

International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Impact on Excessive Use of Social Media on Adolescent Mental Health: A Study on Gautam Buddh Nagar

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Abstract

The research examines how adolescents in the GautamBuddh Nagar between the ages of 15 and 18 are mentally impacted by their heavy usage of social media. Adolescents are more linked online than ever before due to the rapid growth of technology and extensive smartphone use. Their daily lives now center around social media platforms which offer avenues for entertainment, self-expression, and communication. Along with these advantages, however, there is increasing evidence of negative mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, sleep problems, and underachievement at school. A standardized questionnaire completed by a representative sample of adolescents is one of the quantitative methods employed within this empirical research. Analyzing the social media use, the type of platforms being used, content interaction, emotional responses, and noticeable behavioral changes are the primary aims of the research. The data is analyzed to identify trends connecting signs of mental health to excessive screen use and online behavior. The findings reflect both aspects of digital socialization. While some adolescents benefit from information exposure and peer influence, others are afflicted by low self-esteem, and cyberbullying. To foster a healthier online culture among youth, the study concludes with recommendations for digital literacy programs, parental guidance models, and school interventions. The primary aim of this study is to comprehend how various aspects of social media use—passive scrolling, active posting, peer approval in the form of likes and comments, and exposure to idealized images—have an effect on the psychological health of teenagers. It also investigates the prevalence of undesirable factors such as Fear of Missing Out, cyberbullying, body image issues, and addiction to digital media. According to the research findings, the study advises that comprehensive digital literacy interventions should be undertaken to teach young people about appropriate online conduct, critical thinking, and emotional management. It further promotes enhanced parental engagement through active supervision and advice, and the inclusion of mental health education and counseling services in school curricula to counteract the negative impacts of social media.

 $\textbf{Key Words:} \ Social \ Media, \ Adolescent, \ Mental \ Health, \ Technology, \ Self-Esteem, \ Cyberbullying, \ Digital \ Literacy \ Programs$

Introduction

Use of social media has grown within the youth generation, that is, adolescents, and this growth has raised and continues to raise a number of concerns and anticipation as to the psychological effect and what it could be. Adolescents aged between 15 - 18 are developing emotionally as well as cognitively and therefore their capacities are not complete. Burning out increasing time on social media sites gives rise to social media addiction, which not only contributes to social media validation seeking behaviors like liking, commenting, and sharing the specific post repeatedly, file sharing, and unlimited scrolling and immersing oneself deep in grating oneself into the social media whirlpool, but also isolating oneself from social and constructive activities. Social comparison commentary and behavior also deeply affects a person's self-esteem and can have negative impacts on selfdoubt and anxiety. While scrolling and scrolling through social media for hours Gautam Buddha Nagar, which is among the fastest-growing districts in India, has witnessed tremendous development in digital infrastructure, smartphone penetration, and internet usage. According to a report by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India in 2023, urban areas in GautamBuddh Nagar have some of the highest rates of internet penetration in Uttar Pradesh. Over the past few years, there has been increasing concern over the mental health of youths. Issues like anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness, insomnia, and self-esteem problems have become more common, especially concerning the over-consumption of social media. Most teenagers are likely to measure their self-esteem on the basis of online responses such as likes, comments, and share, which helps develop unhealthy comparisons, body concerns, and a constant need to present an idealized self. This exposure to an often unrealistic online world can contribute to emotional distress, especially where young people have no coping mechanisms or support structures in place to deal with such issues effectively. This research aims to explore the impact of excessive social media use on the mental well-being of adolescents in Gautam Buddha Nagar, one of the Uttar Pradesh districts which is experiencing widespread urbanization and digitalization. The district covers a range of urban, semi-urban, and rural environments, making it an interesting location for this study. With increasing access to smartphones and the internet, teenagers in this region are exposed to social media more and more, without necessarily being taught about its proper usage. Most adolescents in GautamBudh Nagar, like their counterparts in India as a whole, spend several hours daily on social media sites that can cause many behavioral, emotional, and learning issues. (Anderson, M., & Jiang, J. 2018)

The problem is most evident in areas of fast-paced technological development and urbanization, like GautamBuddh Nagar in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. This district has seen tremendous growth in digital infrastructure and smartphone usage in the last ten years. Urban cities in GautamBuddh Nagar have some of the highest internet penetration rates in the state, as per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) report of 2023. This has enabled an explosion of online activity among youth populations, particularly adolescents who use social media intensively for both educational and entertainment purposes. Yet, although this digital integration provides numerous advantages, it also poses serious issues regarding adolescent mental health.

Background of the Study

Social media is at the center of life today, dictating our connection with fellow humans, driving everything from communication to education and entertainment. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat and others have broken walls between individuals, particularly among young people, who use these social media platforms the most. India possesses a growing rate of internet penetration and over 462 million social media users . Gautam Buddha Nagar is a fast-developing district of Uttar Pradesh which has experienced a digital revolution, wherein a significant majority of the municipality's population use smartphones, social media, and fast-speed internet. Although social media has some educational significance, it is a general concern of its overuse that it can impact the mental health of teenagers. Adolescence is a critical phase of development during which youth form an identity, become sensitive to feelings, and are exposed to influences from others. The utilization of external validation and discourse tools online has also been found to be a critical period of high susceptibility for adolescents to depression and anxiety, body image conflict, sleep disorders and social withdrawal. In Gautam Buddha Nagar, where educational institutions and digital infrastructure are well established, adolescents have easy access to social media, using it for long hours. The rising reliance on online platforms has created unhealthy behavior such as too much screen time, constant checking of notifications, and emotional trauma due to online comparisons and cyberbullying. Though there is a rising concern, localized studies are needed to investigate the direct effects of excessive social media use on mental health among adolescents in GautamBuddh Nagar. (McCrae, &Grealish, 2020). The emerging need to address adolescent mental health, particularly in urban and semi-urban settings such as GautamBuddh Nagar, calls for empirical investigation. Rising reports of cases of teen depression, anxiety disorders, sleep disturbances, and behavioral issues coincide with increased social media use. However, local information on this topic is still limited. An understanding of how such patterns particularly affect the youth of this district in various socio-economic and cultural environments an give vital information to inform policy formulation, education reform, and parent-child relations. This research, thus, is prompted by the pressing need to evaluate the magnitude of social media's psychological influence on teens in Gautam Buddha Nagar. By discovering usage patterns, emotional and behavioral reactions, and the role of online peer culture, the study hopes to make a contribution to the increasing conversation on digital wellness and youth health. It also hopes to suggest evidence-based interventions spanning from digital literacy instruction to parental guidance models that can facilitate healthier online behavior and protect the mental health of youth in an era of digitization. This research is thus driven by the imperative of evaluating the extent of social media's psychological effect on Gautam Buddha Nagar's adolescents. By establishing patterns of use, emotional and behavioral reactions, and online peer culture effects, the research aims to be part of an emerging body of literature on digital wellness and teen health. It also seeks to suggest practical interventionsranging from digital literacy training to models of parental guidancethat can encourage healthier online habits and protect the mental health of young people in a digital world.

Research Objective

- 1. To identify the behavioral changes associated with too much social media usage, such as reduced academic performance, sleeping problems, and reduced face-to-face interactions.
- 2. To explain the impact of social media overuse on sleeping habits, academic performance, and relationships
- 3. To investigate the mental health effects of overusing social media anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, etc.
- 4. To explore the trends and duration of social media activity among youths in GautamBuddh Nagar and to assess the psychological effects of prolonged social media usage

Review of Literature

1. A Review of the Impact of Social Media on the Mental Health of Adolescents and Young Adults

Chirag Gupta, Mayank Kumar (2022) investigate the growing mutual relationship between social media usage and the mental health in young population. Their findings have made a strong case for the connection between overuse of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTubeand a variety of psychological problems, including anxiety, depression, stress, eating disorders, insomnia, loneliness and externalizing behaviors. Although these platforms provide countless benefits, among them greater connectivity and access to information, they also carry enormous risk when overused especially for teenagers. In the modern epoch we live in, social media is perhaps one of the most widely used forms of communication. The impact is even greater for adolescents and youngsters, who are usually the most advanced in terms of technological integration. The surge of inexpensive mobile phones and the internet have accelerated the adoption of social media in India making it a potent tool for the shaping and development of the social psyche of youth in India.

2. Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health: A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence

Arianna Sala and Lorenzo Porcaro examine how social media serves as an asset and challenge in adolescent life. They cite Kietzmann et al. (2011), who define social media as places where individuals can share and interact with different types of content. For teenagers, these platforms are not only

for communication; they are avenues for self-discovery, identity construction, and social interaction. Their synthesis includes global statistics such as Eurostat's report from 2022 which states over 80% of European youth engage with the internet for social networking. In North America, the Pew Research Centre (2022) reports that more than a third of teenagers are virtually active almost all the time, with a good number admitting to how challenging it would be to stop using the internet. These findings demonstrate an emerging international trend of deep immersion into social media, which can greatly impact mental health, among populations regardless of borders.

3. Mental Health Implications of Social Media Use among Adolescents

In the review done by Rohit Tiwari and Vijay Pal Singh dares to discuss how social media has impacted the communicative behavior of young adolescents. They incorporate numerous academic documents, including, but not limited to, case studies and surveys, to assist in finding the alterations of the mental health of teens. Now, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter as well as a myriad of other social media applications serve as an integral part of the everyday routines of teenagers and therefore, possess the possibility of influencing their emotions. The results unambiguously show an increase in anxiety and depression for teens that utilize social media platforms for extended periods of time. There are multiple reasons that lead to this issue, such as: bullying, exposure to unrealistic idealized images and the general seeking of social validation. The most pressing issue in the aforementioned case is undoubtedly the lack of self-esteem. Teens often face identity crises due to extensive exposure to idealized and heavily edited images which makes them feel unworthy and leads to warped self perception. The ceaseless nature of social comparison facilitated by the internet, coupled with the constant accessibility to distorted content, is likely to exacerbate feelings of anger and promote an unhealthy perspective towards reality.

4. Perception, Usage, and Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Mental Health in India

This research demonstrates a strong relationship between heavy social media use and increasing anxiety, stress, and depression in adolescents. Specifically, one of the most harmful behaviors noted is an adolescent scrolling through social media in the late hours of the night and disturbing their social media use disrupt their sleep cycle, which harms our overall mental and physical well-being. Sleep-related disruptions including erratic sleep schedules, decreased quality of sleep, and rest contributed to mood changes, lower academic success, and increased stakeholder irritability in adolescence. Social media fosters an overwhelming and constant exposure to image and content that is idealized and consistently reshapes the perception of self. This often includes dissatisfaction with one's body image, increases in self-doubt, peer comparisons that are damaging, and overall emotional distress. Furthermore, mental health education and knowledge is allegeably at an early phase of development in India, and social stigma continues to impede young people from seeking help. Also, the consistency of not knowing what resources are available and fear of being judged impede many individuals from seeking mental health assistance. There are multi-pronged considerations in addressing this issue: - Encourage dialogues through awareness programs, create a program of mental health supports in schools, and encourage caregivers to be aware of their child's social media and participation in a digital culture.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods design, which consists of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected using a statistical analysis of survey responses within the greater social media aspect. Qualitative data were collected using case study analysis for the case studies in this study.

Data Collection Methods

1.Primary data:

Survey questionnaire: A structured questionnaire will be used to explore patterns of social media use and the mental health outcomes associated with that use.

Case studies: Individual accounts of several adolescents with experiences of negative outcomes due to too much social media account use will be recorded and analyzed.

2. Secondary data:

A full review of related academic literature including journal articles, newspaper articles, and previous empirical research surrounding the themes of social media and adolescent mental health.

Sampling Technique

While this study will use purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling type, this technique aligns with the objective of the study. We chose purposive sampling with adolescents ages 15-18 being the population of interest.

RESULTS / FINDINGS

Presentation of data

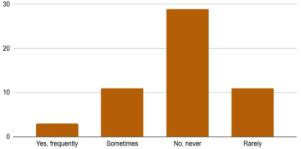
media?
25
20
15
10
5
0
4-6 hours
1-3 hours
Less than 1 hour More than 6 hours

Count of 1. How many hours per day do you spend on social media?

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The bar chart "Count of 1. How many hours per day do you spend on social media?" report impacts of respondents' social media use over a day divided into four time groupings of "Less than 1 hour," "1–3 hours," "4–6 hours," and "More than 6 hours." From the figure you can see there were more respondents indicated they used social media in the 1–3 hours and 4–6 hours range than in other levels of usage. Each of these two groupings had a considerable amount of responses, with "1–3 hours" being slightly greater than "4–6 hours." Both of these groupings had over 20 respondents each suggesting a moderate to moderately high usage of social media was most predominately experiences of the group. As for the groupings of "Less than 1 hour" and "More than 6 hours," they indicated relatively low usage. Both of these categories had less than 10 responses indicating that super low or super high use was less frequent of an experience of people studied. In particular, "Less than 1 hour" did have a slightly increased number of responses than did the group of "More than 6 hours," indicating that only a minority of respondents are engaged intensely in an extremely low daily use of social media platforms and a minority of respondents involved in experiences of high daily use of the social media platforms.

Count of 4. Have you experienced cyberbullying or negative interactions on social media?



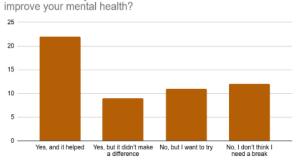
Count of 4. Have you experienced cyberbullying or negative interactions on social media?

This bar chart reflects the responses of 50 participants regarding: "Have you ever experienced cyberbullying or nasty interactions on social media?" The x-axis indicates how frequently these items occurred and includes experiences in the following categories: "Yes, often," "Sometimes," "No, never," "Seldom." The y-axis indicates how many respondents indicated each answer from 0 to 30.

The breakdown of the frequency of responses indicates:

- a) Yes, often: The smallest category, Just 3 people (6%), reported that they often experience cyberbullying or nasty experiences in social media.
- b) Rarely: Another 10 respondents (20%) indicated that they have only rarely experienced cyberbullying or nasty interaction.
- c) Sometimes: 11 respondents (22%) indicated that sometimes they have experienced such nasty interactions.
- d) No, never: the major category is No, never, as 29 respondents (58%) reported that they have never had the experience of cyberbullying or nasty interactions on social media. The data indicate that a majority of the sample population that was questioned (58%) reported that they do not have experience of cyberbullying or nasty experiences on social media. However, a large percentage of the sample has experienced the experiences (22% + 20% + 6% = 48%) but to differing degrees. Although frequent experiences are fairly low, (6%) the total percentage of people who have had negative experiences at least from time to time (48%) indicate such problems are that prevalent in cyberspace.

Count of 3. Have you ever taken a break from social media to



Count of 3. Have you ever taken a break from social media to improve your mental health?

This bar chart displays the responses of 52 respondents to the question: "Have you ever done a social media break to improve your mental health?". The x-axis lists the various responses to this question being "Yes, and it helped", "Yes, but it didn't change anything", "No, but I want to do this", and "No, I don't think I need a break". The y-axis displays how many respondents picked each option recorded from 0 to 25.

Distribution of responses is as follows:

- a) Yes, and it helped: * The largest category, by far, was 22 respondents (approximately 42.3%), who said that they have done a social media break to see if it would help their mental health and it did help.
- b) No, but I want to try: * There were 11 respondents (approximately 21.2%) who said that they had never done so for that reason, but would like to try it in the future.
- c) No, I don't think I need a break: * There were 12 respondents (approximately 23.1%) who said that they did not feel that they needed to have a break from social media for their mental health.
- d) Yes, but it did not do anything: The lowest number with 9 participants (about 17.3%) of the sample reported taking a break but did not experience any difference in their mental health as a result.

The evidence suggested very strong proportions of the sample (about 42.3%) are actively using detachment from online social media for mental health issues and reported positive effects.

Case Studies

1. Body Image Issues and Low Self-Esteem

In Greater Noida, a teen had difficulties reconciling their self-image with influencers and their (seemingly) perfect lives on social media. What started as simple unhappiness grew into significant unhappiness with their body with frequent statements of avoiding school and social interactions while stating feeling "less than", or even inferior, to everybody else. They would spend countless hours preparing pictures before posting to social media, making endless edits in hopes to achieve social popularity through likes and comments, which became the only source of validation for our subject. Each time the likes and comments were demonstrated in numbers below expectations, they sunk further into themselves in sadness and self-deprecation while losing connection with the family, and ultimately themselves! As Khurana (2022) discusses, it is truly unhealthy to engage in this level of comparison which is often a primary aspect of adolescent normative behavior, but also particularly damaging to self-esteem and outcomes, to a level of potential depressive symptoms.

2. Sleep Deprivation and Behavioural Changes

A high school student from Noida Extension started staying up late, endlessly scrolling through reels and chatting online. What started as a fun distraction soon became a nightly activity, resulting in missing out on sleep and waking up exhausted in the morning. This sleep deprivation became evident at home, where the teen's irritability, argumentative behavior, and endless fighting were now a concern to their parents. Teachers also noted a change; the student who turned in all of their homework and was engaged, worn down and had trouble concentrating in class, and often appeared mentally absent. The student confided they felt like they still couldn't stop scrolling and felt that if they did, they would miss out on the fast-changing world of everything online. Gupta et al. (2022) noted that late night use of devices for this purpose was a strong indicator of sleep and emotional instability issues or challenges with emotional stability - which was clearly what this student was experiencing.

Discussion

This study is concerned with the harmful effects of excessive social media use on the mental health of adolescents in Gautam Buddha Nagar. The results showed a significant correlation between the amount of time adolescents spent using social media and the negative outcomes associated with mental illness, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and sleep quality. The social networks, Instagram and TikTok (in particular), are fostering ill-advised social comparisons, leading adolescents to measure their self-worth against idealized images their peers post, and in many cases, feeling inadequate about who they are. Adolescents engaged in virtual communication yet reported feeling lonely and emotionally disconnected from others, calling into question whether this type of interactions satisfies social needs. Adolescents sometimes felt an overwhelming pressure to maintain an attractive online image, creating additional emotional strain and mental fatigue. The use of social media also tended to take place at night, often causing them to sleep late, which intensified their emotional issues, leaving adolescents feeling tired and irritable. Cyberbullying was a meaningful theme across participants, who shared experiences of being bullied that caused psychological distress and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation. These

findings were consistent with research in the area of mental health, including studies conducted by Twenge and Kuss, as well as others and support the relevance of theories like Social Comparison Theory and the Displacement Hypothesis. This experience often diminishes self-esteem and self-worth and increases feelings of not being good enough. Even though teens are now more online than ever, many reported that they feel socially isolated where the digital interaction falls short of the emotional support and fulfillment that contact delivers. The psychological burden of maintaining an appealing digital self, following social media trends, and seeking approval from likes, shares, and comments, is exacerbated. Many respondents reported sleep disruption as a significant result related to nighttime social media use that resulted in day time tiredness, irritability, and poor academic or emotional performance. The prevalence of cyberbullying was especially concerning; many participants reported being subjected to online harassment that caused subsequent emotional distress and even suicidal ideation. The research also calls for practical responses including providing mental health practitioners with the tools appropriate to help adolescents, making digital literacy a component of school education, and encouraging healthy activities that do not involve screens. Policies around screen time limits and enhanced anti-cyberbullying policies were also suggested. However, the research is limited in being based on self-reported data, conducted in a single geography, and due to the cross-sectional nature of the study we cannot infer causality. From a policy perspective, established guidelines for screen time, more robust online safety protocols, and public health initiatives to raise awareness around psychological risk associated with excessive social media use are essential, given our results. However, this study does have limitations, including the reliance on self-reported data, which we know is impacted by bias or error, geographic limitations in research within the province of Ontario, and that this study was cross-sectional and therefore could not draw causal conclusions. Future research needs to include longitudinal designs and diverse demographic samples to understand how the effects of social media on adolescent well-being evolve across diverse contexts.

Conclusion

The research has developed an understanding of the effect of social media addiction on the mental health of adolescents in Gautam Buddha Nagar. As digital media become a more prominent part of the lives of adolescents, their emotions and mental well-being are increasingly being impacted, explicitly and implicitly. The findings of this research indicate that while social media can provide adolescents with opportunities for connection, creativity, and self-expression, it can also present serious dangers particularly when used in excess and without moderation. Adolescents are particularly sensitive to social comparison and use social media to measure their value against the carefully cultivated lives of others. This can be a damaging strategy, and for many adolescents, the repeated experience of social comparison through social media fosters feelings of inadequacy, lowered self-esteem, and even depression. On top of these social comparison feelings, the socially rooted emotional burden of needing to curate an image on social media and maintain an idealized image can contribute to anxiety and emotional fatigue in adolescents. Although the research looks at adolescents from one geographic location, the trends found in this study show a deeper more common concern. The findings confirm existing psychological theories, such as Social Comparison Theory and the Displacement Hypothesis. We have confirmed that digital interactions in the modern world often displace meaningful interactions offline and exacerbate vulnerabilities regarding emotional wellness. Nonetheless, the study suggests it is imperative to act decisively on a number of levels, households, schools, the legislature, the digital industry, to create healthier digital spaces. In addition to digital literacy and promoting offline socialization, as well as establishing screen time parameters (and rules), and mental health supports are all important decisions to protect young users' mental wellness. The present study has limitations, including self-reported data and also it is drawn from a regionally specific population, but it does offer research in the growing area of literature regarding adolescent mental health in the digital age. As adolescents continue to grow in a society saturated in algorithms and online identities, it is important to help equip them with emotional tools and critical awareness to interact with social media in a balanced and healthy manner. This research is meant to act as a prompt, new lens, to reconceptualize and define how we understand digital engagement in the lives of adolescents today.

Suggestions

Psychological effects

A growing body of research suggests that heavy social media use is related to a variety of mental health problems among teenagers. In Gautam Buddha Nagar, many young people are dealing with increased anxiety and depression in part as a result of sustained screen time. Addictive and ubiquitous screen presentations of our social media lives can interfere with sleep patterns if adolescents are using their phones and other digital devices late into the night, leading to poor quality and quantity of sleep. In addition, adolescents are regularly exposed to idealized images and lifestyles on platforms, such as Instagram or Snapchat; this can strongly affect self-esteem and body image and make adolescents feel inadequate and inferior to their peers.

Behavioral and academic impact

Excessive utilization of social media can notably impact the behaviors and academic performance of adolescents. Many students are reportedly unable to concentrate on their studies because they are everly distracted by social media, leading to declines in academic performance. Additionally, an addiction-like behavior is prevalent among adolescents leading them to feel a need to check their phones in an uncontrollable manner. The region also has seen the increase of online aggression along with cyberbullying, which certainly provokes emotional suffering; a form of suffering that in turn will change their behavior. The victim may experience emotional suffering and then become withdrawn or become aggressive.

Social and emotional impact

Although originated to enhance socialability, many adolescents in Gautam Buddha Nagar consistently feel disconnected from others while being socially connected. This paradox of being socially connected digitally while feeling emotionally disconnected seems to have major implications for adolescent wellbeing. Adolescents are also more likely to seek out and receive validation through likes, comments, and shares such that their emotional state is wholly dependent on online feedback. Furthermore, fear of missing out, or FOMO, keeps adolescents glued to social media, making them feel anxious when they are not logged in, away from social media, or unable to participate in social media trends or discussions.

Regional and demographic

Situational factors (Gautam Buddha Nagar):

Gautam Buddha Nagar has both urban and semi-urban settings that may affect adolescent behaviour differently. For example, adolescents will have a different experience and media use if they were living in an urban setting like Noida and will even have worse effects because they have access to more smartphones and data. This could also be a variable to a gender comparison, boys use social media differently from girls, and normally have different psychological results too. Also, the effects of screen time for school-going adolescent students compared to adolescents not in school may be different, as structured school settings provide some regulation or awareness about prescriptions on screen time.

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