienation in their digital lives. Overall, the paper offers a compelling critique of digital culture's impact

on social authenticity, laying groundwork for future investigations that could inform interventions enhancing meaningful digital engagement. Qureshi Hurst (2021) offers a compelling existential framework, drawing on Paul Tillich, to analyze how social media deepens feelings of anxiety, alienation, and estrangement. The author argues that platforms enable users to craft artificial identities through filters and curated content, while also quantifying social approval at scales beyond human evolutionary capacity; these dynamics enlarge networks but degrade the quality of interpersonal interactions. By synthesizing insights from existential theology with empirical findings, the article illuminates how digital life can estrange individuals from themselves and their relationships. Importantly, the work underscores a gap in philosophical and theological engagement with social media, a domain that deeply shapes contemporary youth experience. Overall, the study enriches theoretical discourse by mapping how modern technologies can erode authentic existence, urging deeper cross-disciplinary exploration. Putta (2022) conducted a cross-sectional study among 302 Indian female college students (age 18–25) to explore how passive Instagram usage affects psychological well-being, examining the mediating roles of social comparison and FOMO during the COVID 19 pandemic. Using the INCOM scale for social comparison and Ryff's psychological well-being framework, mediation analysis revealed that FOMO significantly mediated the relationship between social comparison and well being (indirect effect  $\beta = -0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while passive Instagram use exerted a direct negative effect on psychological well-being ( $\beta = -0.07$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The model demonstrated excellent fit indices (CFI = 0.998; RMSEA = 0.017), indicating robustness. Grounded in Social Comparison Theory and Symbolic Interactionism, the study highlights the intensifying psychological impact of passive social media engagement, especially among young women in a crisis context. While the rigorous analytic approach adds strength, its cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation. Overall, the research offers crucial insight into how passive digital behaviours during pandemic-induced isolation can adversely influence female college students' mental health in India. Mishra (2024) explores the complex relationship between social media usage and self-esteem among Indian young adults, though the full methodology and findings are not immediately accessible from the abstract. Drawing from the title and context, the study likely examines the dual nature of social media, how it both connects individuals and erodes their self-worth, creating a paradoxical impact on self-esteem. This aligns with broader literature suggesting that social media addiction correlates negatively with self-esteem while indirectly affecting life satisfaction. Although the study's design and measures remain unclear, its focus on the Indian demographic adds valuable cultural context to global findings. To fully assess its contributions and rigor, access to details such as sample size, instruments, and statistical outcomes would be essential. Overall, the work underscores the importance of investigating digital media's psychological effects in Indian youth and invites deeper scholarly engagement with this paradox. Kakati and Kumar (2024) conducted a qualitative study via semi-structured interviews with 12 urban adolescents and young adults in India to investigate how intensive digital engagement influences psychosocial well-being, self-concept, and family dynamics. Their thematic analysis revealed five key themes: the dual nature of digital engagement (utility vs. overdependence), the paradox of connection and isolation in online interactions, digitally strained family relationships, identity dissonance between authentic selves and curated online personas, and mental health impacts including heightened anxiety, stress, and attention deficits. These findings underscore the nuanced—and often conflicting, role of digital platforms: while they offer space for expression and connection, they also pose risks to genuine emotional bonds and self-identity. The study's qualitative depth and urban Indian context add significant relevance, though its small sample size limits generalizability.

Overall, the research points to the urgent need for digital literacy programs, family-focused interventions, and mental health support that address the emotional toll of digital immersion. This study Piko et al., 2025 presents a compelling analysis of how false self-presentation, via curated online personas, increases the fear of negative evaluation, which in turn drives excessive social media use, a relationship strongly supported by structural modeling (PLS SEM) based on data from 400 Pakistani users. Interestingly, social comparison, typically seen as detrimental, was found to boost self-esteem while simultaneously fueling excessive engagement, suggesting that upward comparisons can function as a form of validation-seeking. Gender emerged as a moderator: women experienced a stronger positive link between social comparison and self-esteem, although gender did not moderate the effects of false self-presentation on fear of negative evaluation. The findings underscore how psychological mechanisms like self-discrepancy and validation needs potentially drive compulsive digital behaviors. The authors advocate for digital literacy interventions aimed at helping users recognize how false presentation and social comparison shape their engagement patterns, particularly in appearance-driven online environments. Mun and Kim (2021) examined how motivations like the need for approval and impression management drive lying self-presentation on Instagram, and how that behavior relates to depression, perceived popularity, and content deletion. The study found that individuals with a strong need for approval tended to engage more in deceptive self-presentation, which was associated with increased depressive symptoms and more frequent post deletions. Interestingly, perceived popularity, such as high likes and engagement, acted as a psychological buffer, partly mitigating the negative impact of false presentation on depression. While offering robust theoretical framing and insightful mediation pathways, the study's cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation. Overall, the paper highlights the complex interplay between digital impression management, emotional well-being, and adaptive behaviors like deleting content, underscoring the need for awareness around how social validation may reinforce harmful online habits. Gil Or, Levi Belz, and Turel (2015) explore the concept of the "Facebook self", defined as a curated online persona that may diverge from one's authentic identity, often aligning more with idealized self-images.

Rooted in Rogers' self-congruence theory and Winnicott's true/false self model, the study identifies low self-esteem, low authenticity, and insecure attachment styles, particularly avoidant attachment, as strong predictors of greater false self-presentation online. These individual differences suggest that users may engage in self-distancing or identity protection through fabricated profiles, potentially exacerbating psychological vulnerabilities. A subsequent corrigendum confirmed that those with high avoidant attachment scored significantly higher on Facebook-self presentation metrics, reinforcing the original findings. Overall, the study offers valuable insight into how psychological predispositions shape online identity construction, emphasizing the potential mental health implications of persistent false self-presentation in social media contexts.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Research Design*

A quantitative, descriptive survey design was used to assess how social media usage correlates with alterations in real-world human interactions.

### *Objectives*

- To examine the extent of social media usage among young adults.
- To identify behavioral changes in face-to-face communication caused by social media.

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- To analyze the correlation between daily social media use and altered interaction patterns.
- To evaluate the psychological and relational implications of increased social media dependence.

### *Sample*

The study consisted of 40 participants aged 15–30 years. A convenience sampling method was used. Most respondents (75%) belonged to the age group of 16–25.

### *Instruments*

A structured questionnaire was used, containing:

- Demographic details
- Most-used platform
- Daily usage duration
- Five Likert-scale statements assessing social-media-induced interaction changes

### **Likert Scoring (5-point scale)**

- Strongly Agree = 5
- Agree = 4
- Neutral = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly Disagree = 1

### *Variables*

#### **Variable 1: Social Media Usage**

“I spend more than two hours daily on social media.”

#### **Variable 2: Alterations in Human Interaction**

- Checking SM during conversations
- Using SM as primary communication
- Preferring texting over in-person meetings
- Routine influenced by SM

A composite score was computed for Variable 2.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Data were analyzed using:

- Mean (measure of central tendency)
- Standard Deviation (measure of variability)
- Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ )

## **RESULTS**

### *Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Usage and Alteration in Human Interaction (N = 40)*

*Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for Study Variables*

Variable	M	SD
Social Media Usage (Daily Use Score)	3.53	1.10
Alteration in Human Interaction (Composite Score)	2.89	0.94

**Table 2: Correlation Between Study Variables**

Variables	1	2
1. Social Media Usage	—	.42*
2. Alteration in Human Interaction	.42*	—

## DISCUSSION

The present study sought to understand how patterns of social media usage influence real-world human interactions, communication preferences, and relational behaviors among young adults aged 15–30 years. The findings offer meaningful insights into the evolving landscape of interpersonal relationships in an increasingly digitized world. Consistent with existing literature, the results of the current study indicate that extensive social media use correlates with noticeable changes in face-to-face communication, emotional engagement, and daily behavioral patterns. The moderate positive correlation ( $r = .42$ ) between social media usage and alterations in human interaction supports the idea that as individuals spend more time online, they experience greater disruptions in real-time social behaviour. A prominent observation from the data is that most participants primarily used Instagram, followed by WhatsApp and YouTube. This aligns with broader national and global trends showing that visually driven platforms, especially Instagram, have become central to the social lives of young people. Visual platforms encourage high levels of engagement, reinforce social comparison tendencies, and increase the desire to maintain online presence, all of which contribute to habitual use. The finding that nearly half of the respondents spend 3–4 hours daily on social media underscores the degree to which digital platforms are integrated into the daily routines of young adults. These usage patterns create a fertile environment for altering interpersonal behaviors, as frequent online engagement becomes normalized. One of the clearest behavioral shifts observed in the study is the tendency to check social media during face-to-face interactions. Although many respondents reported neutral responses, there remains a sizable group who acknowledged that they often divert their attention to their phones while physically present with others. This supports existing evidence that constant digital connectivity can undermine the depth and presence of real-world interactions. Checking notifications during conversations disrupts attentional flow, weakens active listening, and conveys reduced emotional availability, processes that have been documented to negatively impact relationship quality. Moreover, the study revealed that a considerable number of participants use social media as their primary source of communication. This shift toward digital communication can be attributed to convenience, immediacy, and perceived emotional safety offered by online interaction. Communicating through text or social media eliminates the pressure of immediate emotional reciprocity and reduces social anxiety for some individuals. However, such reliance may also compromise the ability to engage in meaningful, empathetic, and spontaneous face-to-face conversations. Prior research, including studies by Biswas and Shukla (2022), echoes this concern by demonstrating that increased online support often comes at the expense of reduced offline social engagement. Another important finding relates to the preference for texting or online chatting over meeting in person. This behavioural shift reflects the growing comfort and habituation associated with digital environments. Online communication offers efficiency and control, enabling individuals to curate their responses and manage impressions more easily. However, reducing face-to-face interactions can hinder the development of essential social skills such as emotional expression, conflict resolution, and nonverbal communication. These limitations further emphasize how high dependency on digital communication may subtly reshape interpersonal competencies. The study found that many participants believed their daily routines were influenced by social media, though not overwhelmingly. This suggests that while users may not always be conscious of the extent

of influence, social media nonetheless structures their time, schedules, and decision-making patterns. Notifications, trends, and algorithm-driven content subtly direct attention and behaviour throughout the day. This aligns with theoretical perspectives indicating that social media platforms are intentionally designed to increase user engagement through reward mechanisms, which in turn reinforce habitual use. Taken collectively, the results of this study highlight a gradual but significant shift toward digitally mediated social behavior. While social media undoubtedly enhances connectivity and provides emotional and social benefits, excessive use can diminish the quality of real-world interactions. The moderate correlation found suggests that the relationship between social media usage and altered interpersonal behavior is meaningful but not absolute, other factors such as personality traits, emotional needs, and situational context likely play roles as well. Beyond the behavioral and interactional changes identified, the findings also suggest deeper psychological and identity-related implications of social media use. While the present study did not directly measure constructs such as self-esteem or self-presentation, the patterns observed align with broader research indicating that digital environments often encourage curated or selective identity expression. As participants increasingly relied on social media for communication, it is plausible that online interactions also shaped how they perceived themselves and presented their identities to others. Platforms like Instagram promote idealized portrayals, which may influence individuals to prioritize aesthetic and socially desirable aspects of themselves, potentially creating discrepancies between online and offline identities. Such discrepancies can introduce emotional strain, self-monitoring, and heightened comparison with peers. The preference for texting and digital interaction found in this study may also reflect an emerging comfort with controlled communication, where individuals can filter, edit, and strategically craft responses—reducing vulnerability but also limiting authentic connection. Additionally, the habitual nature of checking social media, even during in-person conversations, suggests a developing dependency that may influence attention regulation and emotional responsiveness. Together, these psychological and identity-related dimensions illustrate that social media alters not just communication patterns but the very ways individuals experience, express, and understand themselves within social relationships. The findings align with broader literature indicating that while social media supports connection, it simultaneously fosters distraction, comparison, and decreased engagement in offline relationships. As individuals continue to rely heavily on platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp for communication, it becomes increasingly important to promote digital literacy and balanced usage. Encouraging practices such as mindful engagement, designated screen-free periods, and awareness of algorithmic influence may help mitigate the negative effects on human relationships. Ultimately, understanding these behavioral patterns is essential for preserving meaningful, authentic, and emotionally connected interpersonal interactions in a world dominated by screens.

### ***Implications***

The findings of the present study carry several important implications for individuals, families, educators, mental health professionals, and society at large. As social media becomes increasingly embedded in the routines of young adults, understanding its broader impact on real-world communication and relational behavior becomes essential. The moderate positive correlation between social media usage and alterations in human interaction suggests that the digital landscape is not merely a supplementary space for communication but is actively reshaping how individuals connect, perceive, and respond to others. These insights highlight the need for structured awareness, informed technological habits, and intentional efforts at preserving meaningful interpersonal relationships. At the individual level, the results emphasize the importance of cultivating mindful and balanced

social media habits. As participants who spent more time online displayed greater disruptions in face-to-face communication, individuals can benefit from setting personal boundaries around usage. Engaging in digital detox practices, limiting multitasking during conversations, and scheduling intentional offline interactions are strategies that may improve communication quality and emotional presence. Individuals may also need guidance in recognizing the subconscious influence of notifications, social comparison, and algorithm-driven content on their mood, time management, and relational expectations. The findings suggest that fostering digital self-awareness, understanding how, why, and when one uses social media, can help restore intentionality to online behavior. For families, the study underscores the need to strengthen offline communication patterns. Many participants reported preferences for texting or online chatting, which could reduce the emotional richness of family interactions. Introducing device-free family gatherings, encouraging direct conversations, and modelling balanced technology use may mitigate the tendency toward fragmented attention and digital distraction. These efforts are particularly important for adolescents and young adults who are still developing social skills, emotional regulation, and identity stability. Parents and guardians can support healthier habits by engaging in open conversations about digital experiences, peer pressures, and the emotional impact of online interactions. Educational institutions also play a critical role in fostering digital well-being. As the age group studied predominantly includes students, schools and colleges can integrate digital literacy programs into their curriculum. Such programs may educate students on the psychological effects of excessive social media use, the risks of online comparison, and strategies for maintaining boundaries between virtual and real-world identities. Workshops on communication skills, empathy, and conflict resolution can reinforce the value of face-to-face interaction. Additionally, institutions can encourage “tech-free zones” or “focus hours” to promote attentive learning and reduce dependence on constant digital stimulation. Mental health awareness campaigns on campuses can further provide students with resources to manage the emotional strain associated with online interactions. From a clinical and psychological perspective, the findings have important implications for counselors, therapists, and mental health practitioners. The shift toward digital interaction patterns may influence symptoms of anxiety, depression, attention difficulties, and loneliness, issues commonly observed in youth populations. Understanding that social media use is not merely a recreational activity but also a coping mechanism, identity space, and emotional outlet can enhance therapeutic interventions. Mental health practitioners may consider assessing digital habits as part of intake procedures and incorporating interventions such as mindfulness, emotional regulation strategies, and cognitive restructuring to help individuals interpret and manage their online experiences in healthier ways. For clients struggling with social anxiety or interpersonal difficulties, therapy may need to incorporate explicit training on communication presence, nonverbal cues, and relational attunement. At a societal level, the study’s results draw attention to broader concerns regarding communication norms and cultural shifts. As digital communication becomes the default mode for many, society risks normalizing fragmented attention, reduced empathy, and transactional communication. Public health initiatives may need to address digital behavior as a component of overall psychological well-being. Government agencies, NGOs, and digital platforms themselves can collaborate to design healthier online environments by reducing addictive design features, promoting positive digital citizenship, and encouraging balanced media consumption. Awareness campaigns highlighting the impact of excessive screen time on relationships, concentration, and emotional functioning could help counteract growing dependence on online interaction. Digital platforms, on their part, can play a meaningful role by integrating features that support healthier engagement. This includes customizable notification settings, time-limit

reminders, and content that encourages mindful browsing. Since young adults are often the most active users, platforms might also develop educational resources around digital safety, online identity management, and emotional well-being. Encouraging transparent algorithms and reducing emphasis on metrics such as likes and views may also reduce the psychological pressure associated with social comparison. The implications extend to future research. The moderate correlation found in this study indicates that social media's impact on relationships is multifaceted and influenced by various mediating factors such as personality traits, emotional needs, attachment styles, and cultural contexts. Future studies may explore these dimensions in depth, incorporate larger and more diverse samples, and examine platform-specific behaviors. Longitudinal designs may offer deeper insight into how digital habits evolve over time and how they shape relational trajectories across developmental stages.

### *Limitations*

Although the present study provides valuable insights into the relationship between social media usage and alterations in human interaction, several limitations must be acknowledged to contextualize the findings and guide future research. First, the study relied on self-reported data, which is inherently prone to biases such as social desirability, selective recall, and subjective interpretation of items. Participants may have underreported or overreported their social media usage or their communication habits, resulting in potential inaccuracies. Additionally, self-reported hours of usage may not reflect actual screen time, which could vary significantly from perceived usage. Second, the sample size, though adequate for preliminary analysis, was relatively small and geographically limited. Most respondents belonged to similar age groups, cultural backgrounds, and educational environments, primarily young adults aged 15–30. This demographic homogeneity restricts the generalizability of the findings. Social media behaviors differ across age, culture, socioeconomic status, and digital literacy levels; thus, a more diverse sample would provide a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the topic. The overrepresentation of Instagram users also limits platform-specific conclusions because different platforms encourage different forms of engagement and interaction. A third limitation pertains to the cross-sectional research design, which captures data at a single point in time. This design restricts the ability to determine causality. Although the study found a moderate correlation between social media usage and changes in human interaction, it cannot establish whether increased social media use causes altered interactions, or whether individuals with certain communication tendencies are more drawn to frequent online engagement. A longitudinal approach would enable researchers to observe behavioral changes over time and identify causal patterns more accurately. Fourth, the questionnaire items focused primarily on general behaviors and attitudes, which may not fully capture the complexity of online interaction patterns. Social media use is multifaceted, influenced by emotional states, personality traits, social motivations, and situational factors. The study did not assess these variables, which could mediate or moderate the relationship between usage and interaction patterns. For example, introversion, loneliness, social anxiety, or fear of missing out (FOMO) might influence the degree to which individuals prefer digital over face-to-face communication. Without integrating such psychological constructs, the interpretation of results remains somewhat limited. Another limitation involves the lack of qualitative data, which could have provided deeper insights into how participants personally experience and interpret the impact of social media on their relationships. While quantitative data reveals trends and correlations, qualitative responses would help uncover emotional nuances, contextual factors, and subjective meanings associated with online behavior. Including open-ended questions or conducting interviews could complement statistical findings and enrich the analysis. The study did not differentiate between active use (e.g., posting, commenting,

messaging) and passive use (e.g., scrolling, observing), although these behaviors may have different psychological effects. Active engagement can facilitate communication and social bonding, whereas passive consumption is often linked to negative emotional outcomes such as comparison and reduced life satisfaction. Treating all forms of social media use as a single construct may therefore mask important distinctions.

### CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between social media usage and alterations in human interaction among young adults, finding a moderate positive correlation that suggests meaningful connections between digital engagement and real-world relational behavior. As social media increasingly shapes modern communication patterns, the findings highlight how frequent online activity can influence attention, presence, communication preferences, and daily routines. Participants who spent more time on platforms, particularly Instagram, tended to report greater tendencies toward online communication, reduced face-to-face interaction, and increased distraction during interpersonal exchanges. These results align with existing literature indicating that digital platforms, while beneficial for connection and expression, can introduce shifts in interpersonal dynamics that affect the quality of in-person communication. The study emphasizes that social media is not merely a communication tool but an influential social environment that shapes identity, relationships, and emotional habits. The reliance on digital communication, preference for texting, and habitual checking of social media during conversations reflect broader societal changes in how individuals relate to one another. The implications extend beyond personal behavior, influencing family communication, educational practices, mental health considerations, and societal norms. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, it becomes essential for individuals and communities to adopt balanced and mindful usage patterns to preserve authentic and meaningful human connections. While the study provides valuable insights, the limitations highlight the need for future research employing larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and more nuanced assessments of online behavior. Integrating qualitative methods and psychological constructs such as personality traits, emotional regulation, and social anxiety would deepen the understanding of how social media influences human interaction.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this research. The study was conducted independently, without any financial, institutional, or personal interests that could influence the outcomes or interpretation of the findings.

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