

Original Article

The Social Media and Its Influence on Youth Behavior and Social Relationships

Komal R. Bhosale

Assistant Professor, Sociology, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Commerce & Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde Arts College, Nana Peth, Pune

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Abstract

The fast growth of social media has been greatly affecting the social fabric of contemporary society as a whole especially to youth behaviours and relations with one another. The current research paper examines the complex nature of the effect of the social media on young people within the age group of 18–25, including behavioural shift, communication, emotional status and quality of interpersonal relationships. The paper uses mixed-method research with an approach of quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. The results show that social media has two-fold effects- it strengthens interconnectedness and access to information and self-disclosure, on the other hand, it leads to behavioural addiction, short attention span, social comparison, and degradation of intimate interpersonal relationships. It is concluded in the study that to maintain meaningful social relations and enhance psychological well-being, it is important to ensure that social media are used in their balanced and mindful way.

Keywords: Social Media, Ages, Behaviour, Social Relationships, Digital Culture, Mental Health, Online Interaction.

Introduction

The advent of social media, the interaction and communication between humans in the 21 st century has transformed. Social media like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and WhatsApp have gained a significant role in our everyday life, particularly among the youth. Social media has the advantage of connecting instantly, providing a hashtag of networks globally and being able to interact at all times over geographical boundaries unlike conventional methods of communication.

The youth are the most active group in these sites, with some dedicating large amounts of time to accessing the online content. Although social media provides a wide range of opportunities, including knowledge sharing, and career opportunities, as well as social interactions, they also present obstacles that affect behavioural emergence and social interactions.

The transformation of communication through face-to-face interaction to virtual communication has brought out fundamental sociological issues. Digital expressions like comments, shares and likes are replacing traditional forms of social values like emotional attachment, trust and interpersonal understanding. Such a change requires a thorough sociological examination in order to interpret its impact in the long run.

The purpose of the study is the following:

1. To examine the level of social media use amongst young people.
2. To test the effect of social media on behaviour patterns like attention, self-esteem, and decision-making.
3. To determine how social media is affecting interpersonal interaction, in terms of family and friendship.
4. To find out positive and negative impacts of social media.
5. To make suggestions on how to use it responsibly and in a balanced manner.

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Address for correspondence:

Komal R. Bhosale, Assistant Professor, Sociology, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Commerce & Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde Arts College, Nana Peth, Pune
Email: mrskomal90@gmail.com

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Research Questions

1. What is the behavioural shift that is experienced by the youth as a result of using social media?
2. What impact does social media have on social relationships quality?
3. Are more digital interpersonal interactions lowering the level of emotion in the relationships?
4. What steps are to be taken in order to reduce the adverse impacts?

Hypotheses

H1: The use of social media is significantly related to youth behaviour.

H2: The more people use social media, the worse the social relationships in life become.

H3: Exposure to social media leads to some psychological problems including anxiety and low esteem.

Literature Review

Preconnected literature is focused on negative and positive aspects of social media usage. According to Boyd (2014), social media is bringing about identity and socializing among the youth. Nonetheless, Twenge (2017) discovered that the level of depression and loneliness strongly correlates with the extended screen time.

A systematic review by Keles et al. (2020) suggests excessive use of social media to be linked with mental disorders, such as anxiety and stress. In the same vein, a report provided by WHO (2021) adds that excess digital exposure may adversely affect teenagers in terms of mental health.

Recent researches (2022-2024) indicate that social media improves connectivity and access to information yet also an aesthetical of comparison, finding validation and a low attention capacity. The literature shows that there is a future need to use them in balance and be digitally literate.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design embraced in the study is descriptive and analytic in nature in order to reflect the changes in behaviour amongst the youth and their relationship.

Data Collection

- Primary Data: Gathered by an interviewing process that involved semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire, 120 respondents aged 18- 25 in urban contexts.
- Secondary Data: On-line data banks, government reports, and books.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling approach targeting college students and the young professionals.

Tools and Techniques

- Analysis using percentages and frequency.
- Qualitative responses: thematic analysis.
- Demonstration (charts and tables).
- Data Analysis and Interpretation.

Patterns of social media use.

The researchers discovered that some 88 percent of the participants are over 3-5 hours a day on social networks. Instagram and WhatsApp were found to be the most commonly used with YouTube ranking below.

Behavioural Impact

- Most of the respondents also indicated that they were more addicted to social media to get some entertainment and communication.
- Lots of the participants reflected their decreasing concentration and attention durability.
- A big percentage confessed the tendency to compare their life with other people and develop low self-esteem and dissatisfaction.
- Reported sleep disturbances were also common because of using a lot of screens.

Social Relationships.

1. Approximately three-quarters (72 percent) of respondents reported their reduced face-to-face contact with their family and friends.
2. Online communication has taken the place of face-to-face interactions which have led to shallow relations.
3. Social media was however deemed useful in long distance relations and getting back in touch with friends of the past.

Psychological Effects

- High anxiety and stress levels were viewed among the heavy users.
- The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) became popular.
- Emotional relying on online feedback (likes, comments) was noticeable.

Discussion

The results point to a paradoxical position of social media. On the one hand, it serves as a very potent means of connectivity, learning and self-expression. Conversely, it also leads to behavioural addiction, emotional instability and interpersonal weak relationships.

Sociologically, social media is transforming the social norms and patterns of interaction. Patience, empathy and profound communication are slowly being phased away and in their way are quick satisfaction and online approval.

Findings

1. The social media plays a major role in changing youth behaviour especially their way of paying attention, self-perception and their way of responding emotionally.

2. Overuse results in low quality of interpersonal relations.
3. Anxiety and stress are some psychological disorders that social media leads to.
4. Although it has some adverse impacts, social media has increased connectedness and information accessibility.

Suggestions

- Encourage about responsible use of social media.
- Promote digital detox, time management.
- Incorporate electronic literacy training at schools.
- Create physical social interactions and connection to the community.
- Promote the use of social media to engage in education and career development by the youth.

Conclusion

Social media has made an inevitable inclusion in the life of the youth that has affected how they behave and the relationships they have. Although it has many advantages, its uncontrolled and overuse has the potential to cause serious social and psychological problems. Thus, there is a need to strike a balance so that social media can be used as an instrument of development as opposed to a disruptive force.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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