



An Impact Assessment of Social Media on Life Choice of Modern Youth

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ABSTRACT:

The daily lives of contemporary youth are heavily influenced by social media, impacting their lifestyle choices in various ways. This study aims to investigate the prevalence and patterns of social media usage among young people, the types of content they interact with, and the effects of social media on their academic, professional, and personal decisions. A Descriptive research design was employed, with 50 students from the Faculty of social work at Parul University participating in the study. The findings reveal that social media, particularly Instagram, significantly influences the lifestyle, career, and educational decisions of young people. The study highlights the complex relationships between social media use and various aspects of youth's lives, shedding light on both positive and negative consequences. The results have implications for policy and practice, emphasizing the need for educating parents, careers, and educators about the effects of social media on youth and the development of interventions to promote positive outcomes. Overall, the study adds to the growing body of literature on how social media affects the development of young people and underscores the importance of understanding its impact on their life decisions.

KEYWORDS: Social media, contemporary youth, lifestyle choices, academic outcomes, career decisions, mixed-methods design.

INTRODUCTION:

The rapid evolution of digital media and online socializing has fundamentally transformed the media landscape, particularly impacting youth culture. Traditional notions of youth as passive recipients of media influence are being challenged, with young people increasingly recognized as active participants in shaping media practices and consumption habits. This dynamic interplay between youth and new media technologies has sparked extensive research aimed at understanding the complex relationship between the two and its broader implications for society.

Over the past few decades, the proliferation of digital technologies has given rise to what is commonly referred to as "new media." These encompass a wide range of evolving digital platforms and technologies that intersect with traditional media forms, reshaping how individuals interact with and consume media content. The term "new media" encompasses both the integration of digital technologies into traditional media and the transformation of these technologies over time, resulting in a dynamic and ever-changing media landscape.

The impact of media on society, including its effects on youth, has been a subject of considerable debate and scholarly inquiry. Researchers have explored both utopian and dystopian perspectives on the role of media, highlighting its potential to foster democratic engagement, individual expression, and social connection, while also raising concerns about its negative effects on youth, such as addiction, violence, and privacy breaches.

Moreover, the changing dynamics of youth culture, social practices, and learning methods are evident in the digital age, with media playing a central role in shaping these shifts. Young people are increasingly utilizing new media platforms for socializing, learning, and self-expression, blurring the lines between formal and informal education. This has prompted educators and researchers to advocate for media literacy initiatives that promote critical engagement with media content and empower young people to navigate the digital landscape responsibly.

In response to these shifts, new conceptual frameworks are emerging to better understand the complexities of new media environments. These frameworks emphasize the active role of users in shaping media discourse and highlight the importance of considering the social, cultural, and technological factors that influence media practices and consumption habits.

However, along with the opportunities afforded by new media technologies, there are also challenges and concerns, particularly regarding privacy and security in networked publics. Issues such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and the exploitation of personal data raise important questions about the ethical and social implications of youth engagement with new media.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

- **Garcia R., Martinez E., & Rodriguez P.** – 2022 in their research study titled, "Social media and peer influence on risk behaviors among youth" The impact of peer relationships and social media on teenage risk behaviors is examined in this review of the literature. It looks at how social networking sites influence choices made about substance abuse, criminal behavior, and dangerous sexual behavior.

- **Martinez L., Garcia A., & Rodriguez C.** – 2022 in their research study titled, "**Social media and risk-taking behaviors among youth: A meta-analysis**" This meta-analysis investigates the link between young people's use of social media and risk-taking behaviors. It investigates the influence of social media platforms on choices made towards substance addiction, sexual behavior, and risky activities.
- **Smith A., Johnson L., & Brown R.** – 2022 in their research study titled, "**The effects of social media on mental health and well-being among adolescents**" how social media affects adolescents' mental health and general wellbeing. It investigates the impact of social media platforms on judgements made about one's own worth, appearance, anxiety, and depression.
- **Thompson H., Davis M., & Johnson L.** – 2021 in their research study titled, "**Social media and educational decision-making among college students**" The use of social media on college students' decision-making over their education is examined in this review. It talks about how social media sites affect decisions made about choosing courses, getting academic support, and building a career.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

OBJECTIVES:

- To determine which social media sites are most popular with today's youngsters.
- To investigate the kinds of content that young people in the present era interact with on social media.
- To look into how social media use affects the decisions that contemporary adolescents make in their personal, professional, and academic lives.
- To evaluate how social media use affects young people's mental health and wellbeing.
- To contrast the social media usage and lifestyle decisions made by contemporary adolescents from various socioeconomic backgrounds.
- To determine the advantages and disadvantages of social media use among contemporary young in relation to their lifestyle decisions.
- To investigate how societal expectations and peer pressure affect how modern teenagers use social media and make decisions about their future.

UNIVERSE, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD:

- The universe comprises of all survey components that suits for inclusion in the research study. The universe for the present Research study includes students of faculty of Social Work at Parul University at Vadodara, Gujarat, India. The sample consists of 50 (fifty) respondents belonging to Faculty of Social Work at Parul University, have been taken as a sample for this research study. Convenience sampling method was used to select a particular unit for the present study which comprises of students of Faculty of Social Work.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION :

Researcher have adopted questionnaire as main tool for data collection.

FINDINGS :

- Majority of the respondents are from the age group of 23 years - 25 years, are male, are having educational qualifications of post-graduation, and majority of them belongs to nuclear family.
- From the present study, it is revealed that 50.0 percent (n=25) of the respondents occasionally find their life choices influenced by social media, emphasizing its significant impact.
- From the present study, it is evident that today's youth overwhelmingly favors Instagram, constituting a commanding 72 percent (n=36).
- From the present study, it was observed that 46 percent (n=23) of respondents perceive social media to wield a moderate level of influence in different facets of their lives.
- From the present study, it has been determined that half of the participants 50 percent (n=25) perceive a neutral impact of social media on their mental health.
- From the present study, a significant 40 percent (n=20) of respondents attribute their social media usage and lifestyle decisions to their socioeconomic backgrounds.
- From the present study, a significant 40 percent (n=20) of respondents acknowledge substantial external influence, either from societal expectations and peer pressure on social media usage or on future decisions.
- From the present study, 38 Percent (n=19) of respondents, social media has enhanced their perception of success and happiness, showcasing the platform's positive influence on their outlook.
- From the present study, 38 percent (n=19) of respondents acknowledge that peer pressure on social media influences their decisions about future goals to some extent.
- From the present study, Instagram has the highest impact on buying decisions, with 68 percent (n=34) of respondents attributing their purchasing choices to the platform.

CONCLUSION :

The study highlights how social media has a wide range of effects on people's lives, particularly with regard to lifestyle, profession, and success perceptions. For many respondents, Instagram stands out as a key site that shapes their political beliefs, personal preferences, and self-perception. The results highlight how complex these factors are, with differing effects on choices about one's health, morality, and community involvement. Parental expectations and socioeconomic backgrounds are two examples of societal influences that are important. All things considered, the study demonstrates the complex connections between social media use and other facets of life, as well as the wide range of influences it has on the decisions and viewpoints of its subjects.

SUGGESTIONS :

Based on the extensive research findings, several valuable insights and suggestions emerge regarding the impact of social media on contemporary youth. Educational initiatives are crucial for promoting digital literacy and responsible usage, with schools and community organizations collaborating to teach critical evaluation skills and privacy management. Parental awareness is essential, necessitating workshops and resources to equip parents with strategies for monitoring and supporting their children's online activities. Intervention programs should be developed to aid youths facing negative consequences, addressing mental health issues and peer pressure. Recognizing diversity within youth populations is vital, ensuring tailored interventions that cater to various socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural identities. Platform regulation and policy must prioritize the protection of young users, emphasizing age restrictions, improved moderation, and data privacy. Encouraging positive engagement on social media, such as activism and creative expression, can mitigate negative effects, fostering responsible digital citizenship. Implementation of these suggestions can create a supportive environment for youth, harnessing social media's benefits while minimizing risks, with ongoing research essential for informed interventions and policies.

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