



A Study on the Mental Health Effects of Social Media.

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century has witnessed a transformative influence on communication and connection through various media platforms like Face book, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. These platforms have revolutionized interaction, enabling global sharing of thoughts, experiences, and emotions. This research paper seeks to explore the correlation between the use of social media and mental well-being in today's society, acknowledging the benefits of information dissemination and relationship formation provided by social media while addressing mounting concerns regarding its potential negative impact on mental health.

Media's rise has fundamentally altered how we communicate, fostering global connections and providing a virtual community for sharing experiences and support. Empowering marginalized groups and facilitating self-discovery. However, the integration of media into daily life raises concerns about potential adverse effects on mental well-being.

One significant concern is the prevalence of comparison on social media. Carefully curated profiles showcasing the highlights of individuals' might help to detrimental triggering, envy, and depression. Additionally, the consistent resorce of social media blurs work-life boundaries, contributing to "digital burnout" with increased stress and compromised sleep quality, known risk factors for mental health disorders.

Keywords: - Social media, FOMO, Oral health, Dental anxiety, Bruxism, TMJ Disorders, Teeth grinding, Cyberbullying, Orthodontic Concerns, Social Media Addiction, Online Communities

1. Introduction

The impact extends beyond all age groups who are avid social media users. Adolescence, a critical developmental period, can be influenced positively or negatively by social media. While it provides a platform for expression and connection, it exposes young individuals to cyber bullying, unrealistic beauty standards, and constant peer comparison, contributing to anxiety and depression.

The addictive nature of social media, driven by the reward system of likes and comments, results in "problematic social media use" or addiction. This addiction has lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem, often at the expense of real-world relationships and activities.

It is important to understand that different people respond differently to media in terms of their health because of things like personality types, past medical experiences, and social media usage. While some find it a source of support, others may experience stress or anxiety. Scholars across disciplines are actively researching this complex connection, exploring both the consequences and potential benefits of social media use.

In summary, there is a complex and dynamic interaction between media and mental health that necessitates further research. The purpose of this study is to advance knowledge about the aspects of social media use and how it affects wellbeing. Strategies for encouraging healthy and responsible social media use in our connected digital environment can be informed by taking into account individual traits, as well as pros and cons. In recent years, study and worry about the effects of social media on mental health have grown. Social media platforms have completely changed how individuals connect, share experiences, and express themselves since they constitute an essential component of contemporary communication and information sharing. Social media has many advantages, such making it easier to communicate and creating a feeling of community, but it also has drawbacks that can negatively impact mental health.

Social media's ability to either cause or exacerbate mental health problems is one noteworthy feature. Regular exposure to well chosen, frequently idealised depictions of other people's life might cause emotions of inferiority and social comparison. Low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression can be exacerbated by the pressure to live up to the ideals of beauty, prosperity, and happiness that society perpetuates through the use of these platforms.

1. Objectives And Scope

- Look at the impact of social media use in terms of frequency and duration on mental health.Measuring Social Comparison and Self-esteem

- Investigate how a person's self-esteem and sense of self are affected by regular exposure to well-crafted online identities.
- Examine how social comparison contributes to the emergence of issues with self-esteem and body image. Examining Online Harassment and Cyberbullying
- Recognise the elements that lead to cyberbullying's commission and its victims. Investigating Fear of Missing Out
- Examine how FOMO can affect your mental health, including how it can cause worry, anxiety, and social isolation.
- Consider how your level of life happiness may be impacted by the dread of being left out of social events that are portrayed on social media.

Analysing Dependence and Addiction

- Examine the damaging causes of social media on mental health, particularly any possibility for addiction-like behaviours and withdrawal symptoms.
- Examine the connection between overuse of social media and disturbance of daily routines.

Assessing Beneficial Results and Social Support

- Analyse how social media peer support and online groups can improve mental health outcomes, including resilience and coping mechanisms.

2. Review of Literature

As of 2021, there were over 4.4 billion social media users worldwide (Statista). Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok offer numerous options for self-expression, social interaction, and the dissemination of information. However, with the widespread adoption of social media, cares about its causes on mental health have also surged.

This comprehensive section helps to explore the multifaceted relationship between social media and mental health. We will take both the positive and negative aspects of this interaction, examining how various factors mediate and moderate these effects. We'll also address the issue of cyberbullying and discuss strategies for promoting healthy social media use. Additionally, we'll consider the role of age, generational differences, culture, and the emerging concern of social media addiction.

Positive Effects of social media on Mental Health

Social Connection and Support

Research by Kross et al. (2013) highlights how social media platforms enable individuals to maintain relationships, share experiences, and receive emotional support from friends and family, irrespective of geographical distances. For example, a person living far away from their family can stay connected through video calls, messaging, and sharing updates on social media platforms. This ability to bridge physical distances contributes to feelings of connectedness.

Online Communities and Identity Formation

Social media platforms give a unique opportunity for individuals to find like-minded communities, share their interests, and explore their identities. These online communities can be particularly empowering for marginalized groups. Research by Subrahmanyam et al. (2008) suggests that online spaces provide a sense of belonging and acceptance for individuals who may not find these opportunities in their immediate physical surroundings. For example, LGBTQ+ communities have found a safe haven on social media to connect, share stories, and advocate for their rights (Mendoza et al., 2020). This sense of belonging and identity formation positively influences mental health.

Social Identity Theory

Social media platforms can fulfill this need for social identity by giving individuals to network with others who share their values and interests. Research by Jetten et al. (2012) supports this idea, highlighting how online communities formed on social media platforms contribute positively to mental well-being. These platforms enable users to establish a sense of belonging and self-worth by associating with groups that align with their identities and beliefs.

The Buffering Hypothesis

The Buffering Hypothesis posits that social media can serve as a buffer against loneliness and depression, especially when real-world social opportunities are limited (Primack et al., 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to physical distancing measures and lockdowns, provided a unique context to observe this phenomenon. Liu et al. (2020) found that during times of isolation, social media served as a lifeline for many, enabling them to maintain social connections and access emotional support. In essence, social media acted as a coping mechanism, alleviating the negative mental health impacts of social isolation.

Emotional Expression and Creativity

Social media platforms offer individuals a canvas for self-expression, offering them to share creativity, talents, and unique perspectives with a global audience. This avenue for self-discovery and empowerment can positively impact mental well-being (Błachnio et al., 2016). Users often find joy and fulfilment in sharing their achievements, art, and passions, contributing to their overall happiness and self-esteem.

Negative Effects of social media on Mental Health

Comparison and Self-Esteem

This phenomenon leads to social comparison, where individuals perceive their own lives as falling short in comparison, triggering feelings of inadequacy, envy, and low self-esteem (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). For instance, a person scrolling through their social media feed may encounter images of friends on luxurious vacations, seemingly perfect relationships, or enviable lifestyles. Such comparisons can have detrimental effects on self-esteem and mental well-being.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is the anxiety people feel when they perceive that others are having enjoyable experiences without them. Social media platforms often amplify FOMO as users witness their friends' posts about events they weren't invited to or activities they can't participate in (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Dopamine and Reward System

This can create addictive behaviors, with users seeking constant validation through likes, comments, and shares, which can contribute to anxiety and a compulsive need for social media engagement (Ryan et al., 2014). The instant gratification provided by social media interactions can lead to a cycle of seeking rewards that can negatively affect mental health.

Selective Self-Presentation

Many individuals selectively present only positive aspects of their lives on social media while concealing negative ones. This phenomenon, known as selective self-presentation, contributes to the "Facebook Effect," where users perceive others as having happier lives than they actually do (Tandoc et al., 2015). This distortion can lead to increased feelings of dissatisfaction and depression. For example, someone might post photos of their recent achievements and adventures, but they may omit mentioning personal challenges or setbacks, creating an unrealistic image of their life.

Online Disinhibition Effect

This online effect can lead to cyberbullying, harassment, and negative emotional impacts on both the perpetrators and victims (Kowalski et al., 2014). The anonymity and detachment afforded by social media can exacerbate hostile behaviour, resulting in emotional distress for those involved.

Moderating and Mediating Factors

Personality Traits

Individual differences in personality traits play a significant role in how social media affect mental health. For instance, people with high levels of neuroticism may be more susceptible to negative emotions triggered by social media, while those with high extraversion may thrive on social interaction and support (Verduyn et al., 2015). Understanding how personality traits influence an individual's response to social media can provide insights into their mental health outcomes.

Coping Strategies

The way individuals cope with negative experiences on social media can mediate its impact on mental health. Adaptive coping strategies, such as seeking emotional support or taking breaks from social media, can help mitigate negative effects, whereas maladaptive strategies, like rumination or social comparison, can exacerbate them (Shensa et al., 2017). Recognizing and implementing appropriate coping mechanisms is essential for managing the emotional consequences.

Quality of Online Relationships

The quality of online relationships and interactions is crucial. Positive and supportive online connections can enhance mental well-being, while toxic or confrontational interactions can lead to distress (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Developing healthy online relationships and setting boundaries is essential for maintaining positive mental health. For instance, individuals who engage in meaningful and supportive conversations on social media are likely to experience improved mental well-being compared to those exposed to negativity or hostility.

Time and Usage Patterns

The timing and patterns of social media usage also affect mental health. Mindful and balanced use of social media is essential to avoid overexposure and negative consequences. For example, setting limits on screen time or avoiding social media before sleep can contribute to better mental health.

Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Prevalence and Types of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying and online harassment are critical concerns in the digital age. Research by Patchin and Hinduja (2018) highlights the prevalence of various forms of cyberbullying, including hurtful messages, sexual harassment, defamation, and threats. The anonymity provided by social media can embolden bullies and make victims more vulnerable (Kowalski et al., 2014). Understanding the types and prevalence of cyberbullying is essential to address this issue effectively.

Coping with Cyberbullying

Addressing the negative mental health consequences of cyberbullying involves effective coping strategies. Many victims' resort to blocking bullies, ignoring hurtful messages, or reporting abusive content to platform administrators (Raskauskas&Stoltz, 2007). Identifying and implementing appropriate coping mechanisms is crucial for mitigating the emotional distress caused by cyberbullying.

The Role of Social Media Platforms

They are responsible for implementing policies, algorithms, and reporting mechanisms to prevent and respond to abusive behaviour (Nixon et al., 2016). Effective moderation and proactive measures to curb cyberbullying can significantly impact the mental health of users.

Strategies for Prevention and Intervention

Efforts to prevent and intervene in cyberbullying require a multi-pronged approach. Schools, parents, and communities must educate individuals about responsible online behavior and the consequences of cyberbullying (Hinduja &Patchin, 2015). Furthermore, providing resources and support for victims and implementing legal consequences for perpetrators are essential components of a comprehensive strategy to combat cyberbullying.

The Impact of Age and Generational Differences

Adolescents and Young Adults

Adolescents and young adults, in particular, related to the effects of social media due to their developmental stage and reliance on digital platforms for social interaction (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Adolescents may experience intensified effects of social comparison, FOMO, and cyberbullying, making it critical to understand how social media affects their mental health.

Older Adults

Older adults, on the other hand, may have unique experiences with social media. Research by Chopik et al. (2020) suggests that older adults who use social media for positive interactions, such as connecting with family and friends, report higher life satisfaction and reduced loneliness. However, they may also encounter challenges related to privacy and online security. Understanding how social media can positively impact the mental health of older adults while addressing potential concerns is vital.

Cultural Considerations

Cultural Variations in Social Media Use

The relationship between social media and mental health is caused by cultural variations in how individuals use these platforms. For example, collectivist cultures may place a higher emphasis on social connections and support through social media, while individualistic cultures may prioritize self-expression and identity formation (Kim &Dindia, 2019). Understanding these cultural variations is crucial in assessing the cause of social media on mental health across diverse populations.

Cultural Perceptions of Mental Health

Cultural perceptions of mental health can also influence how individuals navigate the challenges posed by social media. Stigma surrounding mental health issues varies across cultures, impacting the willingness to seek help or disclose emotional struggles online (Chong et al., 2016). Bridging the gap between cultural perceptions and mental health support on social media is essential for ensuring that individuals from different cultural backgrounds receive the assistance they need.

The Intersection of Culture, social media, and Mental Health

The intersection of culture, social media, and mental health is a complex terrain that warrants further exploration. Cultural norms, values, and expectations shape the way individuals engage with social media and the psychological impact it has on them. Researchers and practitioners must consider these cultural nuances when designing interventions and support systems.

Social Media Addiction: A Growing Concern

Conceptualizing Social Media Addiction

The concept of social media addiction has gained traction as more individuals exhibit behaviours indicative of excessive and compulsive social media use (Kuss& Griffiths, 2017). Understanding the characteristics and criteria that define social media addiction is crucial for identifying individuals at risk and developing appropriate interventions.

Signs and Symptoms

Social media addiction is characterized by signs and symptoms similar to other addictive disorders. Individuals may experience cravings, withdrawal symptoms, and a loss of control over their social media use (Andreassen et al., 2017). Recognizing these signs is essential for early intervention and prevention.

The Role of social media in Mental Health Promotion

Online Mental Health Resources

Social media platforms provide a valuable space for the dissemination of mental health resources, information, and support. Numerous organizations and individuals use these platforms to raise awareness, share coping strategies, and offer guidance on mental health issues (Gulla & Griffiths, 2018). This accessibility to mental health information can empower individuals to seek help and support.

Raising Mental Health Awareness

Social media campaigns and initiatives have played a vital role in raising awareness about mental health issues (Clement et al., 2015). Platforms like Instagram and Twitter have seen the rise of mental health advocacy movements that encourage open conversations about mental health challenges and experiences.

Digital Therapeutics and Teletherapy

Advancements in digital health have led to the development of digital therapeutics and teletherapy services delivered through social media platforms (Firth et al., 2017). These interventions offer evidence-based mental health support, making treatment more accessible and convenient for individuals in need. Integrating mental health services into social media can revolutionize mental health care.

Strategies for Promoting Healthy Social Media Use

Education and Digital Literacy

Educating individuals, particularly young users, about responsible digital citizenship and digital literacy is crucial (Livingstone et al., 2017). Teaching critical thinking skills and the ability to discern credible information from misinformation can help individuals navigate social media more safely.

Digital Detox and Mindfulness

Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and self-reflection, can also help users maintain a healthy relationship with social media (Seabrook et al., 2016).

Setting Boundaries and Self-Regulation

Empowering individuals to set boundaries and practice self-regulation in their social media use is essential (Ryan et al., 2014). This includes establishing limits on screen time, managing notifications, and being mindful of the emotional impact of specific content.

Technological Interventions

Technological solutions, such as apps and tools that track screen time and provide usage insights, can assist individuals in managing their social media consumption (Turel et al., 2018). These interventions empower users to make informed decisions about their digital habits.

Future Directions in Research

Emerging Platforms and Technologies

As technology continues to evolve, researchers must stay updated on emerging social media platforms and technologies. Investigating the impact of new platforms and features on mental health is essential to understand the evolving landscape.

Cross-Cultural Research

Comparing findings across different cultural contexts can highlight the universal and culturally specific aspects of this relationship.

Interdisciplinary Approaches

Interdisciplinary collaborations between psychologists, sociologists, computer scientists, and other experts can lead to a few holistic understanding of the connection between social media and mental health. Incorporating diverse perspectives and methodologies can generate innovative solutions and interventions.

Conclusion

While social media offers numerous positive effects, such as social connection, support, and identity formation, it also poses negative consequences, including social comparison, FOMO, and the potential for addiction. The impact of social media varies across age groups, generations, and cultures, making it essential to consider these factors in research and interventions.

Addressing the challenges posed by social media requires a comprehensive approach, including education, technological solutions, and responsible usage. It is crucial to recognize that social media platforms play a crucial role in creating mental health awareness, providing resources, and facilitating peer support. Additionally, future research should focus on emerging platforms, longitudinal studies, cross-cultural investigations, and interdisciplinary collaborations to further our understanding of this complex relationship.

Ultimately, as social media continues to shape our digital landscape, the quest to harness its benefits while mitigating its potential harm to mental health remains an ongoing endeavor. By addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by social media.

3. Research Methodology

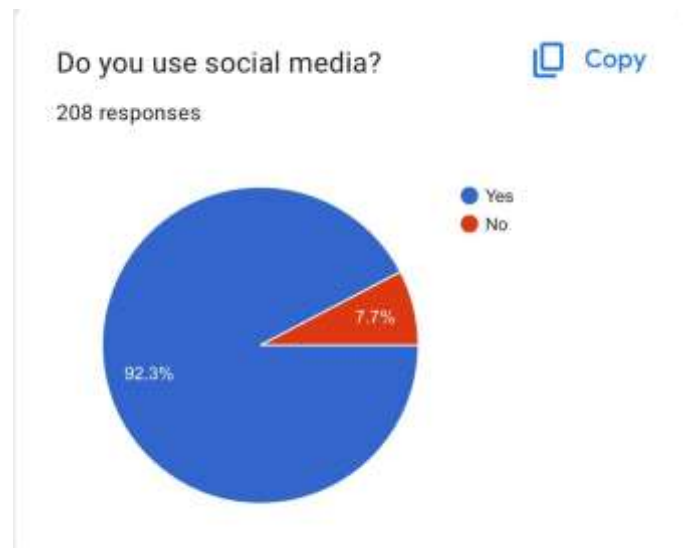
The survey targeted individuals' time invested on social media, the platforms used, and aimed to identify self-reported mental health issues. The study specifically focused on two generational, with a total of 126 participants (100 from Generation Z and 26 from the Millennial generation). The study's power score, indicating its ability to recruit participants, was 0.96.

After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, participants were provided with a consent form, and data collection occurred through two sources. First, the survey was administered to students in an introductory psychology course, targeting a younger age group (Generation Z) and attracting some Millennial respondents. Second, the survey was featured on Facebook and distributed to University of Northern Colorado Honors Program alumni through a newsletter, aiming to attract Millennials. Qualtrics was utilized for data collection on specific social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter).

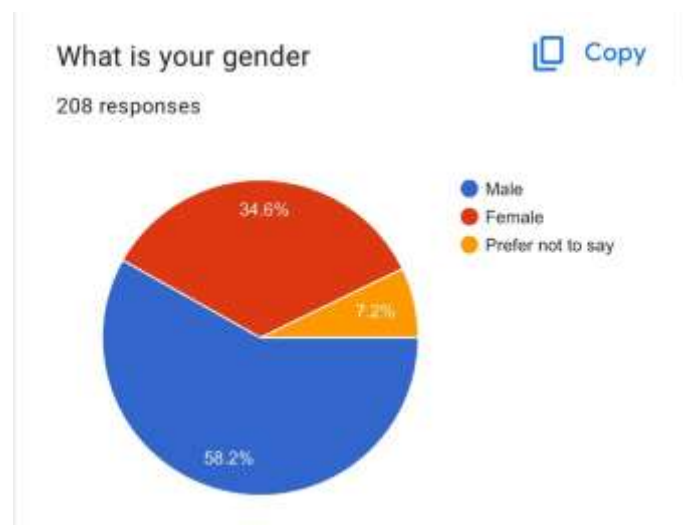
The analysis involved independent t-tests using IBM SPSS software, converting survey responses to a Likert scale. Multiple t-tests were conducted for each scale, comparing data between the two generations at a significance level of 0.05.

The study aimed to address gaps in previous research, specifically focusing on the effect of social media on mental health in different age groups. Hypotheses were formulated to guide the data collection and analysis process, exploring potential differences in depression, anxiety, stress, self-esteem, and social media use between the two generational groups.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

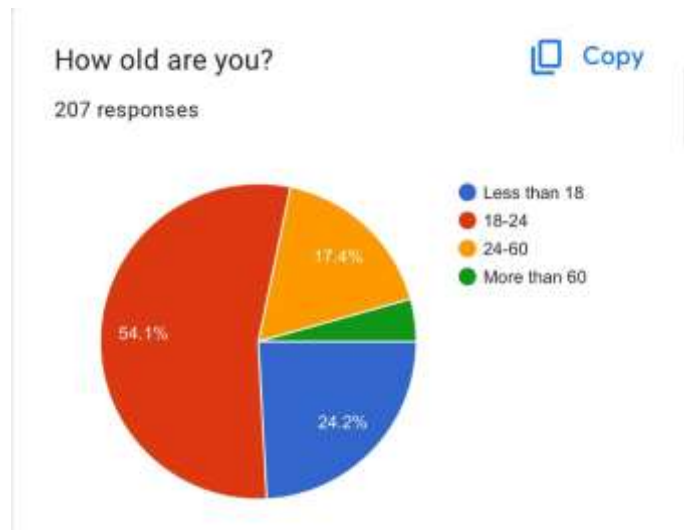


Among the 208 respondents, 92.3% use social media, while 7.7% do not. This translates to roughly 192 individuals using social media and approximately 16 individuals not using it.



The majority of respondents, 58.2%, identify as male.

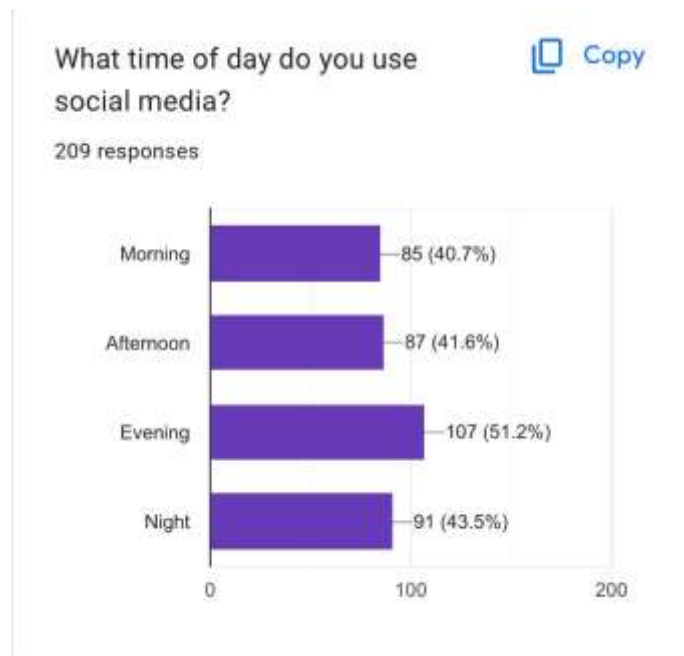
- Approximately 34.6% of respondents identify as female.
- A smaller portion, 7.2%, preferred not to disclose their gender.
- This distribution indicates a higher representation of males among the respondents, followed by females, with a minority preferring not to disclose their gender.



Less than 18: 24.2%

- 18-24: 54.1%
- 25-60: 17.4%
- More than 60: 0%

This indicates that the majority of respondents fall within the 18-24 age range, with a significant portion being younger than 18. There are no respondents over the age of 60 in the dataset.

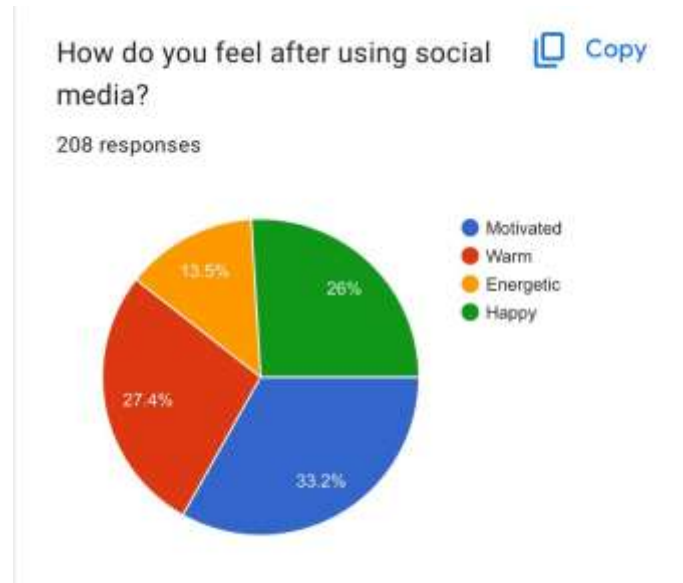


The data indicates that after using social media:

- 33.2% of respondents feel motivated
- 27.4% feel warm
- 26% feel happy

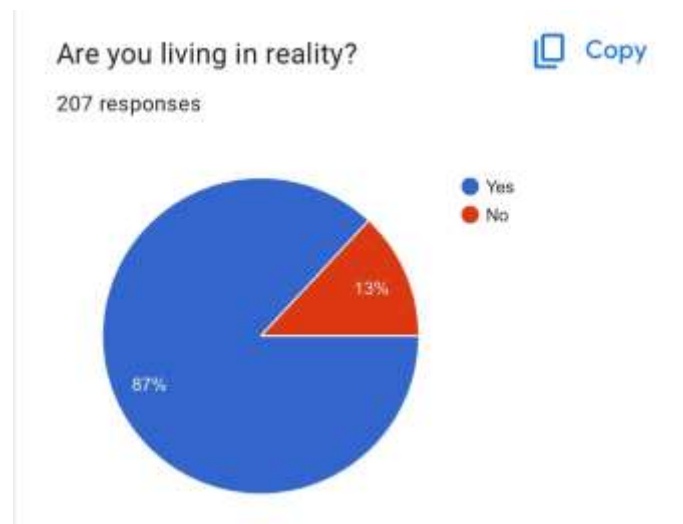
- 13.5% feel energized

This suggests that a considerable portion of users experiences positive emotions like motivation and warmth, while fewer report feeling energized.



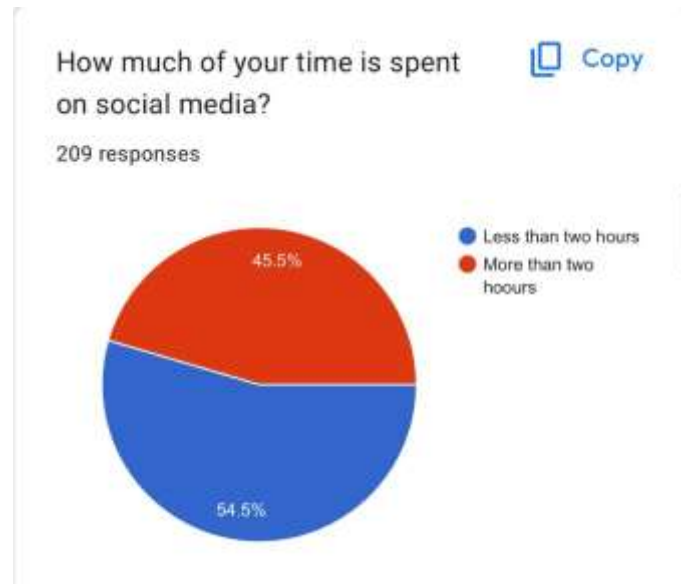
- Morning: 40.7%
- Afternoon: 41.6%
- Evening: 51.2%
- Night: 43.5%

It appears that the evening is the most common time for social media usage among respondents, followed closely by the afternoon. Morning and night usage are also fairly common, but slightly lower compared to the afternoon and evening.



- 13% of respondents indicated “no” to the question “Are you living in reality?”
- 87% of respondents answered “yes”

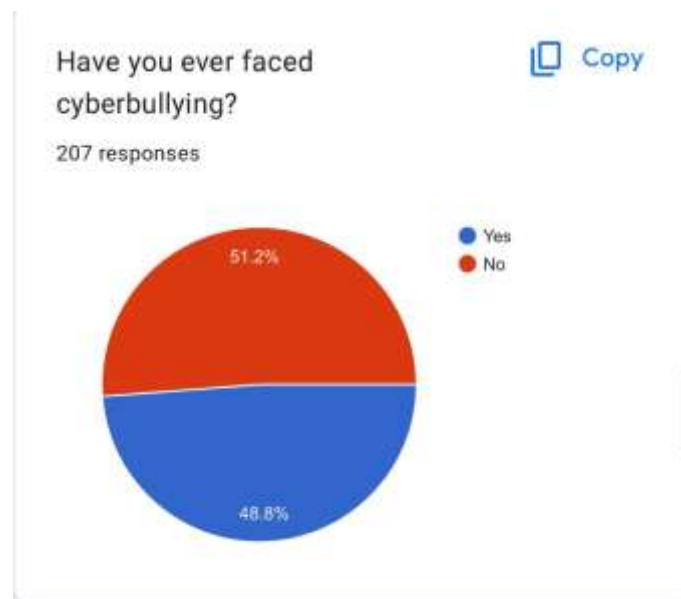
These percentages suggest that the majority of respondents feel they are living in reality, while a smaller portion do not.



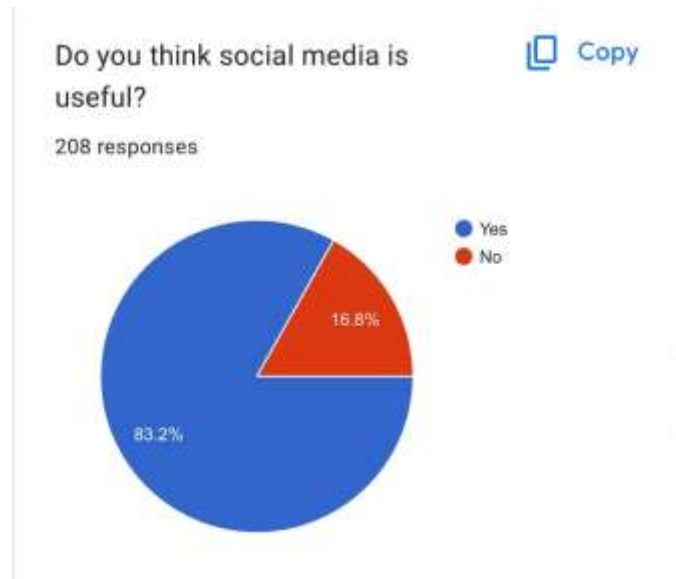
45.5% of respondents spend less than two hours on social media.

- 54.5% of respondents spend more than two hours on social media.

This indicates that a slight majority of respondents spend more than two hours on social media, while a significant portion spends less time.



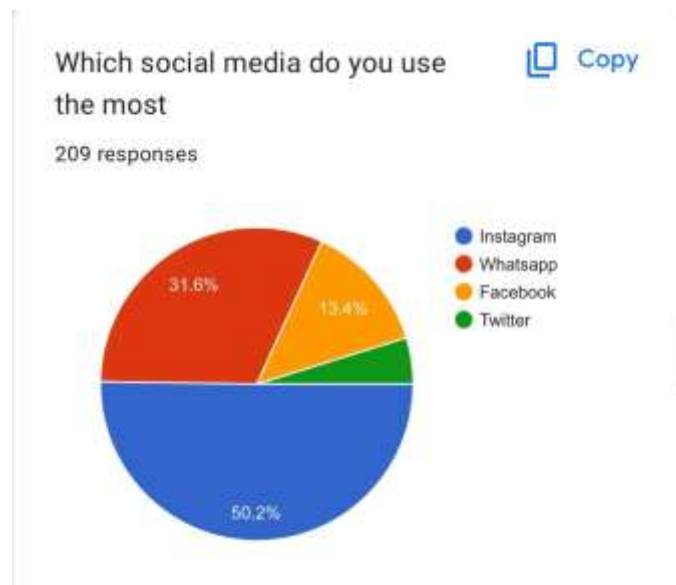
This suggests that cyberbullying is a significant issue, with nearly half of the respondents indicating they have encountered it at some point.



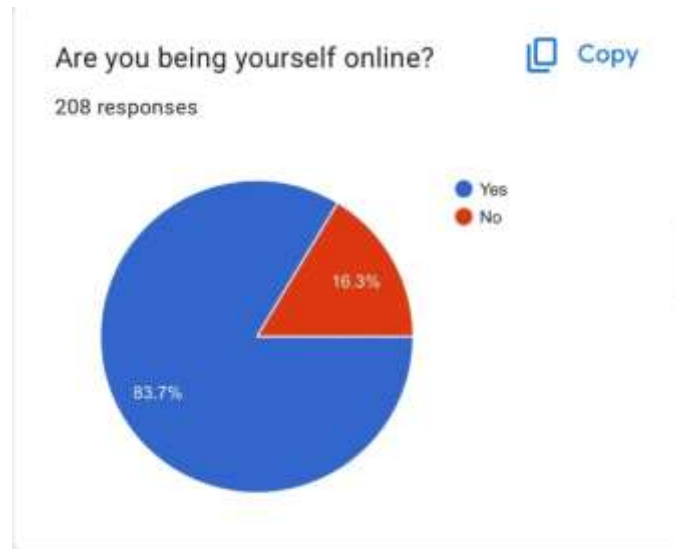
16.3% of respondents indicated “no” to the question “Are you being yourself online?”

- 83.7% of respondents answered “yes”

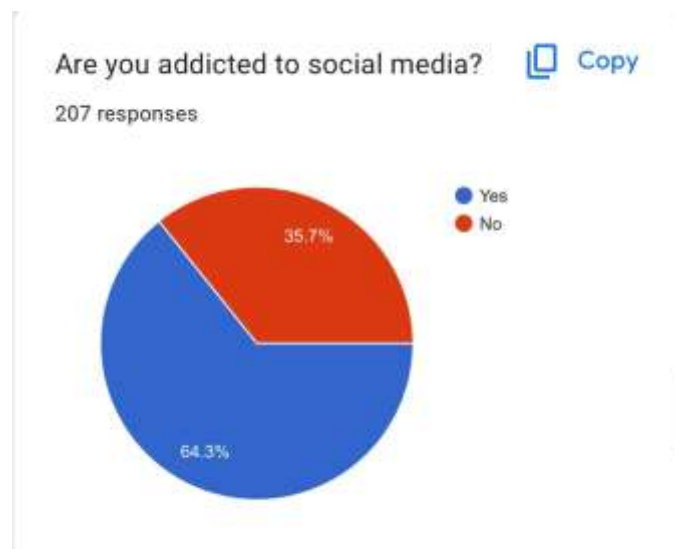
This suggests that the majority of respondents feel they are being themselves online, while a smaller portion do not.



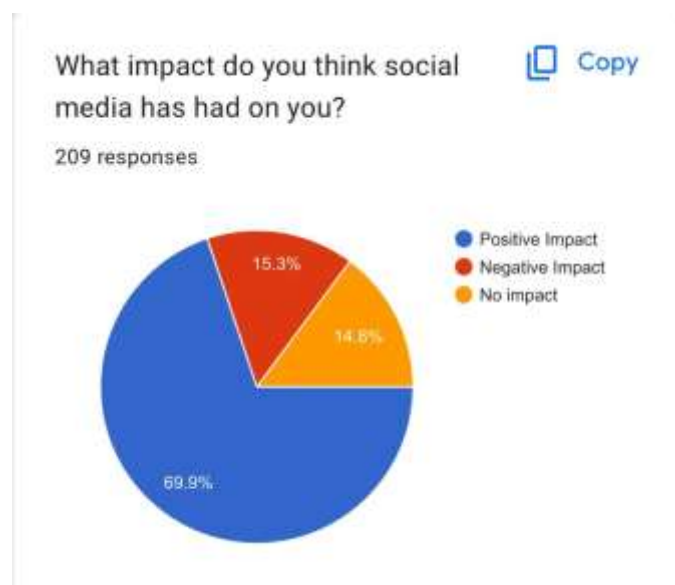
This indicates that Instagram is the most popular social media platform among the respondents, followed by WhatsApp and Facebook, while Twitter doesn't seem to be used the most by any respondent.



The majority of respondents find social media to be useful, while a smaller portion do not.



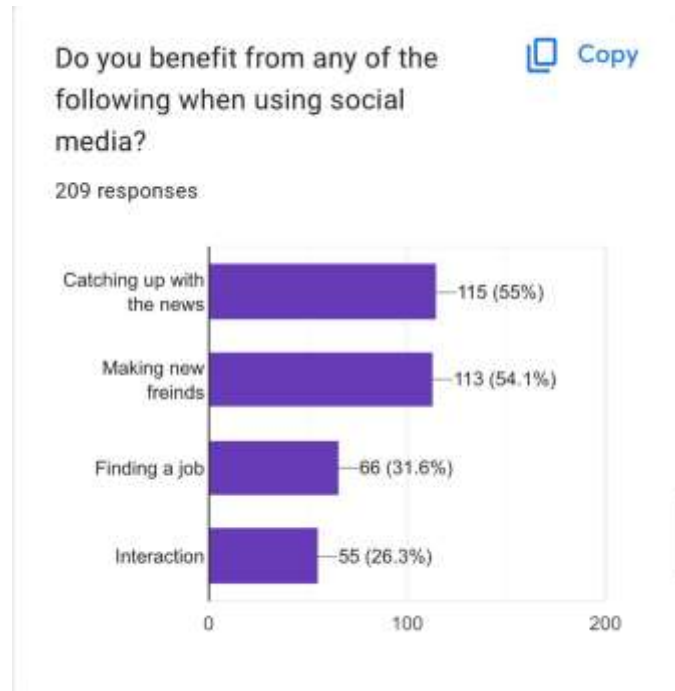
A significant portion of respondents consider themselves addicted to social media, while smaller portions do not.



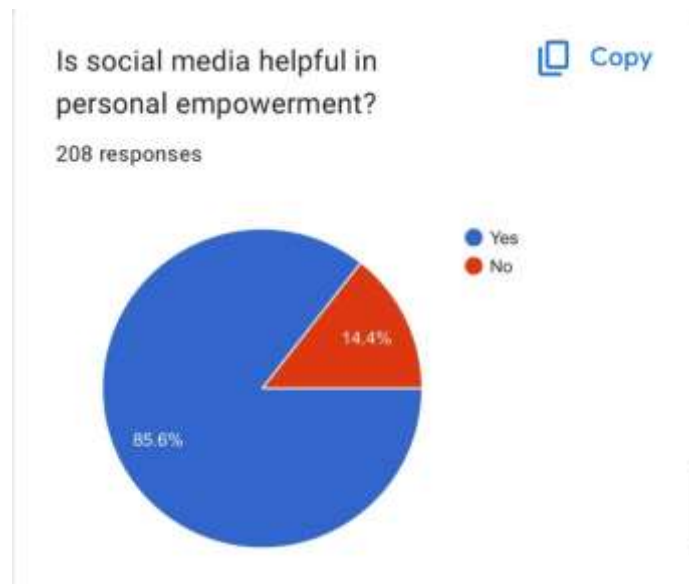
- 15.3% of respondents believe social media has had a negative impact on them.

- 14.8% of respondents indicated “no impact” from social media.
- 69.9% of respondents believe social media has had a positive impact on them.

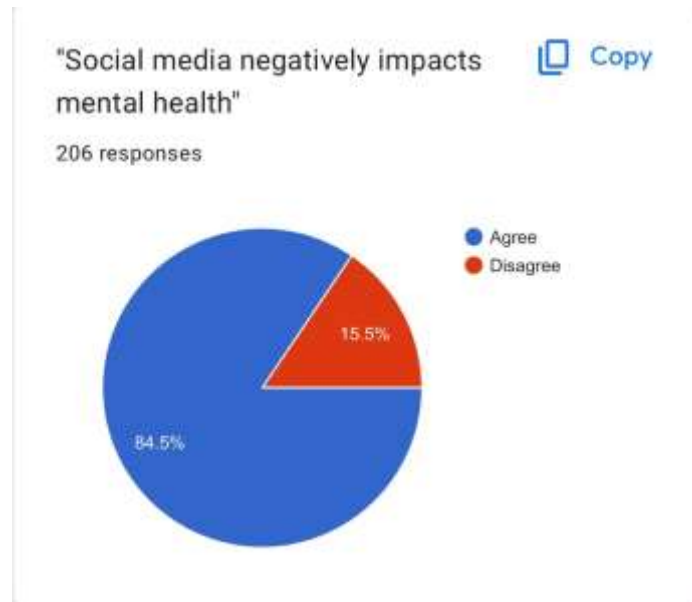
This suggests that the majority of respondents perceive social media to have a positive impact on them, while a smaller portion perceive a negative impact, and some report no impact at all.



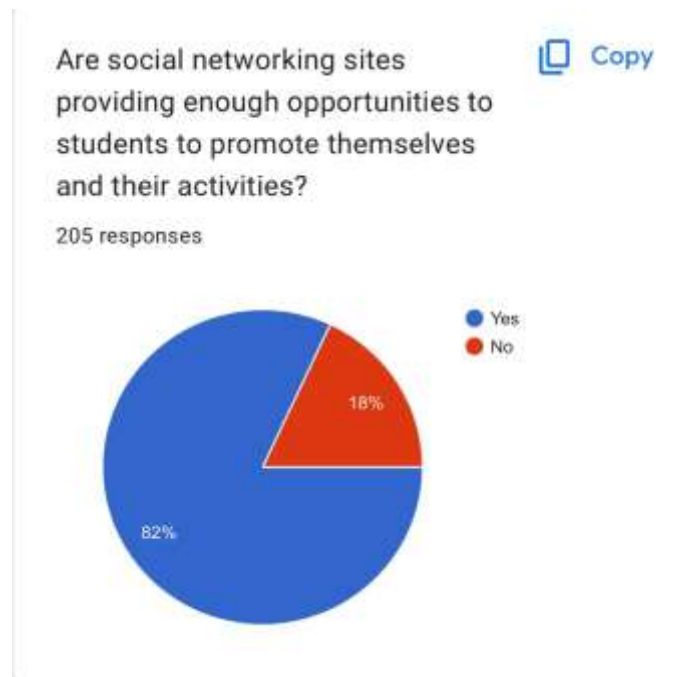
These results suggest that catching up with the news and making new friends are the most common benefits of using social media among respondents, followed by finding a job and interaction.



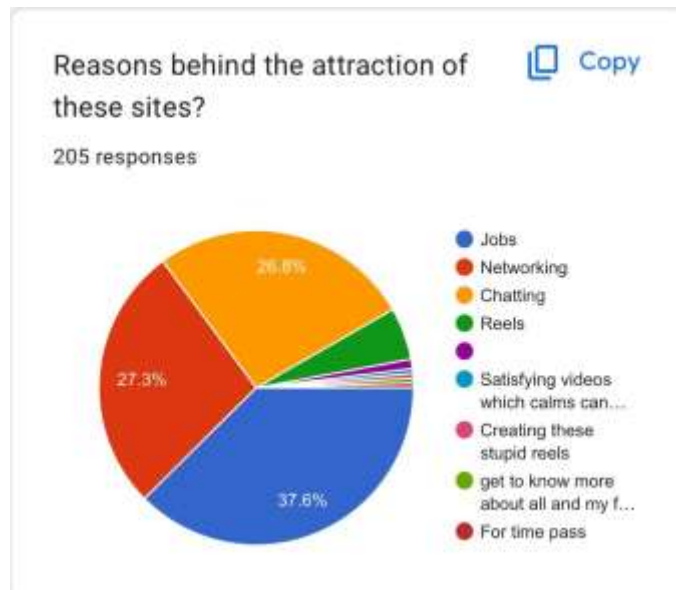
The majority of respondents believe that social media is helpful in personal empowerment, while a smaller portion do not.



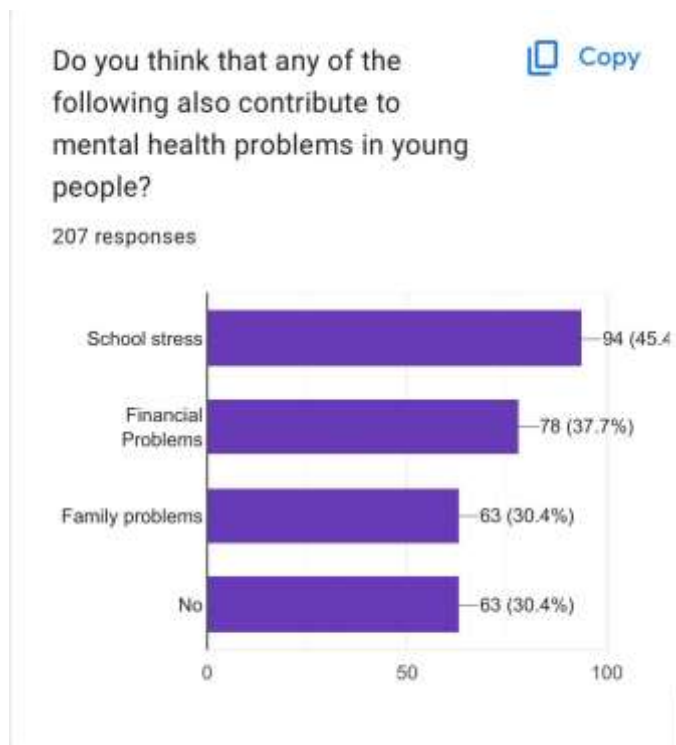
The data indicates that a small percentage of respondents believe social media negatively impacts mental health, while the majority disagree with this statement.



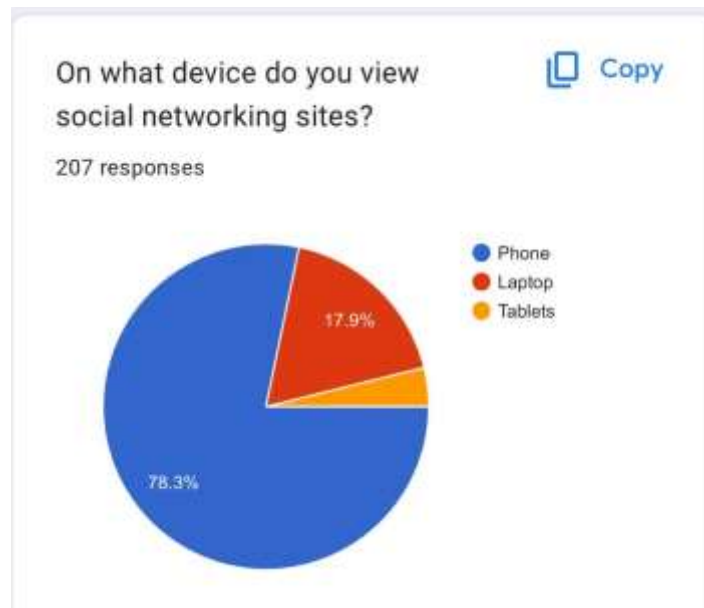
This suggests that the majority of respondents feel that social networking sites are effective platforms for students to showcase themselves and their activities.



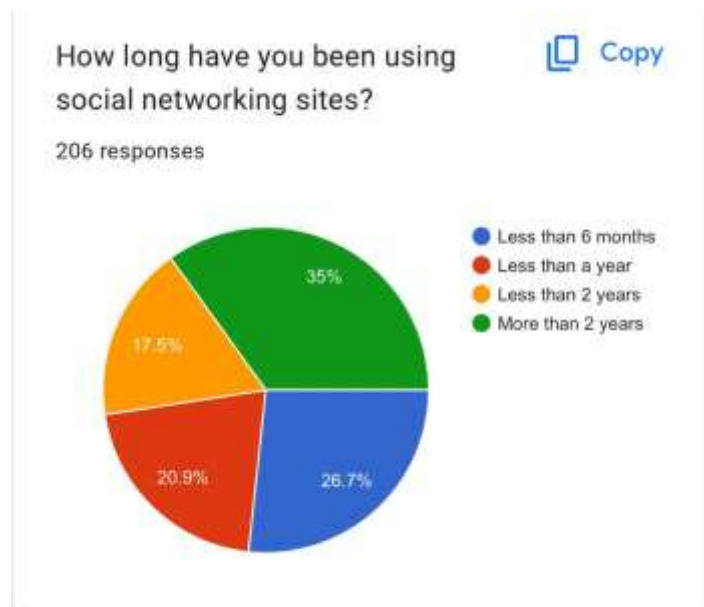
These findings highlight the diverse ways in which social media platforms serve users, from socializing and networking to advancing career goals and accessing job opportunities.



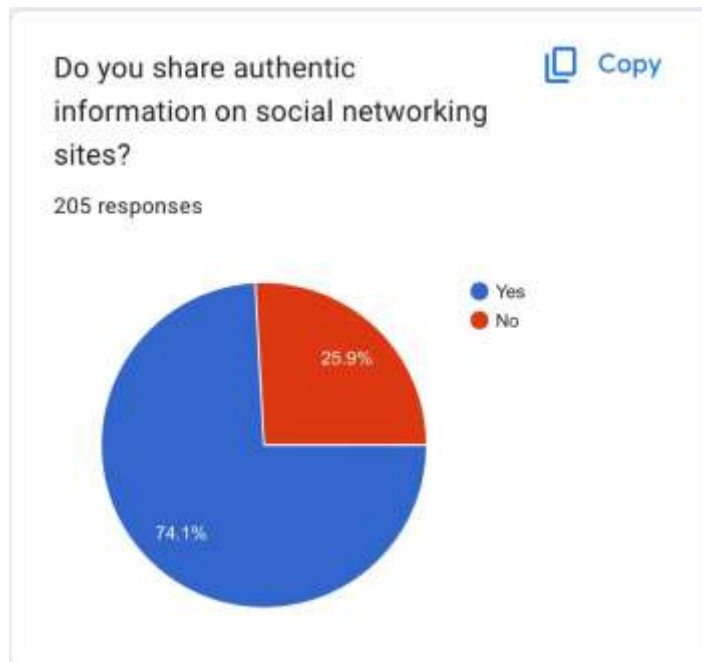
These results suggest that school stress is perceived as the most significant contributor to mental health problems in young people, followed by financial problems and family issues. Additionally, a portion of respondents did not see any of the listed factors as contributors to mental health problems in young people.



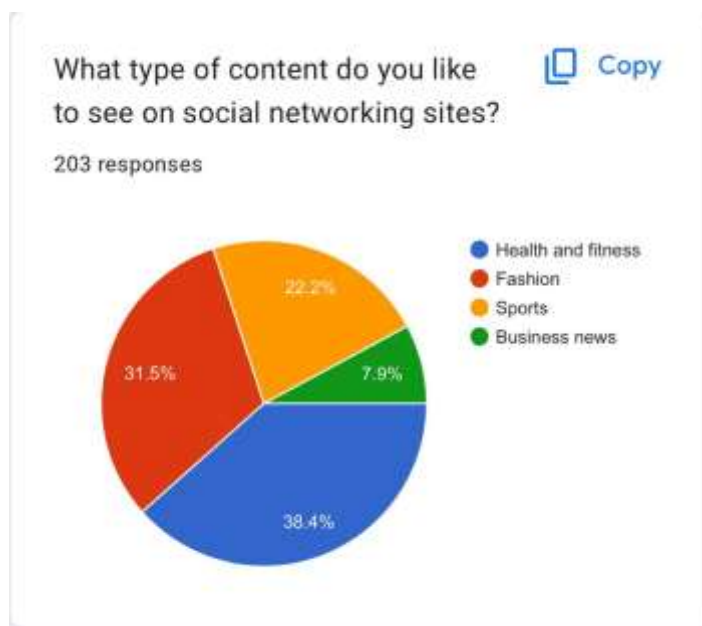
This indicates that the majority of respondents prefer to access social networking sites on their phones, with a smaller portion using laptops for this purpose.



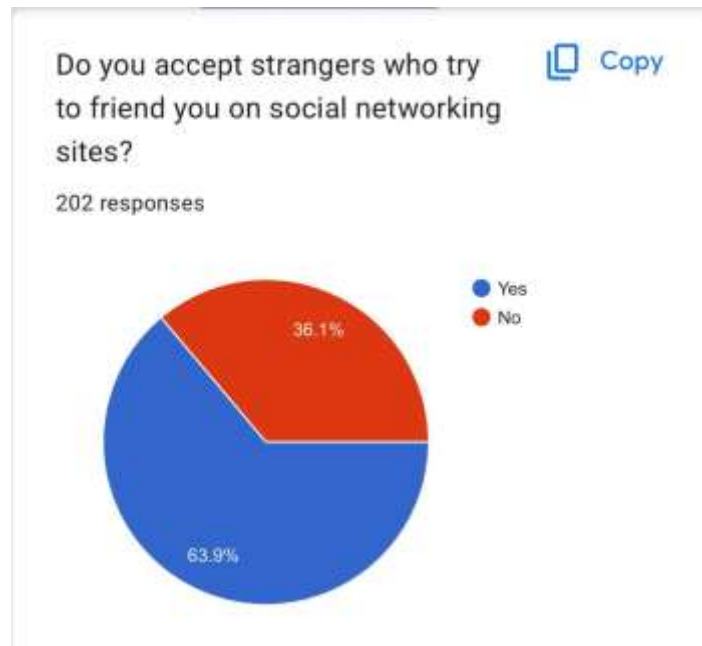
These results show a range of durations for social networking site usage among respondents, with a significant portion having used them for more than 2 years, while others are relatively new users, with less than 6 months or less than a year of experience.



The majority of respondents believe they share authentic information on social networking sites, while a smaller portion do not.



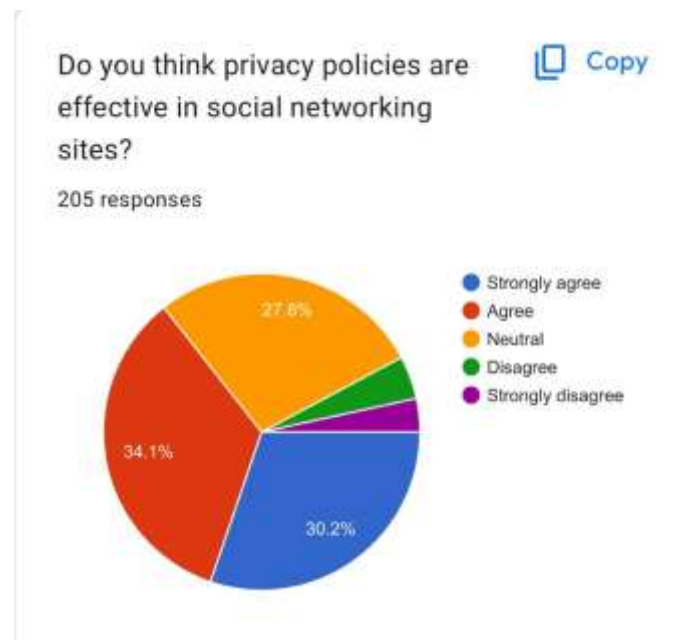
This indicates that respondents have diverse preferences for the type of content they like to see on social networking sites, including sports, fashion, business news, and health/fitness-related content.



36.1% of respondents indicated that they do not accept strangers who try to friend them on social networking sites.

63.9% of respondents answered “yes,” indicating that they do accept strangers who try to friend them on social networking sites.

This suggests that a majority of respondents are open to accepting friend requests from strangers on social networking sites, while a significant portion prefer not to.



This suggests that a majority of respondents believe privacy policies on social networking sites are effective, with a significant portion either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. However, there is also a notable portion that is neutral about the effectiveness of these policies.

5. Findings and Discussion

- Social Media Usage and Demographics:
 - High social media usage: 92.3% of respondents use social media.
 - Gender distribution: 58.2% male, 34.6% female, 7.2% undisclosed.
 - Age distribution: Majority (54.1%) falls within 18-24 age range.

- Emotional Impact of Social Media:
 - Positive emotions: 33.2% motivated, 27.4% warm, 26% happy.
 - Less common: 13.5% feel energized after using social media.
- Time of Social Media Usage:
 - Evening most common: 51.2%, followed by afternoon (41.6%).
 - Morning: 40.7%, Night: 43.5%.
- Perception of Reality:
 - 87% respondents feel they are living in reality, 13% do not.
- Duration of Social Media Usage:
 - Majority (54.5%) spend more than two hours on social media.
- Encountering Cyberbullying:
 - 48.1% of respondents have encountered cyberbullying.
- Authenticity Online:
 - 83.7% believe they are themselves online, 16.3% do not.
- Preferred Social Media Platforms:
 - Instagram most popular (notable presence), followed by WhatsApp and Facebook.
- Perceived Addiction:
 - Significant portion believes they are addicted to social media.
- Impact Perception:
 - Positive impact: 69.9%, Negative impact: 15.3%, No impact: 14.8%.
- Benefits of Social Media:
 - Catching up with news and making new friends most common benefits.
- Personal Empowerment:
 - Majority believes social media is helpful in personal empowerment.
- Effectiveness for Students:
 - Majority believe social networking sites are effective platforms for students.
- Diverse Platform Usage:
 - Diverse ways in which social media serves users, from socializing to career advancement.
- Contributors to Mental Health Problems:
 - School stress perceived as the most significant contributor, followed by financial problems and family issues.
- Device Preferences:
 - Majority prefer accessing social networking sites on their phones.
- Duration of Usage:
 - Range of durations, with some users having more than 2 years of experience.
- Information Authenticity:
 - Majority believe they share authentic information on social networking sites.
- Content Preferences:
 - Diverse preferences for content, including sports, fashion, business news, and health/fitness.
- Acceptance of Strangers:

- Majority open to accepting friend requests from strangers.
- Perception of Privacy Policies:
 - Majority believe privacy policies on social networking sites are effective.

Discussion:

- High social media usage among respondents, especially in the 18-24 age range, aligns with broader trends.
- Positive emotional impact and motivations after using social media highlight its potential for positive experiences.
- Evening and afternoon being popular usage times suggest social media is integrated into daily routines.
- Perception of living in reality and authenticity online indicates a sense of genuine self-expression.
- Encounter with cyberbullying highlights a significant challenge in the digital space.
- The popularity of Instagram and the perception of addiction may indicate the platform's engaging nature.
- Diverse preferences for content and acceptance of strangers reveal varied user behaviors.
- Positive perceptions of personal empowerment and effectiveness for students underscore social media's positive aspects.
- Perceived contributors to mental health problems shed light on stressors affecting young individuals.
- Device preferences and duration of usage provide insights into user habits.
- The majority believing in the effectiveness of privacy policies indicates a level of trust in social media platforms.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey of 208 respondents provides a comprehensive overview of social media usage patterns, demographics, emotional experiences, and perceptions among the surveyed population. Key findings include a high prevalence of social media use, with Instagram emerging as the most popular platform. The majority of respondents, predominantly in the 18-24 age range, reported positive emotional experiences after using social media. Additionally, the study shed light on concerns such as cyberbullying and perceived addiction, though a majority believe in the positive impact and usefulness of social media.

Recommendations:

1. Address Cyberbullying:
 - Implement or enhance anti-cyberbullying measures on social media platforms.
 - Raise awareness among users about reporting mechanisms and support available.
2. Promote Healthy Usage Patterns:
 - Encourage users to be mindful of their social media usage, especially in terms of time spent.
 - Develop educational campaigns on responsible and balanced social media usage.
3. Platform-Specific Initiatives:
 - Social media platforms can consider tailored features promoting positive interactions and emotional well-being.
 - Platforms should continue addressing issues related to addiction and explore innovative solutions.
4. Diversity in Content:
 - Encourage a diverse range of content to cater to varied interests and preferences.
 - Platforms can explore ways to highlight user-generated content that promotes positive experiences.
5. Privacy Education:
 - Enhance user education on privacy settings and policies.
 - Platforms should make privacy features more accessible and user-friendly.
6. Support for New Users:
 - Provide resources and support for individuals who are new to social media.
 - Foster a welcoming environment for users of all experience levels.

7. Targeted Outreach for Different Age Groups:

- Tailor outreach and features to different age groups to address their unique needs.
- Consider age-specific educational campaigns on digital literacy.

8. Continued Research:

- Regularly conduct surveys and research to stay updated on evolving trends and user sentiments.
- Collaborate with academic institutions for in-depth studies on the impact of social media.

9. Community Engagement:

- Foster a sense of community and positive interaction among users.
- Encourage users to participate in discussions and activities that promote a supportive online environment.

In conclusion, understanding the dynamics of social media usage and its impact is crucial for both users and platform providers. Implementing these recommendations can contribute to a more positive and supportive online environment while addressing challenges associated with social media use.

7. Limitations and Future Scope

- **Sampling Bias:** This can introduce biases because individuals may not always be willing to accurately report their experiences. Additionally, the samples used in these studies may not be representative of the general population, as they may be skewed towards younger individuals or those with higher socioeconomic status. As a result, the findings from these studies may not be applicable to the broader population.
- **Correlation vs Causation:** The majority of research in this field is correlational in nature, which means that it can only identify associations between social media use and mental health outcomes. It cannot establish a causal relationship, meaning that it cannot definitively determine whether social media directly causes these outcomes or if other factors are at play. This limitation makes it challenging to draw firm conclusions about the impact of social media on mental health.
- **Complexity of social media:** Social media platforms are diverse and constantly evolving, which presents a challenge in capturing the full range of experiences and behaviours associated with their use. Research often focuses on specific platforms or activities, which may overlook broader trends or interactions between different platforms. This narrow focus may limit our understanding of the complex ways in which social media can impact mental health.
- **Confounding Variables:** There are numerous variables which causes relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes. These variables, such as personality traits, offline social support, and exposure to other forms of media, can confound the results of research studies. Controlling for these variables in research designs is difficult and may result in incomplete or misleading conclusions about the relationship between social media and mental health.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Researchers must carefully navigate these issues to ensure the well-being of participants while conducting rigorous and meaningful research. It is important to prioritize the ethical considerations and protect the rights and well-being of the individuals involved in these studies.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** By tracking changes in social media use over time, researchers can better understand how these changes correspond to shifts in mental health. Longitudinal studies would allow for the examination of temporal associations and the potential identification of causal mechanisms underlying this relationship.
- **Qualitative Approaches:** Qualitative research has the capacity to capture nuanced perspectives and offer context to complement quantitative findings.
- **Intervention Research:** Developing and testing interventions like digital literacy programs or mindfulness-based approaches, individuals can learn to use social media more safely and promote positive mental health outcomes.
- **Cross-Cultural Research** Future studies should explore cultural variations in social media practices and their implications for mental health across diverse populations.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Engaging in collaborations with researchers from diverse fields such as psychology, sociology, computer science, and public health could lead to a more holistic. Interdisciplinary approaches have the potential to leverage a wide range of expertise and methodologies to address complex research inquiries.

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