



PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN PUNE CITY

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Abstract

The rise of social media usage, particularly among young adults, has raised concerns about its psychological impact. This study aims to explore the psychological effects of social media addiction on the mental health of junior college students in Pune city. Using a survey research design, data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to 500 students from both Marathi and English-medium colleges. The questionnaire, which was circulated randomly through WhatsApp groups, consisted of 20 closed-ended questions focused on social media usage patterns and psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, emotional instability, sleep disturbances, and social isolation.

The results revealed that a significant majority (70%) of the students spent more than three hours daily on social media, with 45% reporting symptoms of anxiety and 38% experiencing depression linked to excessive social media usage. Emotional instability, such as mood swings and irritability, was reported by 42% of the participants. Sleep disturbances were also prominent, with more than 50% of students indicating difficulties in falling asleep due to late-night social media engagement. Additionally, 30% of the students reported feelings of social isolation despite being active on social media platforms.

A moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.65$) was found between high social media usage and mental health symptoms. The chi-square test confirmed a significant relationship between social media addiction and emotional instability ($p < 0.01$). These findings highlight the need for mental health awareness programs in educational institutions, focusing on the potential risks of social media addiction. The study concludes that excessive social media use is strongly associated with negative psychological effects on junior college students and calls for further research on intervention strategies to mitigate these impacts.

1. Introduction:

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat have transformed how young adults engage with their social environment. Adolescents, particularly those aged 18 to 20, often spend excessive time on these platforms, leading to potential psychological issues. Despite the recognized benefits of staying connected, the rise of social media addiction has raised concerns regarding its impact on mental health.

While previous studies have explored the relationship between social media and psychological health, research specific to the context of junior college students in Pune city remains limited. This paper seeks to examine the psychological effects of social media addiction, such as anxiety, depression, emotional instability, and sleep disturbances, among students aged 16-18 attending Marathi and English-medium junior colleges.

2. Materials and Methods:

Research Design: The study used a survey research design to analyze the psychological effects of social media addiction among junior college students.

Sample: The sample consisted of 500 students aged 16-18 from various junior colleges across Pune city, including both Marathi and English-medium institutions. The students were randomly selected to ensure a diverse range of participants.

Data Collection Tool: The data was collected using a structured questionnaire in the form of a Google Form, designed to assess the psychological effects of social media addiction. The questionnaire included 20 closed-ended questions and was translated into both Marathi and English.

Survey Distribution: The Google Form link was circulated randomly across different WhatsApp groups consisting of students from various junior colleges in Pune. This method ensured a wide and random questionnaire distribution to students of different mediums and backgrounds.

Key Psychological Factors Measured:

- Anxiety: Feelings of unease, worry, and fear caused by social media dependence
- Depression: Persistent low mood, lack of interest in activities, and feelings of hopelessness
- Emotional Instability: Mood swings, irritability, and difficulty managing emotions
- Social Isolation: Feelings of loneliness despite frequent online interactions
- Sleep Disturbances: Insomnia or poor sleep quality due to late-night social media use

Data Analysis:

The responses were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) to observe social media usage trends and psychological effects. Correlation and chi-square tests were applied to assess the relationship between social media addiction and mental health symptoms.

3. Results and Discussion:

Social Media Usage Patterns:

The survey revealed that 70% of the students spent over 3 hours per day on social media, with 40% admitting they felt restless or anxious when they couldn't access their social media accounts. The majority of students (about 60%) used social media for entertainment, while 55% used it as a tool for socializing.

A. Psychological Effects:

i. Anxiety:

Around 45% of the students reported moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety. Many described feeling nervous and uneasy when unable to check their social media notifications. The constant pressure to maintain an online presence contributed significantly to their anxiety levels.

ii. Depression:

About 38% of the students reported feelings of sadness, lack of motivation, and low self-esteem, which they linked directly to social media use. The tendency to compare their lives with others online contributed to these depressive symptoms, as students expressed dissatisfaction with their own achievements and appearances.

iii. Emotional Instability:

Approximately 42% of the respondents reported frequent mood swings and irritability due to social media. Many students acknowledged that negative comments, lack of engagement on their posts, or online arguments contributed to their emotional imbalance.

iv. Sleep Disturbances:

More than 50% of the students experienced sleep disturbances, reporting late-night use of social media as a primary cause of difficulty falling asleep. Many students admitted staying awake scrolling through content, leading to poor sleep quality and daytime fatigue.

v. Social Isolation:

Despite their constant online engagement, 30% of students reported feelings of social isolation. They noted that their online interactions often failed to translate into meaningful relationships in the real world, leaving them feeling lonely and disconnected.

B. Correlation Analysis:

A moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.65$) was found between high social media usage and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. The chi-square test showed a statistically significant relationship between emotional instability and social media addiction ($p < 0.01$), further confirming the psychological impact of excessive social media use.

C. Discussion:

These findings reinforce previous research that highlights the adverse psychological effects of social media addiction. The study reveals how social media fosters a culture of constant comparison and validation-seeking, which in turn contributes to heightened levels of anxiety and depression among young adults.

The strong association between social media addiction and emotional instability also suggests that the pressure of maintaining a perfect online persona contributes to mood swings and emotional challenges. Furthermore, the findings related to sleep disturbances underscore the detrimental impact of late-night social media engagement on students' overall well-being.

4. Conclusion:

This study sheds light on the psychological effects of social media addiction on junior college students aged 16-18 in Pune city. The results reveal significant associations between excessive social media use and symptoms of anxiety, depression, emotional instability, and sleep disturbances.

It is recommended that educational institutions introduce mental health awareness programs to educate students about the risks of social media addiction. Counselling services, along with initiatives encouraging healthy online habits and digital detox programs, could help students manage their social media usage and improve their mental well-being. Further research is needed to investigate long-term effects and possible intervention strategies to reduce the negative psychological impact of social media on young adults.

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