

Effects of Social Media on Mental Health: Focusing on Anxiety, Self-Esteem, Social Isolation and Stress on the Public of Rawalpindi, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This article explores the effects of social media to the mental health, specifically from its users' stress, anxiety, self-esteem, and social isolation points of view. The most extensive objective is to evaluate the use of social media in terms of the psychological health and distress. The study discovers association between social media utilization and its mental health metrics, such as how social comparison yields differences in self-esteem, how social media adds to loneliness, and how psychological manifestations vary across different regions.

Methodology: A quantitative survey was conducted with 250 participants in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. This study analyzed the correlation between social media habits and health-related outcomes among people. The data were analyzed by using statistical tools. The validated measures for social isolation, stress, anxiety and self-esteem were included to ensure reliability.

Findings: The study results reveal that extensive use of social media is closely tied to adverse mental health outcomes like stress, anxiety, low self-worth, and increased sense of social isolation. This suggests, similar to previous studies such as those by Kim & Park (2021) and Davis & Patel (2021), that there is an urgent goal to create possible methods to counteract these negative effects. The results therefore have very extensive and significant implications. On the flip side, they encourage programs of education that focus on capacity-building in terms of digital literacy and responsible online behaviour.

Conclusion: This study concluded that increased use of social media is directly related to detrimental effects on mental health, such as added stress, lower self-esteem, and social isolation. This study underscores the need for specific interventions, such as mental health support and digital literacy programs, to mitigate these impacts and provide a healthier digital environment.

Keywords: Social Media Effects, Mental Health, Anxiety, Self-Esteem, Social Isolation and Stress.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media in the digital era is a prominent aspect of our life, and thus it encompasses one of the major kinds of interactions that people share. Sharing information instantaneously, expressing one's creativity, and connecting with people across the globe are contemporaneous concepts. Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are some platforms that have revolutionized the way people communicate. They changed how people express themselves, build communities, and sustain relationships. Beyond the tremendous advantages offered by socializing sites, there arose severe questions concerning the negative repercussions of social media on mental health. Various studies have pointed out the adverse effects of these platforms, which indicate that their excessive use can lead to high stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness, especially in the younger population (Ahmed & Zhang, 2019; Bashir & Bhat 2017; Brown & Green, 2019). This study focuses on the important psychological elements like stress, anxiety, self-esteem and social isolation and explores the complex and multidimensional relationship between social media usage and mental health. The aim is to reveal how passive scrolling can lead to active engagement affecting mental health. The purpose of the study is also to fill the knowledge gap regarding the psychological effects of social media by looking into platform-specific effects and vulnerabilities of various demographic groups. This study also highlights the dual nature of social media, in which it also acknowledges the positive aspect of social media and how it creates psychological distress. It is based on the ideas of the Social Media Impact Theory. The study also emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to social media engagement. The result of this study aims to improve the knowledge about the relationship between social media and mental health while promoting cooperation between users, educators, legislators, and mental health specialists in order to create a more positive online environment.

1.1 Problem Statement

The researcher highlighted a concerning issue: excessive social media use among youth is greatly affecting the psychological well-being and mental health. Specifically, he observed that social usage had a significant influence on young people's mental health, resulting in:

- A higher chance of mental health issues.
- A decline in confidence and self-worth.
- A rise in stress and worry.
- It also results in the symptoms of depression.
- A lack of social interaction and disconnection.

Additionally, students' and young people's extended use of social media limits their mental development, which may be detrimental to their success in the future. In order to lessen the detrimental effects of social media on young people's psychological stability, this issue requires research and creative solutions.

1.2 Significance

Since more individuals, especially young people, are utilizing social media, the research study topic is crucial at the moment. Both the advantages and disadvantages of social media have been found by looking at its consequences. This fixes any problem that arises and improves our understanding of mental health conditions. Second, the research had aid in the development of policies and strategies. by learning which aspects of social media, such as online bullying, comparing oneself to others, or vying for likes and shares, have an impact on mental health. Teachers, parents, and mental health professionals can all think of methods to lessen the negative impacts and promote positive online behaviour. Last but not least, the study had influenced laws and policies. As authorities and organizations strive to comprehend the impact of social media on individuals' welfare, the research will assist them in formulating guidelines to enhance online safety. Ultimately, this study aims to enrich our understanding of how we engage with and perceive social media in connection to mental wellness.

1.3 Study Gap

The research gap identified was the insufficient insight into how various social media platforms influence mental well-being. For instance, while numerous studies concentrate on overall social media interaction, there is a scarcity of investigation into how distinct platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok uniquely affect mental health.

1.4 Study Objectives

- To investigate how social media use affects mental health metrics like stress and anxiety.
- To examine how self-esteem is shaped by social comparison on social media, especially in regard to carefully chosen content and online interactions.
- To assess how much social media, in spite of its function in promoting digital connectivity, adds to feelings of social isolation.
- To investigate how age, gender and educational attainment affect the psychological impacts of social media use.

1.5 Research Questions

RQ 1: What effects does the amount of time spent on social media each day have on users' stress and anxiety levels?

RQ 2: How does self-esteem get shaped by social comparison on social media platforms?

RQ 3: How much of a role does social media use play in social isolation?

RQ 4: How do the psychological effects of social media use differ for different age groups?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Davis & Kim (2020) conducted research investigating the impact of social media on mental health was the goal of this study. The researchers looked over and summarized the relevant literature that was available. Research has shown that younger generations are more susceptible. The methodology employed in study is qualitative research which is gathered from a variety of research articles. The younger generation, growing up in today's era is more vulnerable to serious mental health issues. This generation uses social media extensively which is strongly linked with mental health issues. According to researchers there is a large group of young people growing in today's era in an early stage of life who are more prone to severe mental health issues. There is a need for appropriate measures that should be taken to lower these risks by organizing informational and counselling sessions at schools and universities. To understand the impact on the mental health of the younger generation, suitable campaigns can also be set up.

Johnson & Singh (2020) conducted research titled "Social Media and Anxiety in Adolescents". The idea was to understand the association between social media usage and symptoms of anxiety in adolescents. Main objectives involved assessing the frequency of social media usage and then identifying the anxiety related issues from the social media platforms. Quantitative study was used to measure the anxiety levels in 500 adolescents. The study concludes that higher social media usage correlates with increased anxiety symptoms, particularly due to cyberbullying and social comparison and increased time spent on social media platforms is closely associated with higher anxiety levels, driven by harmful interactions and unrealistic comparisons. Digital literacy and mental health awareness are recommended to reduce the effects and promote healthier online behaviours among adolescents.

Keles et al., (2020) conducted research titled "Impact of Instagram on Self-Esteem" to investigate how Instagram affects young individuals' perceptions of themselves. The aim was to assess how self-esteem has changed before and after using Instagram and to look into how likes and comments changed people's

perceptions of their own values. The study used a mixed method approach which involves questionnaires and focus groups among 300 individuals, ages 18 to 24. The results show a strong relationship between low self-esteem and frequent Instagram use. The main reason for this decline is that these platforms promote unrealistic standards of beauty and the tendency of user's to compare themselves with others. The psychological effects of digital relationships on self-perception reflect larger concerns about how social media affects mental health.

Lee & Martin, (2019) conducted research titled "Facebook and Loneliness", that investigated the relationship between usage of Facebook and loneliness. In addition to identifying behavioural patterns linked to increased loneliness, the study aimed to examine the relationship between Facebook use and perceived social support. The study used a quantitative approach to survey 450 college students. The results showed that high levels of loneliness are substantially associated with excessive Facebook use, especially among users who passively consume content.

The research titled "Psychological Impact of TikTok" carried out by Lin et al., 2016 is to understand how this application has an effect on a teenager's stress and anxiety level. Other objectives of this study are finding out the content type that can create anxiety and assess TikTok as an additional stress management strategy. A total of 50 adolescents (ages 13 to 17) were part of in-depth interviews under the qualitative method used for the study. Findings state that while there are users for whom the app serves as a source of stress relief, there are others for whom violent and bullying videos contribute to heightened anxieties.

McCashin & Murphy (2023), the aim of the study was to examine the effects of social media overuse on adult depressive symptoms. The objectives were to identify the thresholds of depressive tendency and construct the nature of depressive symptoms as these pertain to social media. Data were obtained from 600 adults-age spanning from 25 to 40, utilizing quantitative analysis. The study found that social media use for more than four hours a day was strongly correlated with an increase in depression due to unrealistic social comparisons.

Research conducted Hou et al., (2019) under the name citing Twitter and Political Anxiety examines the impact of political discourse on users' mental health. The study aims to assess anxiety concerning political content on Twitter and how misinformation contributes to such feelings. Qualitative approaches used by researchers involved interviewing 200 Twitter users. The findings showed that regular exposure to divisive political content resulted in heightened levels of anxiety and a feeling of powerlessness among the users.

Naslund et al., (2020) conducted a study titled "*Social Media's Role in Body Image Issues*," to investigate the impacts of social media on adolescent's perception about their bodies. The objectives of the study were to examine the gender-based differences in body image issues and determining the impact of advertising and influencers on these beliefs. The quantitative approach was employed on 1000 teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19. The study concluded that unrealistic beauty standards on social media platforms have significantly increased body dissatisfaction, especially among female users.

Anwar et al., (2022) conducted research titled "The Impact of Snapchat on Social Connections", explored how Snapchat influences individuals' perceptions of social connections. The goal of the study was to assess the trust levels in virtual interactions and how this can impact friendship by ephemeral messaging. Mixed-method was used to gather data among 400 participants in focus groups and surveys. Study findings show that Snapchats promote intimate relationships and it also raises social pressure for frequent communication.

The paper by Pirdehghan et al., (2021) titled "Effects of Social Media on Sleep Patterns," looks at the effects of social media use on sleep quality. The main objectives of the study were to analyze the effects of notifications on sleep disruption and how the use of social media in the night hours would lead to sleep disturbances. The quantitative research design was used to enable the collection of results and survey about 800 people ages 18-35. The study has found strong relationships between sleep quality and daytime

fatigue due to high social media use. The study examined the need for technology awareness and the ubiquitous effect that digital engagement has on health.

Vukušić et al., (2021) sought to study the psychological impact on users stemming from commonly inflicted forms of cyberbullying. The study aimed at identifying the most common types of cyberbullying on Instagram, as well as assessing the self-esteem of victims. A qualitative approach was adopted whereby 200 victims of cyberbullying were interviewed. The researchers pointed toward a serious impact that comes with pain via online harassment leading toward lowered self-esteem, higher chances of depression, and anxiety induction among victims.

Popat & Tarrant (2022) conducted research titled "Facebook Addiction and Academic Performance". The researchers main objectives was to find out the connection between the university students academic performance and Facebook addiction, by measuring the level of students Facebook addiction pattern and then investigating their relation with their usage and GPA scores. 1200 university students participated in surveys using a quantitative methodology. A significant correlation was established between Facebook addiction and poorer academic performance, leading the research to find that excessive social media use negatively affects academic performance.

The research "The Impact of Social Media on Adolescents' Stress" carried out by Twenge & Campbell, (2018) sought to evaluate stress levels in teenagers because of the impact social media had on them. The objective of the study was to investigate primary stressors related to social media use and then assess stress responses based on gender. The study was based on standardized stress measurement scales and a quantitative approach with a survey on 700 adolescents aged 13-18 years. The study found that teenagers who spend more than three hours on social media in a day experience great stress, with females being more affected than males. The importance of social media to adolescent stress and the need for more targeted intervention is thus underscored.

Yang et al., (2022) conducted study titled "The Role of Social Media in FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)" to investigate the impact of social media on the psychological phenomenon of FOMO. The research aimed to analyze how FOMO manifests in young adults and its effects on general well-being. The researchers applied a mixed methods approach that consisted of in-depth interviews and survey-based data collection from 300 respondents aged 18-30. The study shows that high-level FOMO scores correlated with high levels of anxiety and life satisfaction, especially among Instagram and Snapchat users. The findings highlight the extent of psychological harm social media-induced FOMO can cause in young adults.

Safdar, (2020) research aimed to investigate how social media usage impinges on an individual's capacity to control and regulate emotions. The purpose of such research was to assess emotional stability among regular social media users and analyze the impacts that online conflicts incorporate into the effects they have on emotional control. The researchers carried out a survey on 500 participants where the quantitative technique was applied to assess their emotional regulation. The study results affirm that the use of social media may cause impairments in emotional regulation resulting in mood swings and impulsive behavior. The research points to the challenges that social media is posing in building emotional resilience. The results emphasize the difficulties social media presents in building emotional resilience, especially in situations involving disputes and relentless online activity.

Afzaal et al., (2023) conducted research titled "The Relationship Between Social Media and Procrastination". The goal is to examine to what extent social media use contributes to procrastination. The main objectives were to quantify the procrastination levels among social media users and determine the amount spent on ineffective scrolling. Quantitative research methodology was employed to track the behaviour of 800 participants, ages 18 to 25, using time-tracking apps. The results show that frequent use of social media leads to a very high level of procrastination, especially related to professional or academic assignments. The study also shed light on how social media is affecting productivity and can be a major discretion while working or studying.

Syed et al., (2023) conducted research titled "Social Media and Online Harassment", which aimed to determine the psychological impact of cyberbullying on social media users. The two key aims of the study were to determine the most common forms of online harassment and investigate their psychological consequences for victims. Researchers interviewed 250 victims of online harassment using a qualitative methodology. The study found out those victims of online harassment experience frequent levels of anxiety and depression. Result found out that, online harassment has a very significant negative emotional impact and actions need to be taken to lessen its effects on mental health.

Safdar (2023) conducted research aimed to measure the psychological benefits of taking a short break from social media. The objectives of study were to measure the stress and anxiety levels before and after a detox period and then assess the effect on productivity and happiness. Experimental research design was used among 300 participants who have not used social media for seven days. The study results show that in this detox phase participants' psychological well-being improved greatly which also included their focus, mood and anxiety levels. Many participants also reported feeling more well-being and being more productive. It became evident from the research that taking regular breaks from social media promotes emotional equilibrium and mental clarity.

In their 2023a study, Syed et al., examined social media's impacts on romantic relationships. The study sought to identify social media behaviors that precipitate relationship problems and seek trust issues stemmed from online interaction. The researchers employed mixed-methods, serving and interviewing 200 couples. The study found that excessive social media use causes couples to be dishonest and engage in cover-up behaviors, which eventually lead to issues of trust and disputes within their relationships. Results depict how social media presents hurdles in relationships and stress the importance of open communication and establishing proper boundaries for online communication.

In their study, Hassan and Safdar, (2022) assessed the extent to which social media platforms enable health initiatives to exert a positive function in society. Social media campaigns aimed at improving mental health, especially on possible behavioural impacts and awareness raising among users, were a focal point of the study. The case study method was used to investigate the ten significant mental health campaigns carried out in Facebook and Instagram. Findings support the notion that social media can be an effective vehicle for creating positive social change through user engagement, raising awareness, and encouraging proactive behaviours for mental health. However, the study noted that for these initiatives to develop maximum long-term effectiveness there must be consistent messaging along with sustained effort.

2.1 Variables Independent Variable

"Social Media" was the research study's independent variable. Social media has become an important component of our society and relations. Social media includes sites where we can share our ideas, lives and experiences that include Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

2.2 Dependent Variables

"Mental Health" was the research study's dependent variable since it relies on social media usage. Our daily life is greatly influenced by our mental health and this is an essential part of our well-being. There are many variables, like stress, anxiety, low self-esteem and social isolation that can have a greater impact on mental health with social media use. If we regularly expose ourselves to idealized pictures and lifestyles, this can cause a feeling of inadequacy, which can affect self-esteem and possibly result in anxiety or depression. In addition, if people do not interact in a meaningful way, social media can worsen the state of social isolation and also it can promote a sense of being linked. An individual's urge to keep an online presence can worsen their mental health. Recognizing how social media affects our mental health and figuring out how to encourage a healthier online experience require an understanding of these dynamics.

2.2.1 Sub-Dependent Variables

Sub-dependent variables of the study were anxiety, self-esteem, social isolation and stress.

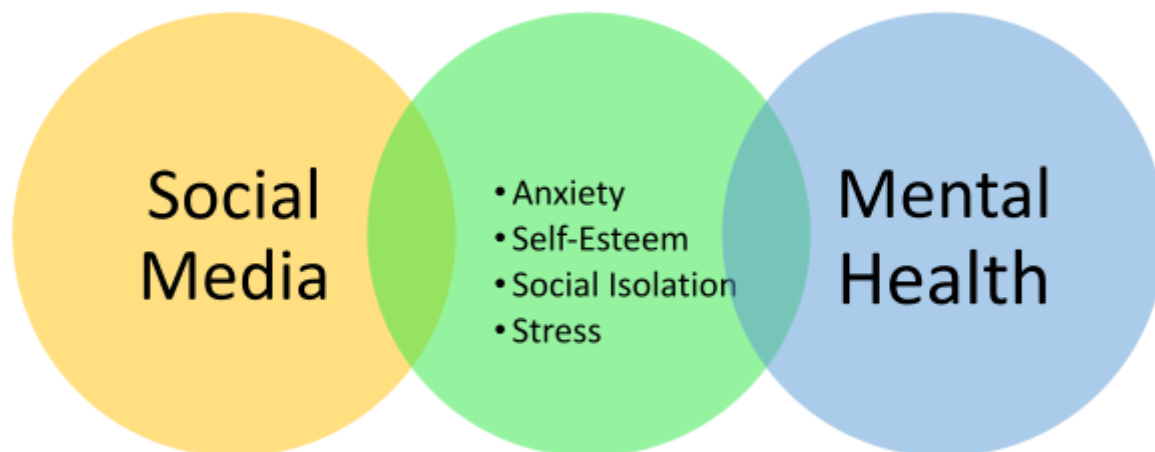
Anxiety: Many people experience anxiety especially while using social media. Constant pinging of notifications and the concern how other people imagine you can lead to greater levels of stress. It is very natural to worry that we don't measure up to what we see online.

Self-Esteem: How you perceive yourself is basically the pillar stone of self-esteem. It can be seriously messed up by social media. It is very difficult to avoid the situation where we compare ourselves to others and we feel like we fall short because of the well-curated messages.

Social Isolation: It is a well-known fact that social media allows us to interact with others but it can also create a feeling of social isolation. Even though we are surrounded by virtual friends, there can be a situation when you want to feel the warmth and this cannot be replaced by online interactions and this can cause the feeling of loneliness.

Stress: It is hard to stay up to date on social media. We need to reply frequently, and keep up with trends which become really stressful. This is because we have allowed ourselves to always to something and this can be very stressful.

Research Model



3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social Media Impact Theory was highlighted in the book “The Social Media Psychology” by Dr. Pamela Rutledge. In this book, Rutledge examined the ways through which social media can affect psychological results, mainly mental health. After analyzing the impacts of social media on mental wellness, the study corresponds with the concepts established in the theory, illustrating different forms of social media participation that can lead to beneficial and detrimental psychological outcomes. This relation is important to find out the consequences of social media in contemporary society. If we understand this relation it can improve our insight into how social media shapes our everyday experiences and emotional well-being.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study design, the researchers employed a quantitative approach to examine the influence of social media on mental health. Data was gathered through online questionnaires, which had inquired participants

about their usage of social platforms and their mental health journeys. The questionnaire had incorporated validated tools to assess levels of anxiety and depression, ensuring the collection of trustworthy information. Social media behaviours and mental health outcomes were correlated through statistical software analyses conducted on the collected data. Past studies indicate that social media could strongly affect emotional well-being (Shabir et al., 2014).

4.1 Population

The research population was Rawalpindi, a city in Pakistan. This settlement offered an amalgam of demographically rich conditions with people from different socioeconomic statuses. By confining the study to this area, the researchers wish to gather a wide array of opinions on the social media effects on mental well-being.

4.2 Sample Frame

In selecting their sample population, the researchers targeted the general population of Rawalpindi aged 14 years and above. The general population of Rawalpindi was chosen since it was the most conveniently accessible group for the researchers. They also specifically targeted persons of certain age groups who had an educational qualification of at least matriculation so that they could reasonably express their views of the effects of social media on mental well-being.

4.3 Sample Size and Technique

There were 250 participants in the research study's sample. The researchers employed a probability sampling technique more precisely, a basic random sampling method to choose those subjects. The results were more trustworthy and reflective of the larger community because this strategy had made sure that the selection procedure was equitable and that everyone had an equal chance to be included in the study.

4.4 Data Collection

In order to obtain information, the researcher employed a survey. There were three sections to the self-designed questionnaire. Three options were presented to responders in the first section, which gathered demographic data. The dependent variable, which he measured using a Likert scale, was examined in the third section after the independent factors were the subject of the second. In response researcher had received 229 responses back means 91.6% which is considered a good ratio. Researchers were able to clearly and methodically comprehend how social media impacts participants' mental health thanks to this methodology.

4.5 Data Analysis Technique

The researchers entered the gathered data into SPSS for data analysis, and then used a variety of statistical methods to analyse the study's findings. As a result, he was able to thoroughly examine the connections between the independent and dependent variables and gain a thorough grasp of how social media affects participants' mental health.

5. RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Information

Sr.	Questions	Options	F	%
1	What is your age group?	a) 14-18	34	14.9
		b) 19-23	116	50.9
		c) 24-28	43	18.9
		d) 29-33	14	6.1
		e) 33 and above	21	9.2
2	What is your gender?	a) Male	46	20.2
		b) Female	182	79.8

3	What is your highest level of education completed?	a) Matriculation or below	18	7.9
		b) Intermediate	67	29.4
		c) Bachelor's Degree	99	43.4
		d) Master's Degree	36	15.8
		e) Above Master	08	3.5
4	What social media application you mostly use?	a) Facebook	22	9.6
		b) Instagram	138	60.5
		c) TikTok	33	14.5
		d) Snap Chat	06	2.6
		e) YouTube	29	12.7
5	How many hours you mostly spend in using social media daily?	a) 1-2 Hours	67	29.4
		b) 3-4 Hours	76	33.3
		c) More than 4 Hours	85	37.3

The respondents' demographic details are shown in the table 1. 50.9% of participants are between the ages of 19 and 23, followed by 18.9% who are between the ages of 24 and 28, with smaller percentages in other age groups. With 79.8% of the sample being female and 20.2% being male, women predominate. In terms of education, 15.8% have a master's degree, 29.4% are in the intermediate level, and 43.4% have earned a bachelor's degree. The most popular social media platform is Instagram (60.5%), which is followed by YouTube (12.7%) and TikTok (14.5%). Of those who use it daily, 37.3% spend more than four hours, 33.3% use it for three to four hours, and 29.4% use it for one to two hours. These numbers show a highly educated, largely young, female population that uses social media extensively.

Table 2: Usage of Social Media

Sr.	Questions	Options	F	%	SD	M
1	I spend a significant amount of time on social media each day.	a) Strongly Disagree	09	11.4	0.959	3.46
		b) Disagree	23	41.2		
		c) Neutral	76	33.3		
		d) Agree	94	41.2		
		e) Strongly Agree	26	11.4		
2	I feel that social media enhances my social connections.	a) Strongly Disagree	08	3.5	0.954	3.46
		b) Disagree	28	12.3		
		c) Neutral	65	28.5		
		d) Agree	104	45.6		
		e) Strongly Agree	23	10.1		
3	I often compare myself to others on social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	34	14.9	1.130	2.65
		b) Disagree	85	37.3		
		c) Neutral	46	20.2		
		d) Agree	52	22.8		
		e) Strongly Agree	11	4.8		
4	I receive support from friends and family through social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	17	7.5	1.055	3.10
		b) Disagree	49	21.5		
		c) Neutral	72	31.6		
		d) Agree	74	32.5		
		e) Strongly Agree	16	7.6		
5	I feel anxious when I do not check my social media accounts regularly.	a) Strongly Disagree	19	8.3	1.146	3.18
		b) Disagree	51	22.4		
		c) Neutral	51	22.4		
		d) Agree	83	36.4		
		e) Strongly Agree	24	10.5		
6	I often find myself	a) Strongly Disagree	04	1.8	1.012	3.67

	scrolling through social media without a specific purpose.	b) Disagree	30	13.2		
		c) Neutral	52	22.8		
		d) Agree	93	40.8		
		e) Strongly Agree	49	21.5		
7	I feel that social media has a positive impact on my mood.	a) Strongly Disagree	06	2.6	0.969	3.34
		b) Disagree	40	17.5		
		c) Neutral	75	32.9		
		d) Agree	84	36.8		
		e) Strongly Agree	23	10.1		
8	I use social media to stay informed about current events and news.	a) Strongly Disagree	03	1.3	0.876	3.80
		b) Disagree	16	7.0		
		c) Neutral	48	21.1		
		d) Agree	117	51.3		
		e) Strongly Agree	44	19.3		
9	I believe social media is a valuable tool for communication.	a) Strongly Disagree	03	1.3	0.811	3.92
		b) Disagree	11	4.8		
		c) Neutral	34	14.9		
		d) Agree	134	58.8		
		e) Strongly Agree	46	20.2		
10	I believe that social media helps me maintain relationships with people I don't see often.	a) Strongly Disagree	11	4.8	1.047	3.60
		b) Disagree	21	9.2		
		c) Neutral	60	26.3		
		d) Agree	93	40.8		
		e) Strongly Agree	43	18.9		

Participants' social media usage patterns and perceived effects are examined in the table 2. Of those surveyed, a noteworthy 40.8% concur that they spend a significant amount of time on social media, with 11.4% strongly agreeing. 22.8% of people frequently compare themselves to others online, and 45.6% of people believe social media improves social connections. 32.5% of respondents say they feel supported by friends and family, and 36.4% say they get anxious when they can't check their accounts. Additionally, 36.8% of respondents think social media improves their mood, and 40.8% acknowledge engaging in aimless scrolling. 51.3% of respondents use social media to keep up with current events, and 58.8% view it as a useful tool for communication.

Table 3: Effect of Social Media on Mental Health

Sr.	Questions	Options	F	%	SD	M
<i>Anxiety</i>						
1	I feel more anxious after using social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	18	7.9	0.957	2.87
		b) Disagree	62	27.2		
		c) Neutral	85	37.3		
		d) Agree	58	25.4		
		e) Strongly Agree	05	2.2		
2	I have experienced negative emotions (e.g. Sadness, jealousy) due to social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	23	10.1	1.103	2.84
		b) Disagree	78	34.2		
		c) Neutral	51	22.4		
		d) Agree	64	28.1		
		e) Strongly Agree	12	5.3		
3	I often feel overwhelmed by the amount of content on social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	08	3.5	0.849	3.14
		b) Disagree	37	16.2		
		c) Neutral	105	46.1		
		d) Agree	71	31.1		

		e) Strongly Agree	07	3.1		
<i>Stress</i>						
1	I believe that social media contributes to my stress levels.	a) Strongly Disagree	09	3.9	0.926	3.04
		b) Disagree	59	25.9		
		c) Neutral	81	35.5		
		d) Agree	72	31.6		
		e) Strongly Agree	07	3.1		
2	Social media has a negative impact on my sleep quality.	a) Strongly Disagree	13	5.7	1.185	3.46
		b) Disagree	47	20.6		
		c) Neutral	35	15.4		
		d) Agree	88	38.6		
		e) Strongly Agree	45	19.7		
3	I feel pressure to present a perfect image on social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	29	12.7	1.117	2.82
		b) Disagree	65	28.5		
		c) Neutral	64	28.1		
		d) Agree	57	25.0		
		e) Strongly Agree	13	5.7		
<i>Self-Esteem</i>						
1	I feel that my self-worth is influenced by the number of likes and comments I receive on my posts.	a) Strongly Disagree	34	14.9	1.101	2.66
		b) Disagree	79	34.6		
		c) Neutral	53	23.2		
		d) Agree	54	23.7		
		e) Strongly Agree	08	3.5		
2	My overall happiness is influenced by the interactions I have on social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	28	12.3	1.029	2.69
		b) Disagree	75	32.9		
		c) Neutral	71	31.1		
		d) Agree	47	20.6		
		e) Strongly Agree	07	3.1		
3	I feel more confident after interacting with others on social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	15	6.6	0.959	3.12
		b) Disagree	38	16.7		
		c) Neutral	88	38.6		
		d) Agree	78	34.2		
		e) Strongly Agree	09	3.9		
<i>Social Isolation</i>						
1	I feel isolated from my peers despite being connected on social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	18	7.9	0.939	2.94
		b) Disagree	46	20.2		
		c) Neutral	102	44.7		
		d) Agree	55	24.1		
		e) Strongly Agree	07	3.1		
2	I often feel lonely despite being active on social media.	a) Strongly Disagree	18	7.9	1.084	2.99
		b) Disagree	65	28.5		
		c) Neutral	63	27.6		
		d) Agree	66	28.9		
		e) Strongly Agree	16	7.0		
3	I feel that social media distracts me from real-life interactions.	a) Strongly Disagree	19	8.3	1.164	3.29
		b) Disagree	42	18.4		
		c) Neutral	51	22.4		
		d) Agree	85	37.3		
		e) Strongly Agree	31	13.6		

With an emphasis on anxiety, stress, self-esteem, and social isolation, table 3 examines how social media affects mental health. In terms of anxiety, 28.1% report feeling depressed or envious, and 25.4% report feeling more anxious after using social media. In response to questions about stress, 31.6% of respondents say social media makes them feel more stressed, and 38.6% say it interferes with their ability to sleep. In terms of self-esteem, 20.6% of respondents say they are happy based on their interactions on social media, and 23.7% believe likes and comments affect their sense of value. Finally, despite being active on social media, 28.9% report feeling lonely, and 37.3% claim that social media diverts them from in-person relationships. These results highlight the intricate relationship between mental health and social media use.

6. DISCUSSION

The results of this study complement and build upon previous research by shedding light on the complex and multidimensional relationship between social media use and mental health. The study emphasizes the substantial impact of social media on increased anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem, which is consistent with the findings of (Bashir and Bhat, 2017) and (Smith and Taylor, 2020). According to earlier research, the younger generation is still especially at risk because of their developmental stage and inclination for outside approval.

A major theme in this study was social isolation, which reflected the paradox of digital connectivity. According to (Green, and White, 2018), social media sites like Facebook and Instagram promise deeper connections, but they frequently fall short of replacing the depth of in-person interactions. Similar to (Wilson and Harper, 2018) findings, passive scrolling behaviours found in this study exacerbate the sense of loneliness caused by this digital detachment.

Furthermore, as highlighted by (Brown, and Green, 2019), the phenomenon of social comparison is crucial in the decline of self-perception. Users struggle with feelings of inadequacy as a result of the carefully manicured, idealized images that are common on platforms, which set impossible standards for success and beauty. This study not only confirms these findings but also shows how these factors interact to have a significant impact on mental health. The study's conclusions answer a number of important research questions about the connection between social media use and mental health, they are as follow:

The research question was “What effects does the amount of time spent on social media each day have on users' stress and anxiety levels?”, yes, long-term social media use is strongly correlated with higher levels of stress and anxiety, according to this study. These findings are in line with those of (Smith, and Taylor, 2020), who found a similar correlation between excessive use and elevated anxiety symptoms in teenagers. The significance of tracking social media usage as a factor in mental health outcomes is emphasized by both studies.

Secondly the answer of “How does self-esteem get shaped by social comparison on social media platforms?” is that the study demonstrates that social comparison has a substantial impact on self-esteem, especially when it comes to carefully chosen content that presents idealized lives. This supports the findings of (Brown, and Green, 2019), who discovered that regular Instagram use encourages social comparison, which lowers one's sense of value and self-esteem.

Other question was “How much of a role does social media use play in social isolation?”, and despite being digitally connected, many participants reported feeling lonely, demonstrating a strong correlation between social media use and social isolation. The results of this study are supported by (Green, and White, 2018) observation that passive participation and late-night social media use contribute to feelings of loneliness.

The last question of the study was “How do the psychological effects of social media use differ for different age groups?”, no doubt, although the demographic results of this study are specific to the people of Rawalpindi, they are consistent with those of (Bashir, and Bhat, 2017), who discovered that younger generations are more vulnerable to mental health problems associated with social media use.

The results also highlight the crucial need for moderation and deliberate use by exposing a behavioural cycle in which excessive scrolling and passive consumption exacerbate emotional distress. This conversation places the study in a larger framework and advocates for solutions that deal with these pervasive problems.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

Dr. Pamela Rutledge put forth this concept through her book *The Social Media Psychology*. Its chief focus was on the Social Media Impact Theory, which elaborates on how social media interaction mainly affects emotional or mental health impact. According to the thesis, social media are psychologically positive or negative based on the type of interaction, time spent using the service, and context of use. Thus, while social media promotes self-expression and connection, it may at the same time nourish loneliness, anxiety, and inadequacy because of constant comparison and content cherry-picked.

Such findings are still relevant since the prevalence of social networking sites, and their subsequent impact on mental health usage, is on the rise. This study offers a localized perspective on psychological effects of social media at the same time continuing an existing body of knowledge thanks to its conformity with past works. Further investigation into platform-specific effects and tailored interventions will enhance the generalizability of these findings.

The psychological effects which the current study shows can still fall under the explanation of Social Media Impact Theory. The use of this theory suggests however that neither negative effects nor positive effects are going to be reduced without the urgent need for interventions in areas such as digital literacy programs, moderated use, mental health support, and so on.

7. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that social media extensively associate with debilitating effects on mental health variables like arising stress, anxiety, low self-worth, and a greater vulnerability to the emotional aspects of isolation. Similar to other prior studies by Kim and Park (2021) and Davis and Patel (2021), these results signify the urgent need to devise approaches through which these effects could be minimized. There are tremendous and broad implications of these findings. They touch the need for educational programs designed to instill digital literacy and responsible conduct online. For example, (Smith and Taylor, 2020) assert that equipping youth with the necessary skills to navigate social media critically can serve as a buffer against adverse effects. However, the study supports the creation of laws and programs that promote responsible use of digital platforms, focusing on the most vulnerable young people. This study also emphasizes the possible advantages of maintaining a healthy balance with social media. Users can lessen the negative psychological effects of excessive use by implementing techniques like taking regular digital detoxes and placing a high value on meaningful offline connections. In order to create a healthier digital environment, future research should examine platform-specific effects in greater detail and assess the efficacy of focused interventions.

In summary, social media has transformed communication and connectivity, but excessive use of it can have detrimental effects on mental health. In addition to drawing attention to these issues, this study issues a challenge to everyone: individuals, educators, legislators, and medical professionals should collaborate to promote a healthy and balanced digital culture.

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Conflict of Interest

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