



Impact of Social Media on Mental Health of College Students

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become second nature in daily life, particularly for college students. Its effect on mental health is still a big worry even if it has many advantages such as communication, information sharing, and entertainment. Emphasising particularly on problems like anxiety, sadness, sleep disorders, and low self-esteem, this article examines how social media affects the mental health of college students. The study offers a thorough overview of the subject by means of survey-based research and prior published material. The study also includes best practices on social media use and policy suggestions for educational institutions. The results are meant to educate politicians, teachers, and students on the need of leading a balanced digital life.

Introduction

Starting From Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikHub to other social media channels, these have changed how people interact and communicate. Among the most frequent users of these platforms, college students encounter both advantages and disadvantages. Although social media promotes academic involvement and networking, excessive use has been connected to various mental health issues. This study looks at how social media affects the mental health of college students and offers potential solutions to mitigate its negative consequences. It also looks at how schools, legislators, and parents can assist to build a safer online environment. The study also discusses continuous shifts in digital use and their effects on mental health.

Literature Review

Numerous studies demonstrate the relationship between young adults' use of social media and mental health problems. Researches show that, due to social comparison, cyberbullying, and distorted depictions of life, excessive social media use is connected to greater anxiety and sadness. Excessive screen use disturbs sleep patterns that worsen psychological distress even more. Studies also indicate that excessive social media use might result in poor self-esteem and a negative self-image even if it might provide emotional support and a sense of community. Furthermore, the dopamine-based reward system of social media platforms can cause compulsive behaviours exacerbating mental fatigue and stress. Recent research also points to social media-generated FOMO, or fear of missing out, as a factor increasing students' sense of isolation and unworthiness.

Methodology

This paper uses a mixed-methods strategy to integrate statistical and qualitative information. College students were surveyed to gauge their self-reported mental health symptoms, social media use, and screen time. A subset of participants also participated in in-depth interviews to learn more about their personal interactions with social media and mental health. Statistical analysis of the data revealed patterns and links between psychological health and social media use. Case studies of students who were heavily dependent on social media were also included to help one better understand the long-term effects. Included as well were observational studies on students' online behaviour, which helped to clarify the relationship between social media use and mental health.

Findings and Discussion

Social media affects college students' mental health both positively and negatively, so complicating it. Many claimed that extended use of social media, especially social comparison and exposure to unfavourable online interactions, had increased their anxiety and sadness. Social validation and approval-seeking behaviours were also connected to more anxiety disorders as students frequently felt pressured to maintain an idealised online image. Moreover, excessive nighttime screen time was connected to irregular sleep patterns, fatigue, and increased stress levels, which raised significant concerns regarding sleep issues. Screens' blue light has been proven to interfere with melatonin synthesis, so increasing the quality of sleep even more. Another important result was that students who often used social media reported low self-esteem.

Prominent indicators of social media addiction—which was also common among some students—were obsessive alert checking, withdrawal symptoms when not using social media, and lower academic performance. One of the main drivers of habitual use was supported by addictive features such as algorithm-driven content recommendations and endless scrolling. Students also suffered FOMO, a psychological phenomenon that caused them to anxiously and obsessively check their social media feeds. Often, this worry distracted students from their academic and personal obligations. Furthermore, those who spent more time on social media but had less face-to-face contact with others reported feeling more lonely, implying that virtual relationships might not completely replace in-person social connections.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, social media was found to be beneficial. Many students said that when times were tough, it helped them to stay in touch, obtain learning materials, and ask assistance from their peers. Mental health awareness campaigns and online therapy tools on social media channels were also viewed positively. Social media groups also let students create support systems fighting loneliness and promoting community feeling. Some of those who responded also stated that social media let them network professionally, be creative, and express themselves, all of which enabled them to develop academically and personally. These advantages, however, were most clear when social media use was intentional and moderate rather than obsessive and excessive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although social media can be a wonderful way to connect and communicate, it also harms mental health that should not be overlooked. College students should develop sensible social media practices that include giving mental health top priority, limiting screen time, and participating in offline activities. If they are to properly address these concerns, institutions should also offer awareness campaigns and mental health assistance. Tech companies can also add features like content restrictions and screen time notifications encouraging improved use.

Policy Recommendations

If educational programmes are to enable students get the tools they need to use social media responsibly and increase digital literacy and mental health awareness, they should be included into college courses. Discussions on social media use should be actively participated in by parents and educators stressing self-awareness and mindfulness. If they want to tighten rules on content filtering, anti-cyberbullying, and ethical artificial intelligence algorithms reducing deceptive engagement strategies, policymakers should work with technology companies. College communities can promote good social interactions outside of digital spheres by establishing wellness programmes and offline support groups. If they are to promote responsible social media use, social media companies should also add more digital well-being tools including artificial intelligence-driven interventions raising mental health issue awareness and screen time tracking tools.

Conclusion

This paper emphasises the importance of college students using social media with awareness and adds to the continuous discussion on its impact on mental health. Stakeholders can build a more wholesome online space giving mental health first priority by raising awareness, encouraging responsible use, and changing laws. The findings indicate that creating a safer and healthier digital environment calls for cooperation among legislators, technology developers, teachers, and students.