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## **The Impact of Social Media on Youth Mental Health**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Youth have unparalleled access to digital information across a variety of platforms, including smartphones, tablets, desktops, laptops, and gaming consoles, making the media landscape wider and more diverse than ever. One essential element of this landscape is social media. Social media, which can be separated from traditional media (such as television) by the fact that users can both consume and generate content, are often referred to as any digital tools or programs that enable people to interact socially. According to this inclusive definition, "social media" could refer to social networking websites (such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and TikTok), text messages and messaging applications, social gaming tools, YouTube, and more. Social media's influence on today's teens must be taken into account for a complete understanding of mental health in adolescents.

Even though using social media regularly has positive impacts on a person, it also has drawbacks. Numerous studies have shown a connection between increased social media use and poor emotional health. Social media has been found to have a variety of effects on people.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

With social media increasingly playing a major part in young people's lives, the technological landscape has drastically changed in recent years. Both huge new obstacles and fascinating new opportunities have been brought forth by social media. Research is starting to show how particular social media interactions may affect young people's mental health.

Some young people, particularly those struggling with social anxiety or depression, may spend more time online and have fewer in-person interactions. It can exacerbate feelings of alienation, hopelessness, isolation, anxiety, and depression when someone increases their online presence rather than healthily engaging in the world—interacting with others, managing themselves in trying situations, whether it's in classes or speaking up in class, going on interviews, or dealing with peer conflict.

With the use of this research, we were able to determine the level of mental health among our peers and people of different age groups ranging from 13-25, as well as what isn't working and what can be done to improve it both during and after college.

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### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Young people's life now revolves entirely around digital technologies. Many children are exposed to screens from an early age; in the US, children under two spend an average of 42 minutes daily using screens. Most young people are thoroughly engrossed in the world of smartphones, computers, and social media by the time they reach adolescence. According to recent data that is nationally representative, 95% of teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18 have access to a smartphone, and 88% have a desktop or laptop at home. In 2018, 45% of US teenagers said they used the internet "nearly frequently," an increase from 24% just three years earlier (Nesi, 2020). New media's widespread use has produced a complex world that young people, parents, medical professionals, and legislators must manage. While this media environment has created several fresh risks and concerns for young people's mental health, it has also offered several noteworthy advantages and opportunities.

Every technology has a less-than-ideal aspect, just like anything else. Teenagers who have a mental disorder or are at risk of developing one may be particularly affected negatively by social media. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 22.2% of teenagers would experience serious mental impairment in their lifetimes, and there is a lifetime prevalence of any mental condition among adolescents of 49.5%. Additionally, the incidence of mental illness is highest among young individuals (ages 18 to 25) at 25.8%, compared to 22.2% for adults aged 26 to 49 and 13.8% for adults aged 50 and beyond. According to a 2018 survey by the Pew Research Center, 85% of teens use YouTube, followed by 72% of users of Instagram, and 69% of users of Snapchat. According to a 2014–2015 teen poll, the proportion of teenagers who report using Facebook decreased to 51% in 2018 from 71%. People between the ages of 16 and 24 spend an average of three hours, one minute each day on social media, according to a 2018 survey published by the GlobalWebIndex. But according to study findings published in the journal JAMA Psychiatry, teenagers who spend more than three hours a day on social media "may be at heightened risk of mental health disorders, particularly internalizing problems" (Carter, 2019).

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study's objective is to examine how VIT students utilize various social media sites and draw conclusions about the potential impact on their mental health. These readings were done to evaluate the :

- Youth's perceptions of social media
- Youth's reliance on social media
- Social media-related mental illness
- Solution to stop mental illness caused by social networking

## METHODOLOGY

Students from the Vellore Institute of Technology in Vellore were selected as the study's target group because they offer a diverse range of data. Given the diversity of backgrounds and lives represented among the students that attend VIT, one can easily anticipate a wide range of responses to the questionnaire that was distributed. A Google form that had been made and circulated was given to the participants, and 70 replies were obtained in all. Additional replies were gathered from sources outside of VIT in order to reach the age bracket over and under college age. The replies that were obtained were used for analysis and interpretation. Pie charts were then developed for straightforward visualization and understanding.

## DISCUSSION

### Positive Aspects of Social Media :

When utilized effectively, social media can support young people in their real-world connections, whether it is through friendships with other young people who share their interests, academic progress, or participation in hobbies like music, painting, or cooking lessons. Nowadays, it's practically hard to avoid social media at all, and many people use it to learn about local events and hobbies that encourage them to interact with others, such as hiking clubs, reading clubs, music groups, and art galleries. As a result, we want individuals to utilize social media, but responsibly.

### Negative Aspects of Social Media :

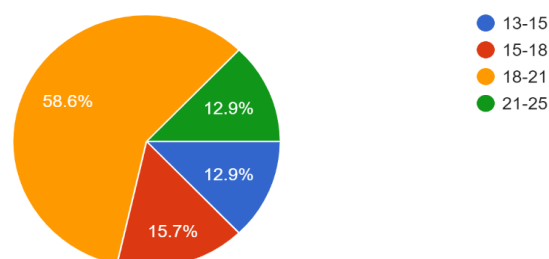
Social media is widely used, thus it's necessary to think about any potential repercussions. While social media use does have certain benefits, there are also many drawbacks, especially for young people. These drawbacks include anxiety, melancholy, poor sleep, and emotional problems. Specifically among young individuals, using social media more than three times per day has been linked to poor mental health and well-being. Across the board, barely 1 in 10 Americans (or 64% of the population) believe that social media use has a positive impact on the nation today (Reynolds, 2022).

- **What is your age?**

This question makes it easy to identify the target market and simply separate the different survey participants' age groups.

The majority of participants (58.6%) were between the ages of 18 and 21, or college students, according to the graph that follows. Due to the survey's extensive reach beyond college students, 13.1% of respondents were between the ages of 13 and 15, 15.7% were between the ages of 15 and 18, and the final 12.9% were between the ages of 21 and 25.

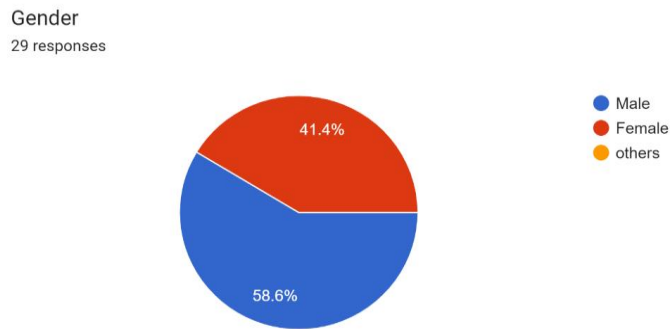
What is your age?  
70 responses



- **Gender?**

Through advertisements and images, the media propagate gender roles and behavioral trends where women's tasks vary from childcare to office duties emphasizing women's reliance while men are portrayed as more independent and less likely to display their emotions. Because of this, even while the digital world gives us the opportunity to express ourselves through our e-identities, actual digital settings merely serve to mimic the gender norms and culture of the physical world.

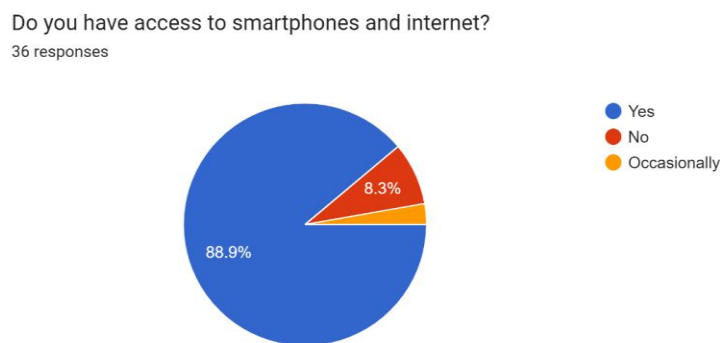
Roughly 60 % of the responses were from the male audience and the remaining 40 % were female.



- **Do you have access to smartphones and the internet?**

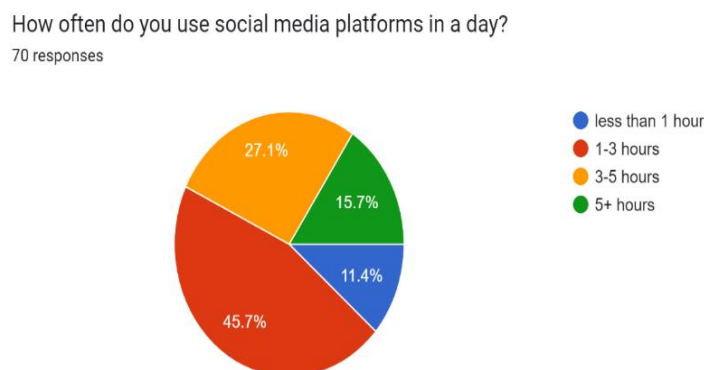
This question was added as a way to determine whether the target population had access to the internet and any other smart devices, including smartphones. Even if the response to the query appeared to be a given, it was nevertheless necessary to confirm that participants were utilizing smart technology.

88.9% of participants had access to smartphones and the internet, compared to 8.3% who did not.



- **How often do you use social media platforms in a day?**

People are spending more and more time online, particularly on various social media platforms, in today's huge internet ecosystem. Social media, in particular, has become central to the lives of today's youth, and they spend a large portion of their online time on various social media platforms.



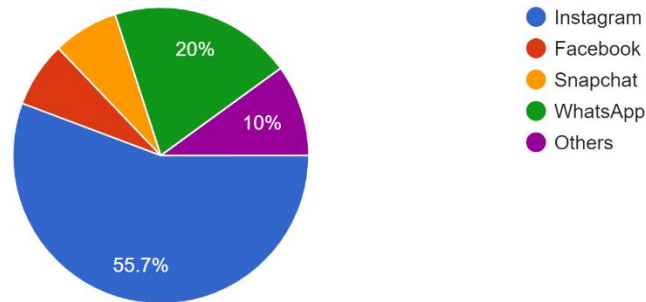
The participants gave a range of answers to the aforementioned question, with the majority of 45.7% claiming to spend 1-3 hours online each day, followed by 27.1% with 3-5 hours, and a troubling 15.7% with 5 or more hours per day on social media. Unsurprisingly, only 11.4% of those surveyed reported spending less than an hour each day.

- **Which is your most used social media site?**

There are several social media platforms accessible today, and each one has appealing and distinctive features that the general public can use. Social media comes in a variety of formats, such as blogs, social networking sites, photo and video-sharing websites, instant messaging, podcasts, and more. However, among other social media platforms, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Facebook are where young people today prefer to spend the majority of their time.

#### Which is your most used social media site?

70 responses



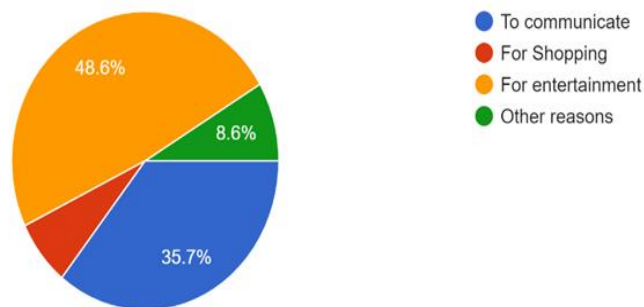
More than 55.7% of the participants claimed that their primary social media of choice is Instagram, followed by 20% who use WhatsApp mostly, 7.1% who use Snapchat, and 7.1% who use Facebook.

- **Why do you primarily use social media?**

Users of various social media platforms may access and engage with a wide range of services, enabling them to buy and experience practically anything entirely online. As a result, users can express themselves, talk about hobbies, exchange and receive information and entertainment, and even produce web content in addition to having discussions.

#### Why do you primarily use Social Media?

70 responses



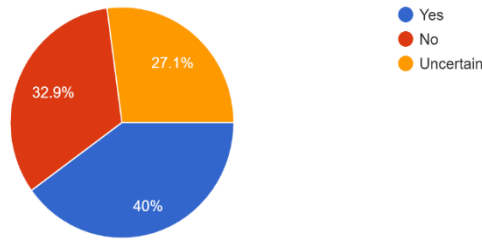
After narrowing down the primary reasons for the use of social media by youth, 48.6% of participants in the survey responded that their principal reason for social media usage was for entertainment, 35.7% for communication, 7.1% for shopping, and 8.6% for other reasons.

- **Has social media had any effect on your mental health?**

In recent years, there has been an increase in research on social media use and youth's mental health. Many of these studies have looked at whether using social media more frequently is linked to issues with depression, disordered eating, body image issues, and emotion dysregulation. According to statistics, people with ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder) are more likely to get sucked into social media's "rabbit hole" and spend less time outside.

Has Social media had any effect on your mental health?

70 responses



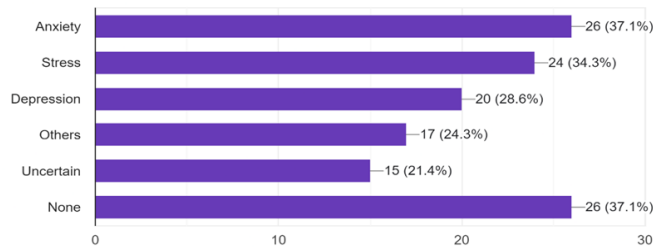
We can deduce from the data above that 40% of the participants had effects on their mental health, compared to 33% who did not. Furthermore, 27% of the participants weren't sure of their answers.

• **What issues have you faced from using Social Media platforms?**

Due to the prevalence of social media and people's frequent use of mobile devices, people are more prone to physical difficulties, such as eye strain and body aches, as well as mental problems, such as depression and separation.

What issues have you faced from using Social Media platforms?

70 responses



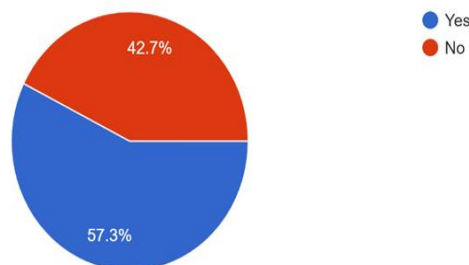
Nearly 55% of the participants have a mental health problem, with another 21% unclear, which is a rather normal sight. One-third of the participants reported having no problems using social media.

• **Have you tried taking a break from social media?**

The best way for teenagers and young people to ensure that their usage of social media has a positive impact on their lives is probably to spend less time on these websites. Therefore, it's critical to understand whether people entirely shun social media in order to deal with their mental health issues.

Have you tried taking a break from social media?

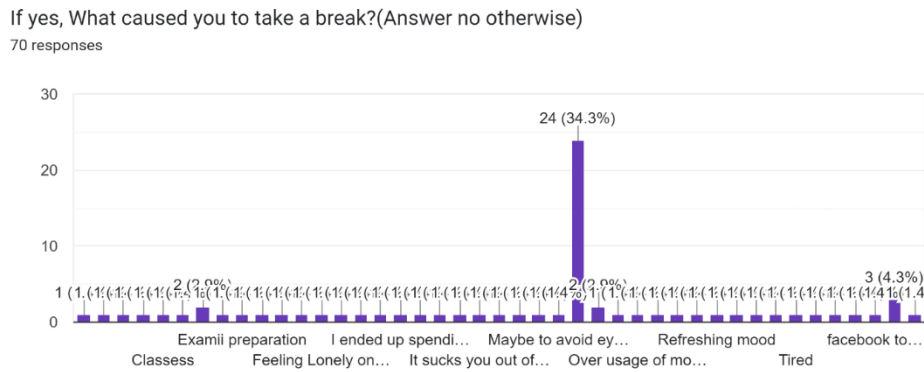
75 responses



With 57% of participants taking a break and the other 42% not, the outcomes were nearly equal. It is clear that social media detoxification is fairly common among young people since more than 50% of them employ it when required.

- **If yes, what caused you to take a break? (Answer no otherwise)**

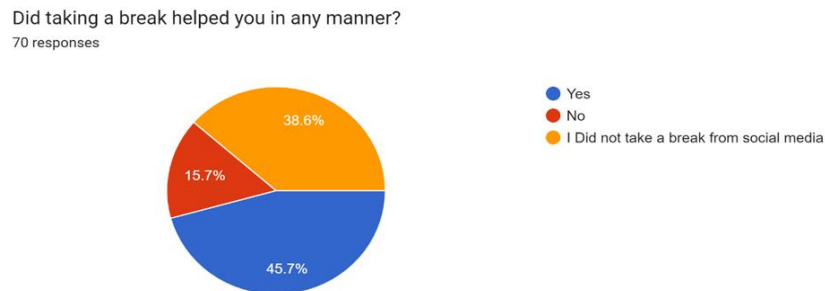
This a follow-up to the prior query asking participants why they are taking a break from social media.



A significant portion of the participants took a break to prepare for tests or to detox for the benefit of their mental health. 34% of respondents, as implied by the previous question, did not take a break.

- **Did taking a break to help you in any manner?**

According to research in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, college students who restricted their usage of Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat to a combined total of 30 minutes per day were more upbeat and had better self-images. After three weeks, the students who limited their social media use to 30 minutes a day reported reduced despair and loneliness, while the students who initially reported "greater degrees of depression" felt better the most.



15% of the participants did not think it helpful to take a break from social media, but nearly 50% of them did. The answers to the questions above suggest that the remaining 39% did not take a break.

- **What made you join back social media?**

It can be difficult to avoid social media because it plays such a big role in our lives. In order to pinpoint the precise reason why the participants returned to social media, the question above was posed.

FOMO
Free time
Networking
Nil
I was bored
.
Nothing
Communication break
Fear of missing out

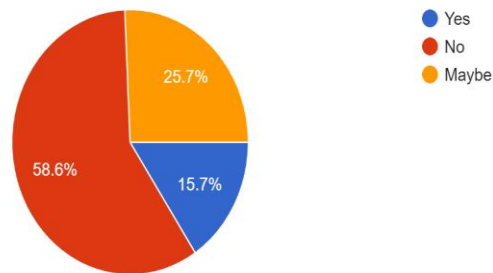
The participants' most frequent response was FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). This fear of missing out encourages young people to constantly try to build up their social media profile in some way, which encourages them to take risks that could put them in an awkward position or result in bullying. This fear of missing out also keeps you tethered to your phone all day, every day.

- **Has social media caused alienation from your peers?**

A person needs at least one or two friends who will listen to them, engage in conversation, and provide enjoyment. And being alone will make anxiousness and this surreal feeling worse, possibly giving you a distorted impression of how the world really works. This is especially true if you are alone when watching Netflix, reading through Instagram, or playing video games.

Has social media caused alienation from your peers?

70 responses



Surprisingly, 60% of the participants said they did not feel alienated from their classmates, whereas 15% said they did and 26% said they were unclear. This suggests that even if the majority of participants have some type of mental health issue, they nevertheless work through it in a group setting with their peers.

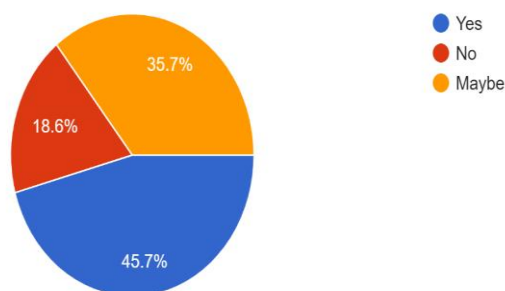
- **Did social media have a positive impact on your life?**

When used effectively, social media can support young people in their real-world connections, whether it is through friendships with other young people who share their interests, academic progress, or participation in hobbies like music, painting, or cooking lessons.

Nowadays, it's practically hard to avoid social media at all, and many people use it to learn about local events and hobbies that encourage them to interact with others, such as hiking clubs, reading clubs, music groups, and art galleries. As a result, it is encouraged to utilize social media, but responsibly.

Did Social Media have a positive impact on your life?

70 responses



As anticipated, over 50% of the participants believed that social media had a good influence on their life, whereas 18% disapproved and 25% were undecided. This demonstrates how, when used properly, social media can be advantageous for people.

- **If yes, what positive impact did social media have on your life? (Answer no if not)**

To learn more about the participants' positive experiences with social media and how they affected their lives, this question was posed.

Was able to know other people's aspects of life

Have a platform to interact

Made me more socially communicative.

Meet new people

lot of my juniors from college reach out to me through social media

Well, I met a lot of cool people on instagram, linkedin and reddit

Entertainment

Nothing

Motivation,learning

The two most frequent pleasant experiences were meeting lots of new people and education, among many others such as entertainment and business.

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## CONCLUSION

With the emergence and rapid prominence of social media, it is vital to understand the impact it has on active users' mental health and relationships. The purpose of this report was to effectively identify and analyze the social media usage and dependency of college students and then evaluate the mental health problems that inevitably follow.

A detailed questionnaire consisting of 12 closed-ended and 3 open-ended questions was actively answered by 70 participants. The age group of the respondents varied from 13 to 21, with a majority male population of 56.3% and a female population of 31.3%, and the frequency, most-used platform, and primary reason for social media usage were also determined. The participants then assessed the state of their mental health based on their social media usage as well as their dependency on it, and whether they tried taking a break and if it was effective. When asked about the overall positive impact that social media has had, 45.7% of the respondents answered in the affirmative, 35.7% were uncertain, and the rest said they had not experienced any positive impact. The replies to the survey were then thoroughly examined to determine the relationship that arises between the answers to various questions and to draw a final inference.

Thus, having gained a better understanding of the impact and the role social media plays in the shaping of the mental health of today's youth and based on the analysis and discussion conveyed, it has been found that there exists a correlation between increased social media use and the presence of various mental health disorders, including anxiety, stress, and depression, among students today. Given the prevalence of social media in everyday life, particularly among today's youth, it is critical to be mindful of its consequences. It is essential to be aware and mindful of good and healthy social media usage because the frequency, duration, and intensity of social media use can have effects on an individual, relational, and societal levels. Therefore, it is vital for researchers, physicians, and anyone working in the field of mental health to not only acknowledge the negative effects of social media use but also to promote awareness. The findings of the study can assist physicians in deciding whether to incorporate the possibility of social media usage as a contributing factor to the client's symptoms in their assessments, help implement early intervention and prevention of mental illness related to social media use, and raise awareness of the benefits of using social media in moderation. In conclusion, this report should also spur discussions and subsequent analysis on therapies, self-help procedures, and inspirational measures to increase motivation for social media users to change their frequent social media usage and alleviate the adverse symptoms linked with social media.

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## SUGGESTION

After getting all findings and discussing the conclusion of collected data the researcher recommends some measures to use social media in the right direction and utilize social media favorable and appropriate manner for its users (Shabir, G., Hameed, Y. M. Y., Safdar, G., & Gilani, S. M. F. S., 2014). Instead of dealing with any mental health issues, youth who positively utilize social media can advance their academic careers, skills, better way of life, and adoption of new trends, art, and humanities, among other things. Focusing on the advantages of technology is a recurrent topic in the materials and suggestions for reducing the detrimental effects of social media on young people's mental health.

### So, what can be done to prevent social media-related mental illness?

- For starters, perhaps the single most effective way for teens and adolescents to ensure their use of social media has a positive impact on their lives is by spending less time using the services.
- Parents and educators must also make sure that children are taught safe internet behaviors to prevent children from developing mental health-related issues.



- Prevent social media from replacing your real life. Social media can be a helpful supplement to your social life when utilized intelligently and intentionally, but only the real-world person sitting across from you can meet the fundamental human need for contentment.
- Always be mindful of your actions and emotions when using social media by planning periodic extended breaks from social media.
- Take control. According to research (Albano, 2021), those who use social media and experience sentiments of envy for others on the site may benefit most from taking a break from it. It's critical to keep in mind that you have the power to act. The platform or app is a tool. You have the power.

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## LIMITATIONS

The study was completed quickly, which resulted in a small number of respondents. Due to the overwhelming number of questions and time constraints, students must deal with as a result of their busy schedules, as previously indicated, one would need to involve a broader audience and include a few more questions in order to get a thorough and accurate analysis.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE:

Q1.) What is your age ?

- a) 13-15
- b) 15-18
- c) 18-21
- d) 21-15

Q2.) Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Others

Q3.) Do you have access to smartphones and the internet?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Occasionally

Q4.) How often do you use social media platforms in a day?

- a) Less than 1 hour
- b) 1-3 hour
- c) 3-5 hour
- d) 5+ hours

Q5.) Which is your most used social media site?

- a) Instagram
- b) Facebook
- c) Snapchat
- d) Whatsapp
- e) Others

Q6.) Why do you primarily use social media?

- a) To communicate
- b) For shopping
- c) For entertainment
- d) Other reasons

Q7.) Has social media had any effect on your mental health?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Uncertain

Q8.) What issues have you faced from using social media platforms? (can choose multiple options)

- a) Anxiety
- b) Stress
- c) Depression
- d) Others
- e) Uncertain
- f) None

Q9.) Have you tried taking a break from social media?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q10.) If yes, what caused you to take a break?

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Q11.) Did taking a break helped you in any manner?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I did not take a break from social media

Q12.) What made you join back social media?

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Q13.) Has social media caused alienation from your peers?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe

Q14.) Did social media have a positive impact on your life?

- a) Yes

b) No

c) Maybe

Q15.) If yes, what positive impact did social media have on your life?

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**GOOGLE FORM LINK:**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeCglagMwviALRTZOYxck4ifSURTvep118GXYGCveGCjIOHNO/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeCglagMwviALRTZOYxck4ifSURTvep118GXYGCveGCjIOHNO/viewform?usp=sf_link)