

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The problematic use of social media emerged as a significant challenge confronting contemporary college student populations, raising concerns about its harm to psychological well-being.

Objectives of the study following:

- To assess the level of usage of social media among Nursing students.
- To assess the mental health among Nursing students.
- To correlate with the usage of social media in mental health among Nursing students.
- To associate the relationship between the demographic variable and usage of social media on mental health.

A quantitative exploratory descriptive research design was adopted. Data were collected from 350 nursing students using a non-probability convenience sampling technique through a Google Form. The research tool consisted of self-structured questionnaires based on a three-point Likert scale to measure social media usage and mental issues.

The results showed that 25.4% of students were heavy users of social media, while 67.1% had moderate usage. Only 8.6% reported high mental issues, whereas 48.9% had moderate and 42.6% had low mental health. A positive correlation was observed between increased social media use and reduced mental issues. Significant associations were also found with demographic variables such as age, gender, and education. The study concludes that higher social media usage is linked to variations in mental issues, indicating a complex relationship between digital behavior and psychological well-being among nursing students.

Keywords: Social media, mental health, nursing students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to digital platforms that allow users to share information, ideas, images, and videos, and participate in online communities. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have become part of everyday life. Globally, nearly 4.9 billion people use social media, with an average daily use of about 2–3 hours¹ (Data Reportal, 2023). While social media helps people stay connected and informed, its effect on mental health is complex².

Social media can provide emotional support, reduce feelings of isolation, and promote open discussions about mental health. However, excessive or problematic use—such as compulsive checking or passive scrolling—has been linked to depression, anxiety, poor sleep, and reduced real-life interaction^{3,5} (Keles et al., 2020; Primack et al., 2017). Individuals with social anxiety are more likely to overuse social media, which may worsen psychological distress¹⁰ (Weidman et al., 2024).

Adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable. Studies show that high social media use is associated with low self-esteem, cyberbullying, academic stress, and sleep disturbances^{11,14} (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Exposure to idealized images can increase social comparison and body dissatisfaction. At the same time, mindful and purposeful use of social media can support well-being and peer connection.

Nursing students face additional stress due to academic workload, clinical training, and emotional demands of patient care. Social media plays an important role in their academic and social life, but its impact on their mental health requires further investigation, especially in the Indian context^{6,7}.

Need for the Study

Social media usage has become an essential part of daily life, especially among young adults and students. While it offers benefits such as communication, academic support, and social connection, excessive or unregulated use may negatively affect mental health.^{8,9} The impact of social media varies from person to person, depending on usage patterns, duration, and purpose. Therefore, it is important to understand how social media influences emotional well-being.

Nursing students represent a unique group, as they face high levels of academic pressure, clinical responsibilities, and emotional stress related to patient care. At the same time, they frequently use social media for both personal and educational purposes^{12,13}. This dual exposure may affect their mental health, including stress levels, sleep patterns, concentration, and interpersonal relationships.

Despite the widespread use of social media, limited studies have specifically examined its impact on mental health among nursing students in the Indian context¹⁴. Understanding this relationship is essential for identifying potential risks and benefits. The findings of this study can help in developing strategies to promote healthy social media use, improve mental well-being, and support nursing students in managing both academic and psychological demands effectively.

II. MATERIAL AND METHOD OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To assess the level of usage of social media among Nursing students.
- To assess the mental health among Nursing students.
- To correlate with the usage of social media in the mental health among Nursing students.
- To associate the relationship between the demographic variable and usage of social media on mental health.

Research Question: Does social media usage have an impact on mental health among Nursing students?

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:

Social Media: It refers to online platforms that allow nursing students to create, share, or interact with content and engage in online virtual.

Mental Health: It refers to the psychological well-being of nursing students, characterized by emotional, psychological, and social functioning.

Nursing Students: It refers to all students who are currently pursuing, B.Sc. Nursing, PB.B.Sc. Nursing, M.Sc. Nursing and M.Sc. NPCC students.

ASSUMPTION

- (1) Social media use may have positive effects on the mental health in nursing students. (2) Social media use may have negative effects on the mental health in nursing students.

DELIMITATION

The study includes only B.Sc., PB B.Sc., M.Sc. Nursing, and M.Sc. NPCC students, not students from other academic disciplines.

Research Approach: Quantitative research approach **Research Design:** Descriptive exploratory research design

Research Variables: Social media usage and Mental health **Population**

- Target Population: All nursing students of various nursing colleges
- Accessible Population: Nursing students of selected nursing college

SAMPLE

Sample Size: 350 students

Sampling Technique: Total enumeration

Inclusive Criteria:

- All Nursing students of the selected Nursing college.
- Those who are present at the time of data collection.

Exclusive Criteria:

- Those who are not exposed to social media.
- Who are not willing to participate in the study.

Description on instrument:

Part 1- Demographic data.

Part 2- A structured questionnaire to measure social media usage

Part 3- A -Structured questionnaire to assess nursing students' mental health.

Data were collected through a self-structured questionnaire (Google Form) with a 3-point Likert scale. The tool was valid and reliable ($\alpha = 0.84$ and 0.87). Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Content validity was established by seven experts in the fields of research methodology, psychology, and nursing, who evaluated each item for appropriateness, clarity, and relevance. Necessary modifications were made based on their suggestions. Reliability of the tool was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α), which showed values of 0.84 for the social media usage questionnaire and 0.87 for the mental health questionnaire, indicating good internal consistency and confirming the reliability of the instrument. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

III: ANALYSIS

SECTION 4.1: Demographic variables

Table 1. Frequency and percentage-wise distribution of samples based on demographic

n=350

Demographic variables		(f)	(%)
Age in years	17 to 21 years	270	77.1
	22 to 25 years	65	18.6
	More than 25 years	15	4.3
Gender	Female	296	84.6
	Male	54	15.4
Education	BSc Nursing	300	85.7
	PBBSc Nursing	29	8.3
	MSc Nursing	7	2.0
	NPCC	14	4.0
Most common social media platform do you Use	Google	6	1.7
	Instagram	207	59.1
	WhatsApp	45	12.9
	YouTube	35	10.0
	Snapchat	5	1.4
	Multiple platform	49	14.0
	None	3	.9
	Less than 15	46	13.1

Age at which you started using social Media	15 to 18	250	71.4
	19 to 20	52	14.9
	23 and above	2	.6

Table 1, shows the majority of nursing students were aged 17–21 years (77.1%) and predominantly female (84.6%). Most participants were studying B.Sc. Nursing (85.7%). Instagram emerged as the most commonly used social media platform (59.1%), and most students reported starting social media use between the ages of 15–18 years (71.4%).

SECTION 4.2: Assessment level of usage of social media among Nursing student Figure 2 : Percentage distribution of level of usage of social media n=350

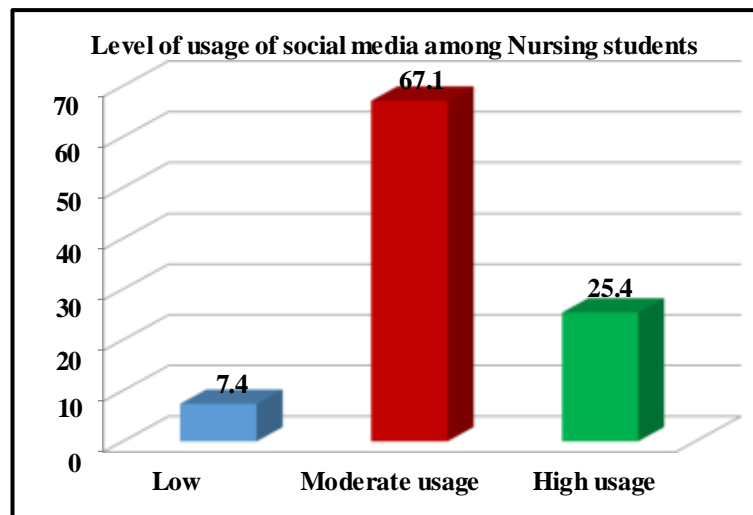


Figure 2, showed that the majority of nursing students (67.1%) had a moderate level of social media usage, while 25.4% had high usage.

SECTION 4.3: Assessment of mental health among nursing students

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of mental health among nursing students [n=350]

Mental healthScore		(f)	(%)
Low	10-17	149	42.6
Moderate	18-24	171	48.9
High	25-30	30	8.6
Total		350	100

Table 3, revealed that most nursing students (48.9%) had a moderate level of mental health, while 42.6% showed low mental health status. Only 8.6% of students had a high level of mental health, indicating the need for mental health support and awareness.

SECTION 4.4: Correlation between usages of social media and mental health among nursing students

Figure 3: Scattered diagram showing the correlation between usages of social media and mental health among

nursing students
 Karl Pearson’s correlation coefficient method was used to find out the relationship.
[n=350]

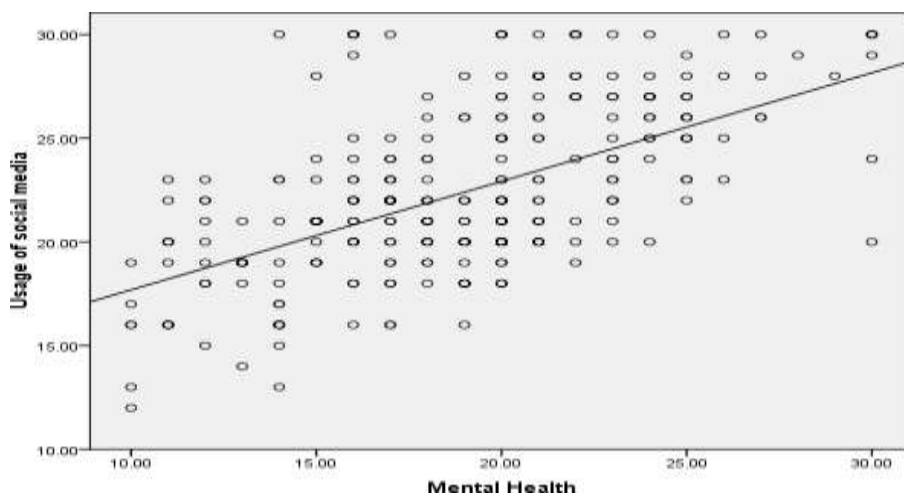


Figure 3, revealed a significant moderate positive relationship between social media usage and mental health among nursing students, with the majority showing that higher social media usage was associated with increased mental health issues ($r = 0.573, p < 0.001$).

SECTION 4.5: Relation between usage of social media and mental health with selected demographic variables

Table 7: Relation between usages of social media with selected demographic variables
(n=350)

		Demographic variables							
Age in years	17 to 21 years	21	198	51	270				
	22 to 25 years	5	33	27	65	33.67	<0.001	4	S
	More than 25 years	0	4	11	15	3			
Gender	Female	25	198	73	296				
	Male	1	37	16	54	3.134	0.216	2	NS
Education	BSc Nursing		26	214	60	26			
	PBBSc Nursing	0	13	16	29	34.59	<0.001	6	S
	MSc Nursing	0	3	4	7	1			

	NPCC	0	5	9	14				
	Google	0	5	1	6				
	Instagram	11	141	55	207				
Most common	WhatsApp	4	30	11	45				
social media	YouTube	3	29	3	35	17.78			1
platform do	Snapchat	0	4	1	5	4	0.122		NS
you use	Multiple	8	24	17	49				
	platform								
	None	0	2	1	3				
Demographic		Low	Moderate	High	f	Chi	P	Df	Level of
Variables						value	value		significance
Age at which	Less than	7	27	12	46				
you started	15	15	167	68	250	8.773	0.187	6	NS
using social	15-18	4	40	8	52				
media	19-20	0	1	1	2				
	23 and								
	above								

Table 7 showing the relationship between social media usage and selected demographic variables among nursing students.

A significant association was found between age and social media usage, with the majority of older students showing higher usage levels ($\chi^2 = 33.673$, $p < 0.001$).

No significant association was observed between gender and social media usage, as the majority of both male and female students had moderate usage ($\chi^2 = 3.134$, $p = 0.216$).

Educational qualification showed a significant association with social media usage, with the majority of P.B.B.Sc. and NPCC students reporting high usage ($\chi^2 = 34.591$, $p < 0.001$).

No significant association was found between the type of social media platform used and level of usage, although the majority of students used Instagram ($\chi^2 = 17.784$, $p = 0.122$).

There was no significant association between the age at which social media use began and usage level, though the majority who started between 15–18 years had moderate usage ($\chi^2 = 8.773$, $p = 0.187$).

Table 8: Relation between mental health with selected demographic variables

Demographic Variables					(n=350)			
	Low	Mo	High	P	df			
	der			value				
	ate			(f)				
Age in years	17 to 21 years	124	129	17	270	13.7530.008	4	S
	22 to 25 years	23	31	11	65			
	Moe than 25	2	11	2	15			
	years							
Gender	Female	136	136	24	136	8.9400.011	2	S
	Male	13	35	6	13			
Education	BSc Nursing	141	139	20	300	26.0536	1	S
	PBBS Nursing	5	17	7	29			
	MSc Nursing	1	6	0	7			

Level of significance

	NPCC	2	9	3	14				
	Google	2	4	0	6				
	Instagram	101	91	15	207				
Most common social media platform do you use	Whatsapp	12	28	5	45				
	YouTube	10	24	1	35				
	Snapchat	3	1	1	5	21.278	0.046	12	S
	Multiple platform	19	22	8	49				
	None	2	1	0	3				
Age at which you started using social media	Less than 15	24	17	5	46				
	15 to 18	105	125	20	250	5.261	0.511	6	NS
	19 to 20	20	27	5	52				
	23 and above	0	2	0	2				

Table 8, showing the relationship between mental health and selected demographic variables among nursing students. A significant association was found between age and mental health status, with the majority of students aged 17–21 years showing moderate mental health ($\chi^2 = 13.753$, $p = 0.008$).

Gender showed a significant association with mental health, with the majority of female and male students reporting moderate mental health ($\chi^2 = 8.940$, $p = 0.011$).

Educational qualification had a highly significant association with mental health, with the majority of B.Sc. Nursing students showing low to moderate mental health levels ($\chi^2 = 26.053$, $p < 0.001$).

A significant association was observed between the most commonly used social media platform and mental health status, with the majority of Instagram users reporting low mental health ($\chi^2 = 21.278$, $p = 0.046$).

No significant association was found between the age at which social media use began and mental health status, though the majority who started between 15–18 years had moderate mental health ($\chi^2 = 5.261$, $p = 0.511$).

V: DISCUSSION

The study found that most nursing students had moderate to high social media usage, consistent with previous studies (Chaudhary & Barman, 2021; Singh et al., 2023). Instagram was the most commonly used platform, reflecting current digital trends among youth.

Mental health findings showed that a large proportion of students had moderate or low mental health, which aligns with earlier research highlighting stress among nursing students (Rani et al., 2021; Ahmed & Khan, 2023).

The positive correlation between social media usage and mental health suggests that social media may provide emotional support and connectivity when used appropriately. Similar findings were reported by Kumar & Jain (2021) and Das & Mehta (2023), where moderate use improved social interaction and well-being.

Demographic factors such as age and education influenced both usage and mental health. Older students and those in advanced programs showed slightly better outcomes, possibly due to improved coping skills.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasises the need to assess social media usage among nursing students, as excessive engagement can influence mental health, emotional balance, sleep quality, and academic performance. Identifying problematic usage at an early stage helps develop awareness, encourages healthy digital habits, and supports psychological well-being, ultimately improving students' overall quality of life and learning outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all Nursing Students who consented to be part of the study. My deepest gratitude to my guide, Dr Susan Jacob (Professor / Vice Principal of MGMNBCON), for her invaluable guidance and unwavering support, insightful feedback and mentorship throughout the study.

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