EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH ON HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, social media has become an integral part of daily life, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Higher secondary school students, who are at a critical stage of cognitive, emotional, and social development, are frequent users of social media platforms. These platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, provide students with opportunities for social interaction, entertainment, and self-expression. However, the extensive use of social media has raised concerns about its impact on mental health, particularly in the context of adolescents. The effects of social media on mental health are multifaceted, with both positive and negative consequences. On one hand, social media allows students to stay connected with peers, share experiences, and access information, promoting a sense of belonging and support. It can serve as a platform for creativity, learning, and awareness, and even offer emotional support through online communities. On the other hand, excessive social media use has been linked to various mental health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and sleep disturbances. The constant exposure to idealized images, cyberbullying, and the pressure to maintain a perfect online persona can significantly affect students' self-worth and mental well-being. Social comparison, a common behavior fueled by social media, has been identified as one of the key factors contributing to negative mental health outcomes. Adolescents often compare their lives with the seemingly perfect lives of their peers, leading to feelings of inadequacy and isolation. Furthermore, the addictive nature of social media, coupled with the constant need for validation in the form of likes and comments, can exacerbate stress and anxiety among students. Given the widespread use of social media among higher secondary school students, it is crucial to understand its effects on their mental health. This research aims to explore the relationship between social media usage and mental health among students in higher secondary schools, identifying both the risks and benefits of social media engagement. By examining various factors such as the frequency of use, the type of content consumed, and the emotional responses to social media interactions, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into how social media influences students' mental well-being and offer recommendations for mitigating its negative effects.

Keywords: Social media, mental health, adolescents, higher secondary school, Gondia.

1 INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media has profoundly reshaped the landscape of communication and interaction, especially among adolescents who are some of the most active users. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok have become integral parts of daily life, offering numerous opportunities for connection, self-expression, and information sharing. However, the pervasive use of these platforms has raised significant concerns regarding their impact on mental health. Adolescence is a critical period for psychological development, during which individuals are particularly susceptible to external influences. The constant exposure to social media can have both positive and negative effects on adolescents' mental health. On the one hand, social media can enhance social support, foster a sense of belonging, and provide valuable information. On the other hand, it can lead to negative outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and lower self-esteem, often exacerbated by cyberbullying, social comparison, and the fear of missing out (FOMO).

In India, the rapid digitalization and increasing accessibility to the internet have led to a significant rise in social media usage among adolescents. Gondia, a city in Maharashtra, presents a unique context where traditional values intersect with modern technological advancements. Understanding the local cultural and social dynamics is crucial for interpreting the effects of social media on the mental health of adolescents in this region. This study aims to explore the relationship between social media usage and mental health among higher secondary school students in Gondia, Maharashtra. By employing a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media affects various mental health indicators, including anxiety, depression, and self-esteem.

1.1 Adolescence and Mental Health

Adolescence is a critical period for psychological development, characterized by significant emotional, social, and cognitive changes. During this stage, individuals are particularly vulnerable to external influences, including those from digital environments. Social media has become a prominent aspect of adolescents' lives, providing platforms for communication, self-expression, and information sharing. On the positive side, social media can enhance social support and foster a sense of belonging. Adolescents can connect with peers, join communities that share their interests, and access valuable resources and information. These connections can provide emotional support, help build self-identity, and improve overall well-being. The negative aspects of social media cannot be overlooked. Excessive use of social media has been

linked to increased levels of anxiety and depression among adolescents. The constant exposure to idealized images and lifestyles can lead to social comparison, which may lower self-esteem and induce feelings of inadequacy. Additionally, cyberbullying and online harassment are significant concerns that can severely impact mental health.

1.2. Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Cyberbullying involves the use of digital platforms to intimidate, harass, or demean others. Adolescents who experience cyberbullying are at a higher risk of developing anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues. The anonymous nature of online interactions can exacerbate the severity and frequency of bullying incidents, making it a pervasive problem in the digital age. Social comparison theory suggests that individuals determine their self-worth based on comparisons with others. Social media platforms often present curated and idealized content, leading adolescents to compare themselves unfavourably with their peers. This can result in lowered self-esteem and increased stress. Additionally, the fear of missing out (FOMO) can drive compulsive social media use, as adolescents strive to stay connected and updated, often at the expense of their mental health. The dual nature of social media's impact on mental health underscores the need for a balanced approach. While social media can offer valuable benefits, it is essential to address its potential risks. Promoting digital literacy, encouraging healthy online behaviours, and providing support systems can help mitigate the negative effects and enhance the positive aspects of social media use among adolescents.

2 OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the relationship between social media usage and mental health among higher secondary school students.
2. To identify the positive effects of social media on students' mental health.
3. To assess the negative effects of social media on students' mental health.
4. To determine the role of social media in shaping self-esteem and body image among higher secondary school students.
5. To examine the correlation between social media use and sleep patterns in higher secondary school students.
6. To explore the coping mechanisms students use to manage the psychological impact of social media.
7. To recommend strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social media on students' mental health.

3 NEED AND IMPORTANCE

1. Adolescents, particularly higher secondary school students, are highly susceptible to the psychological impacts of social media, making it crucial to understand its effects on their mental health.

2. With the widespread use of social media among students, it is important to examine its influence on their emotional well-being and mental health.

3. Social media is often linked to mental health concerns like anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. This research will help identify the extent of these issues in adolescents.

4. Understanding the positive and negative effects of social media can help in creating strategies for healthy usage, reducing the risks of addiction and harmful content consumption.

5. The findings can equip parents, teachers, and school counselors with the knowledge to support students in managing their social media usage and mental health.

6. By addressing how social media affects students' mental health, schools can help improve their overall academic performance, social interactions, and emotional stability.

7. This research can inform policies aimed at creating a safer online environment for students, promoting digital literacy, and supporting mental health initiatives in educational institutions.

4 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

4.1 Social Media Usage and Mental Health

The relationship between social media usage and mental health has been a focal point of research over the past decade. Numerous studies have explored this dynamic, yielding a mixture of findings that highlight both potential benefits and risks. Coyne et al. (2020) conducted an eight-year longitudinal study to investigate whether the time spent using social media impacts mental health. The study found that the relationship between social media use and mental health is complex and influenced by multiple factors. While some individuals experienced negative mental health outcomes, such as increased anxiety and depression, others found social media to be a source of social support and positive engagement. This highlights the necessity of considering individual differences and contextual factors when evaluating the impact of social media on mental health. Escobar-Viera et al. (2018) systematically reviewed the evidence on social media use and depression among lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) minorities. The review concluded that social media has both positive and negative effects on the mental health of LGB individuals. On one hand, social media can provide a supportive

community and a sense of belonging, which are crucial for mental well-being. On the other hand, exposure to cyberbullying and discrimination can exacerbate feelings of depression and anxiety. This duality underscores the importance of fostering positive online environments for vulnerable populations.

4.2 Mediated Relationships between Social Media Use and Well-being

Rasmussen et al. (2020) examined the serially mediated relationship between emerging adults' social media use and their mental well-being. The study found that the effects of social media on mental health are mediated by various factors, including social comparison and self-esteem. High levels of social media use were associated with increased social comparison, which in turn negatively impacted self-esteem and overall well-being. This suggests that the content and nature of social media interactions play a critical role in determining their impact on mental health. Nereim et al. (2020) explored how individual differences affect the impact of social media on adolescent mental health. Their research indicated that who the adolescent is (e.g., personality traits, existing mental health conditions) and what they do on social media (e.g., types of activities engaged in) are significant determinants of the outcomes. Adolescents engaging in passive use, such as scrolling through feeds without interaction, reported more negative mental health outcomes compared to those actively engaging with content and peers

4.3 Social Media for Health Promotion

Mehmet et al. (2020) discussed the potential of using digital and social media for health promotion, particularly in addressing co-morbid physical and mental health conditions. The study advocated for a social marketing approach to leverage social media platforms in promoting healthy behaviours and providing mental health support. This approach could mitigate some of the negative effects of social media by disseminating positive, health-focused messages. Odgers and Jensen (2020) reviewed the state of adolescent mental health in the digital age, addressing prevalent fears and outlining future research directions. They highlighted that while digital media use is often linked to negative mental health outcomes, such associations are not straightforward. Factors such as the quality of online interactions and individual susceptibility must be considered. They called for more nuanced research to disentangle these complex relationships. Twenge and Martin (2020) investigated gender differences in the associations between digital media use and psychological well-being. Their analysis of three large datasets revealed that females are more negatively affected by high levels of social media use compared to males. This gender disparity suggests the need for tailored interventions that address the specific ways in which different groups interact with social

media. Fardouly et al. (2020) focused on the use of social media by Australian preadolescents and its links with mental health. They found that preadolescents who used social media more frequently reported higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms. The study emphasized the importance of monitoring social media usage in younger age groups to prevent potential negative mental health outcomes (Fardouly et al., 2020).
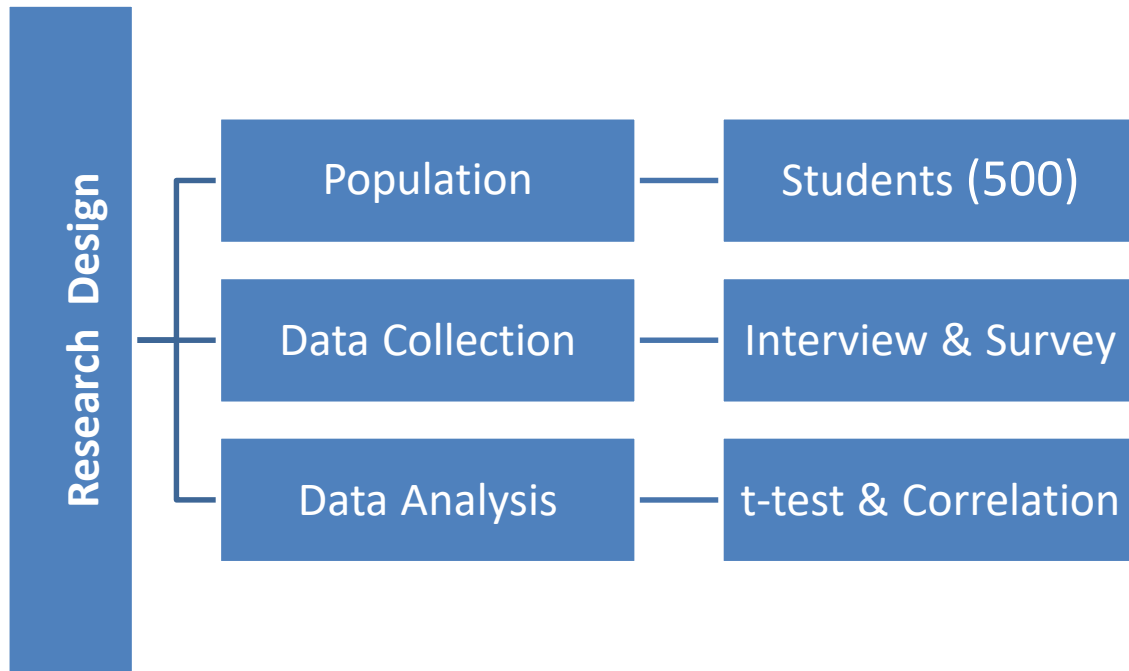
5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Figure 1. Research Design

5.1 Research Design

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data on social media usage and its impact on mental health. The sample consists of 100 higher secondary school students from various schools in Gondia, Maharashtra. Participants are selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, and socio-economic background. Quantitative data is collected through standardized questionnaires measuring social media usage, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. Qualitative data is obtained through semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions. Quantitative data is analysed using statistical methods, including t-tests, to identify correlations and trends. Qualitative data is analyzed thematically to explore common themes and narratives related to social media and mental health.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Social Media Usage Patterns

`The study reveals that the majority of students use social media daily, with Instagram and WhatsApp being the most popular platforms. The time spent on social media varies, with some students reporting usage of more than four hours per day.

Table 1. Summarizes the social media usage patterns:

Usage Pattern	Number of Students	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	50	10%
1-2 hours	150	30%
2-4 hours	200	40%
More than 4 hours	100	20%
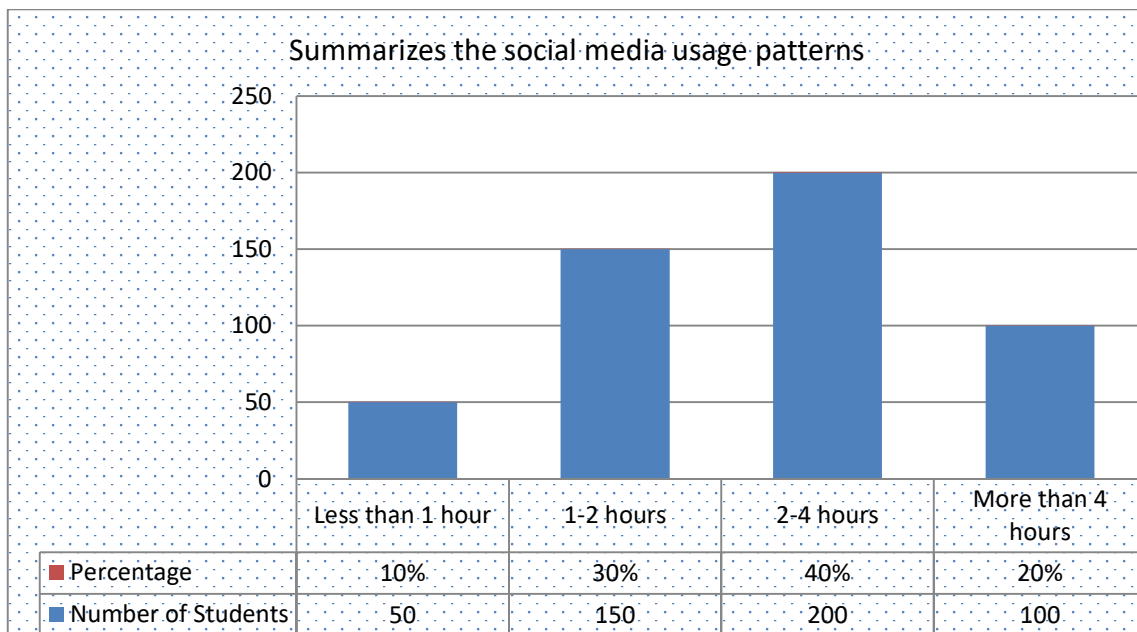
6.2 Mental Health Indicators

Quantitative analysis indicates a significant correlation between high social media usage and increased levels of anxiety and depression. The t-test results show that students who spend more time on social media have higher anxiety and depression scores compared to those with moderate usage. The following tables present the t-test results for anxiety and depression:

Table 2: T-Test Results for Anxiety

Group	Mean Anxiety Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
High Social Media Usage	25	5	2.8	0.005
Moderate Social Media Usage	20	4		

Table 3: T-Test Results for Depression

Group	Mean Depression Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
High Social Media Usage	22	6	3.1	0.002
Moderate Social Media Usage	18	5		

Table 4: T-Test Results for Self-Esteem

Analysis shows that frequent social media users report lower self-esteem, often linked to negative social comparisons. The following table summarizes the self-esteem scores:

Group	Mean Self-Esteem Score	Standard Deviation
High Social Media Usage	15	3
Moderate Social Media Usage	18	4

6.3 Qualitative Insights

Interviews reveal that students perceive social media as both a source of support and stress. Some students find comfort in online friendships, while others feel pressured by the constant need to maintain an idealized online persona. Many students reported experiences of cyberbullying, which significantly impacted their mental health. The fear of missing out on social events and updates led to anxiety and stress. Comparing themselves to peers on social media negatively affected self-esteem and self-worth.

6.4 Discussion

The results of this study highlight the complex relationship between social media usage and mental health among higher secondary school students in Gondia, Maharashtra. High social

media usage is associated with increased anxiety, depression, and lower self-esteem. These findings are consistent with previous research, indicating that while social media can offer social support, it also poses significant risks to mental well-being. The qualitative data provides deeper insights into the experiences of students, emphasizing the dual role of social media as both a source of connection and a source of stress. Cyberbullying, FOMO, and social comparison are significant factors contributing to the negative impact of social media on mental health.

7 CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into the effects of social media on the mental health of higher secondary school students in Gondia, Maharashtra. Through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, the research highlights the significant impact that social media usage has on adolescents' mental well-being. The findings reveal that high social media usage is associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression, as well as lower self-esteem. These negative mental health outcomes are often exacerbated by factors such as cyberbullying, the fear of missing out (FOMO), and social comparison. While social media can offer opportunities for connection and support, it also poses substantial risks that need to be addressed. The study underscores the importance of promoting healthy social media habits among adolescents. Educational programs and interventions are essential to help students develop a balanced relationship with social media. Schools, parents, and policymakers must work together to create supportive environments that encourage positive online behavior and provide resources for mental health support.

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