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Exploring the Impact of Social Media on the Mental Health of University Students

Abstract

The number of students using sites for interaction with one another has significantly increased. The massive use of social media among university students is an alarming situation that is causing harm to mental health. This research aims to find out that social media addiction causes some major factors that damage students' irregular sleeping patterns, attitudes, and behaviors. Social media users make and share content for a brief period of time, adding content that enables them to project the perfect image that has a significant impact on their mental health and life satisfaction. The findings show a strong connection between social media use and sleeping patterns and a considerable correlation between mental health and sleep patterns. Additionally, 36.3% of them reported going to bed between 12 am and 1 am respectively. Hence, 29.8% of them claimed their use of social networking sites as the reason for their later bedtime.

Keywords: Social Media Use, Mental health, Depression, Satisfaction with Life, Social Comparison, Sleeping patterns

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Contents

Abstract

The number of students using sites for interaction with one another has significantly increased. The massive use of social media among university students is an alarming situation that is causing harm to mental health. This research aims to find out that social media addiction causes some major factors that damage students' irregular sleeping patterns, attitudes, and behaviors. Social media users make and share content for a brief period of time, adding content that enables them to project the perfect image that has a significant impact on their mental health and life satisfaction. The findings show a strong connection between social media use and sleeping patterns and a considerable correlation between mental health and sleep patterns. Additionally, 36.3% of them reported going to bed between 12 am and 1 am respectively. Hence, 29.8% of them claimed their use of social networking sites as the reason for their later bedtime.

Keywords: Social Media Use, Mental health, Depression, Satisfaction with Life, Social Comparison, Sleeping patterns

Introduction

For, two decades, the matter of the correlation between media website usage and mental health issues has escalated. Even though existing data indicates a connection between heightened media website engagement among youngsters and an uptick in mental health challenges within the same demographic, the precise nature of this relationship remains elusive (Singh, 2021). The term "social media" typically encompasses a range of online platforms facilitating the formation and utilization of virtual communities through the sharing, consumption, and discourse of user-generated content. With the extensive adoption of mobile phones, many young people now enjoy unparalleled access to information, entertainment, and activities previously beyond their reach.

Consequently, the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) continues to expand, not only within the realm of education but across various fields of daily routine (Singh, 2020). Additionally, Webster (2014) defines a media website as "a platform that provides an opportunity for people to share their ideas, feelings, thoughts, and emotions with peers". Although coined in 2004, this term has become ubiquitous over the past decade as media website usage has surged. Individuals today appear more interconnected than ever, whether they're live-tweeting, hosting virtual bridal showers, or curating Facebook profiles for their pets. As reported by (Smith G. B., 2013) approximately 73% of internet adults are now active on social networking sites. Presently, approximately internet users are 5.16B globally, with 4.76 billion engaging in media website sites. Studies suggest that increased media website usage, particularly for non-academic purposes, can lead to classroom distractions and academic setbacks among students (Kolhar, 2021).

Media Website Usage and Mental Well-being

Numerous research endeavors have established a concerning correlation between the usage of media with adverse psychosomatic effects such as heightened anxiety, increased loneliness, and tendencies toward narcissism. The escalating prevalence of media website engagement, particularly among the younger demographic prompts inquiries into its potential pitfalls. Given these associations between the usage of media and unfavorable outcomes, so becomes imperative for research on the way to delve deeper into uncovering the underlying factors contributing to these issues and identifying potential remedies (Mujahid, 2021).

Media Website Impact on Sleep Habits

The extensive use of digital media especially social media not only affects daily patterns of sleep, but also their physical well-being and overall sense of wellness. Furthermore, many individuals rely on alarm clocks to regulate their sleep patterns (Mhóráin & Agamanolis, 2005). Particularly throughout adolescence, a developmental stage marked by susceptibility. The present discussion contributes novel inner by investigating how the usage of media late at night, as participation in media websites related to mental health issues, correlates with students' sleep quality, levels of anxiety, feelings of grief, and self-esteem (Mhóráin & Agamanolis, 2005)

Statement of the Problem

This research examines the investigation that the correlation between students' usage of social media websites and their mental well-being. To address this research gap, the current study specifically examines the association between students' sleep quality and their engagement with social media websites and platforms. It is hypothesized that increased usage of online social networking sites force be related by means of diminished sleep eminence consistent with the preceding result on internet usage patterns.

The Rationale of the Study

The term "social media" refers to online platforms that facilitate interaction among individuals through activities such as "liking," "commenting," and "sharing." The primary purpose of a media website is to enable sharing and connection among users, fostering personal growth, knowledge expansion, interest exploration, and entertainment. It is important to note that online communication can never fully replace face-to-face interaction.

Significance of Study

The pervasive use of media websites has become so significant for many individuals that it occupies a substantial portion of their day, extending into their evenings and even encroaching on their sleep time. Accumulating research suggests that prolonged engagement with social networking sites, particularly in excessive quantities, is associated with an increased susceptibility to depression and other mental health ailments. Studies related to respective issues propose that consistent use of media website platforms can alter the chemical composition of users' brains and reshape the dynamics of their social relationships. Dr. Siegal, a renowned professor of psychiatry, has observed tangible, physiological changes in the brains of individuals who heavily engage with social media. From his perspective, online communication is gradually supplanting face-to-face interactions (Justin & Chen, 2014).

Research Objectives

1. To assess the correlation between media website usage and the mental well-being of students.

2. To investigate the determinants influencing life satisfaction linked to the utilization of media websites among university students.
3. To scrutinize how media website usage influences depression among university students.
4. To explore the impact of spending time on media website platforms on the sleep patterns of students.
5. To examine the mechanisms underlying the association between media website usage and feelings of anxiety.

Literature Review

In this segment, observed writing sourced as divers explore is reviewed, and relevance to the subject is discussed. Consulting a broad spectrum of equipment including journals, and website data facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The mental well-being of students is analyzed in relation to their engagement with media website platforms. Historical instances may be referenced to underscore the significance of the study (Senekal & Groenewald, 2022) Furthermore, there exists a correlation between students' utilization of media websites and their psychological well-being. (Senekal & Groenewald, 2022) observed that the heightened reliance on media website platforms for announcements among young people underscores the noteworthy role platforms play in shaping the mental landscapes of media. The health of the mind is affected by websites, search engine is a burgeoning field of study, encompassing a broad array of concerns. The findings underscore the complex interplay of students' minds and time spent on media (Senekal & Groenewald, 2022). However, maintaining close relationships with loved ones can mitigate these risks. Despite potential drawbacks, media website also offers potential benefits, such as facilitating a friend circle through the internet.

Uses and Gratification Theory

This section of the study thoroughly discusses the purposes and satisfaction hypothesis employed in the research. The results indicated that individuals use Facebook for six primary reasons: to stay connected, share photos, monitor social activity, communicate with others, facilitate announcements, and satisfy interest. Similarly, the concept of an active audience underscores the deliberate inclinations of individuals and the selectivity in their engagement with mass media. According to this concept, the responses of viewers

exposed to media messages reflect individuals' social connections, interests, and past experiences (King & Bleakley Turow, 2009). The Uses and Gratifications Theory recognizes the audience as active and adept in terms of media preferences and usage. This approach also challenges the assumption that the influences observed during the era of impact research were imposed on the audience by the media. Instead, it argues that the media serves as a toolkit that individuals freely utilize to address various needs (Laughey, 2010).

Social Identity Theory

The study of social identity theory can provide valuable insights into understanding social media website effect on the mental and psychological health of students. In the context of social media, social identity theory can help us understand how young people construct their online identities and how these virtual identities shape their interactions and experiences on media website platforms. For example, adolescents may join specific online communities or groups based on shared interests, hobbies, or identities. Their participation in these groups can influence their sense of belonging, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

Research Questions

1. Does a correlation exist between media website usage and the mental well-being of students?
2. What are the primary factors contributing to the level of life satisfaction linked to media website usage among university students?
3. In what ways does media website usage contribute to depression among university students?
4. How does the duration of time spent on media website platforms impact the sleep patterns of students?
5. What are the underlying reasons for the association between media website usage and feelings of anxiety?

Hypotheses

1. Utilizing media websites has an adverse impact on the mental well-being of students.
2. The benefits of media website usage among university students contribute to life satisfaction.
3. Excessive engagement with media websites is a precursor to depression in university students.
4. Overindulgence in media websites during nighttime disrupts students' sleep patterns.

5. There is a significant association between media website usage and feelings of anxiety.

Research Methodology

This chapter delineates the research design, methodology, data collection technique, data gathering tool, research process, and methods for ensuring validity and reliability. The primary objective of this study is to explore the impact of undergraduate students' media website usage on their mental well-being. Employing a survey method, the inquiry targets a sample of young individuals who habitually spend over three hours on media website platforms. The survey covers various aspects related to social media, seeking respondents' perspectives. The data for the study was collected, analyzed, and reported using the SPSS software. The research methodology adopted in this study is rooted in quantitative analysis. This study adopts a descriptive approach, which aims to define the phenomenon under investigation. Participants in this research comprised both male and female media website users hailing from a variety of educational universities. The following university students were involved in the research sample:

1. Bahauddin Zikriya University, Multan
2. Education University, Multan
3. Women University, Multan
4. University of NCB&A, Multan
5. University of ISPR, Multan

In social sciences research, the sample size denotes subjects incorporated in the study. In this particular research, the section comprised 400 male and female respondents selected randomly from five universities in Multan, aged 18 years and above. Utilizing a sample size calculator, it was determined that 380 individuals would constitute the sample for this study, based on the method proposed by (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The sample was drawn from the selected five universities. To test the hypothesis, a questionnaire was administered through physical, hand-delivered surveys. Data collection was conducted using a convenient sampling technique, a non-probability method that involves selecting a sample from the population readily available. In this study, a questionnaire served as the primary instrument. Information regarding participants' age, gender, and educational attainment was collected through demographic and personal information inquiries. Subsequently, the questionnaire delved into aspects such as media website usage, sleep habits, depression, and life satisfaction. Data were collected from respondents in the respective institutions utilizing a survey format employing a five-point Likert scale. The scale was delineated the same as strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. In this study, statistical analysis in the social sciences will be conducted using SPSS, also known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Noels, 2018).

Analysis and Finding

The analysis of data is presented in this section. It includes the demographic characteristics of the participants, across a preliminary analysis of the respondents. Moreover, it offers insights into behaviors, attitudes, and inferential statistics, aiding in addressing the study's questions, alongside a descriptive analysis of the findings. The data analysis is conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a software suite comprising various statistical tools tailored for social science research. SPSS is primarily utilized to explore technological data relevant to social sciences, facilitating tasks such as market analysis and survey research. Its advantages include user-friendliness, widespread familiarity among statistical consultants, and practicality. Statistics, as a field, encompasses a range of mathematical methods and procedures for collecting, characterizing, organizing, and interpreting numerical data.

Table 1

Relationship between demographic factors and age

	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	99	24.8
	Female	301	75.3
Age	18-25	382	95.5
	26-30	18	4.5
	Above 30	0	0
Qualification	Bachelor's	343	85.8

	Description	Frequency	Percentage
	Master's	51	12.8
	Ph.D.	6	1.5

The data in Table 4.1 by using the cross tabulation indicates that a higher number of females responded compared to males. Furthermore, the majority of users on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram fall within the 18-25 age brackets, and most respondents are pursuing bachelor's degrees. Specifically, the results reveal that 382 respondents, or 95.5%, are between the ages of 18 and 25, while 18 respondents, or 4.5%, are aged 26-30, and there are no respondents above the age of 30. Given that university students predominantly consist of young adults aged 18 to 23, it can be inferred that the population under study comprises exclusively young adults enrolled in universities. The data also indicates that 301 participants, or 75.3%, are female, which aligns with the trend of women using media websites more frequently and engaging more actively on social networking sites.

Table 2

Relationship between media website network and age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
10-49	224	56.0	56.0	56.0
50-99	41	10.3	10.3	66.3
100-149	47	11.8	11.8	78.0
150-199	20	5.0	5.0	83.0
More than 200	68	17.0	17.0	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

By using the cross-tabulation table 4.2 above illustrates that 56% of respondents have approximately 50 media website friends, whereas 17% of respondents have more than 200 friends on social media. It reflects the ubiquitous use of media websites in today's society, with individuals spending significant amounts of time on social networking sites. The table provides a breakdown of respondents based on the number of their media website friends, allowing for an understanding of the various categories and their corresponding percentages. Specifically, 47 respondents, constituting 11.8% of all respondents, reported having 100 to 149 media website friends, while 5% of respondents mentioned having 150 to 199 friends.

Table 3

Relationship between media website and time consumption

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Time At All	16	4.0	4.0	4.0
10 To 30 Minutes	37	9.3	9.3	13.3
More Than 1 Hour	77	19.3	19.3	32.5
2 To 3 Hours	103	25.8	25.8	58.3
More Than 3 Hours	167	41.8	41.8	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

By using the cross-tabulation, the table 4.3 provided above indicates that the majority of respondents, comprising 41.8% of the total, dedicate more than three hours daily to media website engagement, encompassing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and other social networking sites. Conversely, 4% of all respondents reported abstaining

from media websites entirely. Consequently, 25.8% of respondents allocate two to three hours daily to media website usage. Additionally, alongside the noted 4.76 billion media website users, there are 5.16 billion internet users worldwide. Notably, the average Android user now spends over five hours per day on their smartphone, marking an increase of seven minutes daily compared to the previous year (WeAreSocial, 2023).

Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter consists of the findings and results of the study on behalf of objectives and hypothesis of research questions mentioned in the previous chapter. This chapter concluded with results and possibilities that could be discussed. Also, provide recommendations for further research topics.

Conclusion

The problem of poor sleeping habits is pervasive among students, irrespective of age, gender, or academic discipline. Despite extensive research, the precise causes of poor sleep quality remain elusive. Factors such as smoking, physical activity, or consumption of stimulant-containing beverages did not demonstrate a significant influence on sleep status. However, individuals experiencing poor sleep quality tended to miss more morning classes and reported heightened anxiety levels throughout the day. These findings offer valuable insights for academic advisors and students themselves, aiding in the optimization of daily routines and sleep patterns. Further exploration is warranted to elucidate the impact of lifestyle and behavioral factors, specifically, on sleep quality. It is noteworthy that sleep quality is not solely dictated by media website (SM) consumption alone. Rather, the duration and timing of smartphone usage, as well as its purpose, play crucial roles in determining sleep quality. Complications arising from excessive SM use, such as mental health disorders and sedentary behavior, may also contribute to sleep disturbances. Media website facilitates interaction and the establishment of new relationships, often characterized by a more formal and transient nature. Many users find that the connections formed through media websites lack depth and meaningfulness compared to those nurtured through direct interactions with friends and family. According to 59% of students, excessive media website usage negatively impacts their relationships with loved ones. Researchers like (Adesi et al., 2019) argue that relying solely on media websites for relationship-building can lead to

feelings of hopelessness, loneliness, and depression. The prevalence of smartphones further complicates matters by reducing face-to-face interactions among friends and family, potentially diminishing the value of time spent cultivating these relationships and fostering a sense of psychological isolation among individuals (Adesi et al., 2019).

Discussion

Hypothesis one was "Utilizing media websites has an adverse impact on the mental well-being of students" which the result of the hypothesis shows from the cross-tabulation relationship. It means that that more utilization of media websites has an impact on the mental well-being of the students so it is accepted. The current study reveals that 41% of children spend more than three hours a day on social media, suggesting a prevalent trend among most students. Research indicates that frequent media website use is linked to increased risks of anxiety and depression (Hu, Manson, & Stampfer, 2001).

Hypothesis two was "the benefits of media website usage among university students contribute to life satisfaction" in which the result of the hypothesis shows from cross-tabulation relationship. It means that more usage of media websites among university students contributes to life satisfaction. The proliferation of media website platforms, which act as virtual social networks, is a consequence of the internet's pervasive influence on every aspect of human life.

Hypothesis three was "excessive engagement with media websites is a precursor to depression in university students" which the result of the hypothesis shows from the cross-tabulation relationship. It means that excessive engagement in media websites is a precursor to depression in university.

Hypothesis four was "Overindulgence in media websites during nighttime disrupts students' sleep patterns" in which the result of the hypothesis shows a cross-tabulation relationship. It means that more usage of media websites during the night time disrupts the students' sleep patterns. Jackson, Sztendur, Diamond, Byles, and Bruck (2014) assert that adolescents' late-night engagement with media website platforms leads to delayed bedtime and disrupted sleep, which subsequently affects their ability to manage feelings of sadness and anxiety.

Hypothesis five was "there is a significant link between media website usage and sentiments of anxiety" in which the result of the hypothesis shows a cross tabulation relationship. It means that more media website usage affected feelings of

anxiety. Instead of utilizing their own communication networks for educational purposes, students increasingly spend excessive amounts of time online throughout 24 hours while actively participating in activities such as shopping, gaming, and pleasure. These acts hinder students' participation in academic pursuits, limit study opportunities, and serve as distractions from learning, consequently leading to a decline in academic performance (Young & Lo, 2012).

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