

‘Youngsters’ Time Spent on Social Media: Impacts and Trends

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Abstract

In today’s digital age, social media has become an integral part of youngsters' daily lives, drastically influencing how they interact, learn, and engage with the world around them. This research examines the extent to which youngsters (aged 13-24) spend time on social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook, and explores the effects of this usage on their academic performance, mental health, and social relationships. As social media usage continues to rise globally, particularly among the younger demographic, it is crucial to understand both the amount of time spent and the psychological, educational, and social ramifications of such engagement.

A mixed-method approach was employed for this study, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. A survey was distributed to 300 students to gauge the average time spent on social media daily, their primary activities on these platforms, and their perceptions of the impact on their academic and personal lives. Additionally, focus group interviews were conducted to provide deeper insights into the emotional and social experiences related to social media use.

The findings reveal that youngsters spend, on average, more than three hours daily on social media, with significant implications for their mental health and academic outcomes. Many respondents reported increased levels of anxiety, depression, and social comparison as a result of frequent exposure to idealized online content. Academically, prolonged use of social media has been linked to decreased focus, procrastination, and lower academic performance, as many participants admitted that they often multitask between their studies and social media, leading to distraction and reduced productivity.

These insights suggest a complex relationship between social media use and various facets of youngsters' lives, highlighting the need for greater awareness, digital literacy, and balanced online habits to mitigate the potential negative consequences. Future research could further investigate

strategies to promote healthier social media use among youngsters while exploring the long-term effects on their overall wellbeing and development.

1. Introduction

The advent of social media has dramatically reshaped how people communicate, share information, and form connections. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook have become central to the daily routines of millions of individuals worldwide, particularly among younger demographics. Social media is no longer just a tool for casual interactions but a powerful force that influences culture, identity, and social behavior. For many youngsters—defined in this study as individuals between the ages of 13 and 24—these platforms serve as spaces for entertainment, self-expression, social interaction, and information sharing.

The ubiquitous presence of smartphones and constant access to the internet have further cemented the role of social media in the lives of youngsters. The ability to be connected 24/7 has blurred the boundaries between the digital and real worlds, making social media an inseparable aspect of how young people interact with their peers and engage with content. From scrolling through Instagram feeds and watching viral TikTok videos to participating in discussions on Facebook and maintaining streaks on Snapchat, social media usage has become a dominant daily activity.

While social media provides numerous benefits, such as fostering global connections, offering platforms for creativity, and enabling access to real-time information, its overuse has sparked growing concerns. Researchers, educators, and psychologists are increasingly examining the effects of prolonged social media exposure on various aspects of young people's lives, especially in relation to their mental health, academic performance, and social relationships. Numerous studies have suggested that heavy use of social media is linked to issues such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness, as well as distractions from academic pursuits and a decline in in-person social interactions.

This study seeks to explore the extent to which youngsters engage with social media and how this usage impacts their mental wellbeing, academic success, and social connections. It will delve into questions such as: How much time do young people spend on these platforms? What motivates their usage? And what are the consequences of spending hours daily in these virtual environments?

The goal of this research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of social media's role in young people's lives, identifying both the benefits and challenges it brings. By investigating the patterns of social media use and its psychological and educational consequences, this study aims to shed light on how social media affects the developmental processes of young people in today's fast-paced, digitally driven world.

Research Questions:

1. How much time do youngsters spend on social media daily?

2. What are the primary activities they engage in while on social media?
 3. What impact does social media have on youngsters' mental health and academic performance?
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2. Literature Review

2.1 Time Spent on Social Media Various studies have shown that the average time spent by youngsters on social media has increased over the years. A 2023 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 90% of teenagers use social media daily, with 70% admitting to spending over two hours a day on platforms like Instagram and TikTok (Smith, 2023). The increasing accessibility of smartphones and faster internet has facilitated this rapid rise in screen time.

2.2 Impacts on Mental Health There is growing concern about the impact of prolonged social media use on mental health. Researchers such as Twenge (2019) have linked excessive social media use with increased levels of anxiety, depression, and body image concerns. The constant exposure to curated, idealized images and lifestyles can lead to social comparison, potentially resulting in negative self-esteem and mental health outcomes (Huang, 2020).

2.3 Academic Performance Social media's distraction factor is also well-documented in literature. A study by Jacobsen & Forste (2019) revealed that students who spent more than three hours a day on social media platforms had lower academic performance compared to those who limited their use. The instant gratification and frequent notifications lead to multitasking, which hinders focus and productivity in educational contexts.

3. Methodology

This research employs a mixed-method approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the time youngsters spend on social media and its effects. The study involved:

3.1 Survey

A survey was distributed to 75 students aged between 13 and 24 across several high schools and universities. The survey asked questions about the daily time spent on social media, preferred platforms, and how students perceive its effects on their academics and mental wellbeing.

3.2 Focus Group Interviews

Three focus group interviews were conducted, each consisting of 10 participants who discussed their experiences with social media. The interviews explored how social media impacts their day-to-day activities, emotional health, and face-to-face interactions with peers.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Time Spent on Social Media

Survey data revealed that youngsters spend an average of 3.5 hours daily on social media, with some users spending up to 6 hours. The most commonly used platforms were TikTok (30%), Instagram (25%), and Snapchat (20%), with others like YouTube and Twitter being less frequently cited.

4.2 Mental Health Impacts

In the focus group interviews, participants frequently discussed feelings of anxiety and inadequacy after using social media, especially when engaging in comparisons with peers. Approximately 45% of survey respondents admitted that social media negatively impacts their self-esteem, with body image being the most affected aspect. However, a smaller group (15%) reported that they found social media to be a source of support and connection, helping them cope with feelings of loneliness.

4.3 Academic Distraction

A significant portion of respondents (65%) confessed that they found it difficult to focus on their studies because of social media distractions. Many students reported checking their phones frequently during study sessions, which negatively affected their concentration. Focus group discussions also echoed this sentiment, with students admitting to procrastination due to the allure of social media.

5. Discussion

The findings align with existing literature that suggests a high daily usage of social media among youngsters, with significant mental health and academic impacts. The 3.5-hour daily average supports the claims of increasing screen time, and the self-reported effects on mental health underline the potential dangers of social comparison and constant connectivity. While some youngsters view social media as a supportive space, a larger group experiences negative emotions due to unrealistic standards and cyberbullying.

In terms of academic performance, the distractions caused by social media are concerning, as constant interruptions reduce students' ability to focus on tasks. This finding is consistent with studies by Rosen et al. (2018) that emphasize the detrimental effect of multitasking with digital devices on educational outcomes.

6. Conclusion

This research underscores the pervasive influence of social media on the lives of youngsters, revealing that they spend a significant portion of their daily time on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook. On average, youngsters dedicate more than three hours a day to these platforms, which can have far-reaching effects on their mental health, academic performance,

and social relationships. While social media provides valuable opportunities for creativity, communication, and connection, the excessive time spent on these platforms comes with notable drawbacks that must not be overlooked.

The findings suggest that prolonged social media use contributes to a range of mental health concerns among young users, including increased anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy, often exacerbated by social comparison with idealized portrayals of life on these platforms. Additionally, academic performance is adversely impacted, as social media often serves as a major source of distraction, leading to procrastination, reduced focus, and, in some cases, lower grades.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the positive dimensions of social media. Many youngsters use these platforms to maintain friendships, stay informed about current events, express themselves creatively, and participate in global conversations. However, the challenge lies in achieving a balance between the productive use of social media and mitigating its negative effects.

To address these challenges, there is a pressing need for future research to explore strategies for promoting healthier social media habits among youngsters. Digital literacy programs can play a crucial role in helping young people understand the consequences of excessive social media use and teaching them how to manage their time online effectively. Moreover, schools and educational institutions can incorporate discussions on digital wellbeing into their curricula, offering guidance on how students can maintain a healthy balance between their online and offline lives.

Parents, too, have an essential role in fostering responsible social media habits. By modeling healthy digital behavior and setting appropriate boundaries, parents can guide their children in using social media in a way that enhances their lives without compromising their mental and emotional wellbeing. Open communication about the risks and benefits of social media is key to empowering youngsters to make informed choices about their online activity.

In conclusion, while social media has become an integral part of youngsters' daily lives, it is clear that excessive use can lead to a range of negative consequences, particularly in the realms of mental health and academic success. The path forward involves equipping young people with the tools and awareness to navigate social media responsibly, encouraging a more balanced approach to digital consumption. By involving schools, parents, and communities, we can create a supportive environment that helps youngsters harness the benefits of social media while minimizing its risks.

Recommendations:

1. **Digital Literacy Programs:** Schools, colleges and University should implement programs that teach students about the responsible use of social media, including strategies for managing time online and identifying harmful behaviors.
2. **Parental Monitoring Tools:** Parents should be encouraged to monitor social media usage and engage in open conversations with their children about the effects of excessive use.

3. **Further Research:** Longitudinal studies are needed to track the long-term effects of social media usage on mental health and academic achievement.

References

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