

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Relationship between Social Media Usage and Mental Well-Being among Young Adults

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*Department of Psychology, Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore -Pakistan**Correspondence to Dr. Saima Majeed, Email: saimamajeed@Fccollege.edu.pk Tel:+92-317-4633096.***ABSTRACT****Background:** The use of social media has grown rapidly over the past decennium and a half, however, not much research is conducted on it to identify its correlation with mental well-being and its effects.**Aim:** To determine the correlation between social media usage and mental well-being in young adults.**Study design:** Cross Sectional study.**Methodology:** Data was collected using convenient sampling. This study includes a sample size of 215 young adults, 108 men, and 107 women, from two universities in Lahore, Pakistan, aged between 18 -25 years. Two instruments were used in this study to measure the variables, the Social Networking Usage questionnaire, and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale. Data was evaluated by using SPSS version 24. Pearson's correlation and independent sample t-test were applied with p-value < 0.05 as significant.**Results:** Findings indicated a significant positive relationship between all dimensions of social media usage including academic, socialization, entertainment, and information. High mean scores indicated that research participants mostly use social media for academic purposes. There was not a statistically significant relationship that could be seen between social media usage and mental well-being. Gender differences were found only related to mental well-being where men scored high as compared to women with a significance of 0.01 level.**Practical Implication:** Present study results raised the idea of examining other mediating or moderating factors between the connection between social media platforms usage and mental well-being. Not only the time but the content and purpose of social media should also be considered while establishing the direction of the relationship.**Conclusion:** It was concluded that young adults' use of social media has not an inverse connection with mental health, and they mostly use it for academic purposes. However, men and women are different on the mental well-being scale, and men with high well-being reported for the present sample.**Key words:** Social Media, Correlation, Mental Well-Being, Depression and Self-Esteem.**INTRODUCTION**

The use of social media has grown rapidly over the past decennium and a half, however, not much research is conducted on it to identify its correlation with mental well-being and its effects. Social media is used for many reasons, to stay in touch with people, to discover new things, to be up-to-date and woke about recent world affairs, for entertainment, for jobs, and for searching. It has blessed the modern world with a lot of advantages and contributed a lot to the betterment of societies, however, excess usage of social media has a lot of disadvantages, especially when young adults in recent years have notably reported an increase in the time, spend on their phones scrolling through social media. This has also rightfully increased concerns regarding whether there is a negative correlation between social media and the mental well-being of young adults.

A Research found that nearly majority of Americans use social media and the percentage of usage was higher of using Facebook. 68% Facebook and other on Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram¹.statistical scale shows that spending time on social media is significantly on higher rate. On average, 28% of the time internet is being used for social media interaction^{2,3}. The total population of the world that uses social media is 4.48 billion, making that 56.8% of the world population⁴. and 84% of those users are young adults. According to a graph, we found online, women use Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest more whereas men use Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, Reddit, and WhatsApp more. Both genders use Snapchat an equal amount⁵. Considering one developing country i.e., the USA, has 72.3% of social media users⁴ whereas a developing country i.e., Pakistan 31.5% of social media users⁶.

The use of social platform has caused social desolation and put a strain on real-life relationships and social interactions and it is reported that increased use of social platform can lead to cellphone (gadgets) addictions^{7,8}. This is mostly due to the fear of

missing out, or FOMO as the young people say nowadays^{9,10}. Findings of previous, relevant articles have reported that social media usage has a correlation with loneliness, depression, and anxiety¹¹, social isolation^{12,13} and "phubbing," which means how much the user is ignoring somebody by using their cellphone during face-to-face interaction with others^{14,15}.

Increased amounts of social media users have also caused self-esteem issues, and self-confidence problems that have led to body dysmorphia, and dissatisfaction with one's body by comparing themselves to models which can eventually lead to eating disorders. High social media usage has proven to increase loneliness and envy as it mostly only shows the happy sides of the people using it, making an individual feel like their own life is very boring, not very happening and that they do not have fun with people around them. Social media has increased cyberbullying and distress over irrelevant and minute things such as not getting enough likes on pictures, which is very harmful because it might cause people to engage in dangerous behaviors just to get a couple of more likes. Increased use of social media has proven to distract people from their responsibilities for example students not focusing on school, causing low academic performance, and also being distracted at work.

Contradictory to an point of social isolation, social media has also opened channels of communication that have played a crucial role in social support, it has helped people find communities in which they feel a sense of belongingness, helped them find their identity, build a reputation and enhanced relationships. It can also boost self-esteem by receiving positive feedback from others. Moreover, some of the recent studies showed that the impact of cellphone and internet on mental well-being depends on the time spent on each app and the activities in which the users involved in.

Social media is found to have a buttness nature. Using it makes a person relax and happy Harmon releases called dopamine which indirectly is the reward in nature. However, the platforms are made to distract, addict a person and are linked with mental illness and physical.

While researching this topic of social media, we came across multiple theories related to it. The theories were divided into three

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headings: micro theory macro theory, and pseudo theory. There are three theories of micro. The first one is Word of Mouth/ Psychological Ownership and Perceived Control which states that consumers are likely to believe what comes from the mouths of the people they know such as friends or family. The second theory is the Social Exchange Theory, which explains how human beings need to communicate with each other to form bonds, relationships, and communities. The third theory is the Social Penetration Theory which, just like the previous theory, talks about the formation of human bonds and relationships but while the former talks about these topics at an organizational level, this theory talks about them at individual levels. It talks about individuals revealing their inner selves and identity¹⁶.

The study was accompanied to explore the relationship between network usage and psychological well-being among US students and emerging adults. The result revealed that there was a positive association between adults and a negative correlation among students. Findings also suggest that the way social media usage has increased among adults' later depression and other mental disorders going to be more common¹⁷.

The research was done to explore Facebook usage and the well-being relation among undergraduate students and the result showed that Facebook usage was negatively correlated with well-being among first-year students but moving to their final year results were different and it was positively correlated. By age, students use Facebook for more beneficial purposes¹⁸. There was another research done in the 2016 general survey to explore the association between social network usage and mental well-being. The result showed; there was a negative relationship between the ages of 18-29 years. But there was a positive correlation among adults of aged more than 29 years¹⁹.

There was research done in Korea and this study showed that there was a positive correlation between internet usage and the subjective well-being of students as students get more chances to express themselves on social media which has a positive impact on their psychological well-being. But there was a negative correlation with regards to their socioeconomic status with self-disclosing behavior²⁰.

There was another meta-analysis study done to explore whether social media usage and psychological well-being have a positive correlation or negative. And the results showed that there was a positive correlation between phone calls and texting on psychological well-being but there was a negative correlation between gaming and other network usage with mental well-being²¹.

Based on previous studies and present conditions that could be seen in every educational institution or house, it seemed that it is a need for time to explore the association between social-media usage and the psychological well-being among young adults. Present study raised the idea of examining other mediating or moderating factors between the connection between social media platforms usage and mental well-being. Not only the time but the content and purpose of social media should also be considered while establishing the direction of the relationship.

The objective of the study was to determine the correlation between social media usage and mental well-being in young adults.

METHODOLOGY

A correlational study with a cross-sectional research design was used to find the relationship between social media usage and mental well-being. For research, data were collected from 215 young adults (university students). There were 107 females and

108 males, in the age group 18-25, and recorded their responses from university students in Lahore, Pakistan. For this research study, two scales were used to evaluate social media usage and mental well-being. The Social Networking Usage questionnaire (2018) was used to measure social media usage which is consist of 5 factors, the first factor comprised academics containing 7 items, second-factor socialization comprised 9 items, the 3rd factor consisted of 4 items of entertainment, the 4th factor consisted of the 3 items of informativeness and the 5th factor consist of constraints having 4 items. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scales was used to measure mental well-being, comprises of 14 items related to mental well-being, and responses were made on a 5-point scale ranging from 'none of the time to 'all the time. Sampling was done by convenient sampling (non-probability sampling) technique.

Statistical analysis: Data was evaluated by using SPSS version 24. To determine the gender difference based on social media usage and mental well-being t-test was used with p-value < 0.05 as significant. A person's correlational test will be used to see the mean of two groups male and female.

RESULTS

Both men and women reported their responses to social media usage and mental well-being questionnaires. Their mean age was 21 years (SD=1.47) as shown in table-1. Participants were from the social sciences, natural sciences, and Business departments mostly in the senior year of their undergraduate studies

Table-2 indicated a significant positive relationship between all dimensions of social media usage. High mean scores indicated that research participants mostly use social media for academic purposes. There was not a statistically significant relationship that could be seen between social media usage and mental well-being.

Gender differences were reported in entertainment purposes of media usage and mental well-being as men use social media more for entertainment and perceived their mental being better than their counterparts. However, no statistically significant difference could be seen for any other dimension of social media usage as shown in table-3

Table-1: Baseline Parameters (n=215)

Characteristics	Categories	Study Sample
Age (years)	Mean ± SD	21.60 ± 1.47
Gender	Male	108 (50.2%)
	Female	107 (49.8%)
Semester	Freshman	15(7.0%)
	Sophomore	38(17%)
	Junior	59(27.4%)
	Senior	103(47.9%)
Academic Majors	Natural Sciences	75(35%)
	Social Sciences	75(35%)
	Business Studies	65(30%)

Table-2: Association between Social-Media platform Usage for Different Purposes and Mental Well-Being of Young Adults

Variable	Social	1	2	3	4	5
Media Usage						
1Academic			.515**	.475**	.521**	-.090
2. Socialization			-	.434**	.489**	-.042
3. Entertainment				-	.270**	.120
4. Information					-	-.058
Mental Well-being						-
M	19.41	11.66	9.28	8.74	44.79	
SD	5.217	3.130	3.210	2.499	9.181	

(Note: M=mean, SD= standard deviation, *p<0.5, **p<.01)

Table 3: Gender variation in Social-Media platform Usage for different purposes and Mental Well-Being in Young Adults

Variables	M (n=108)		F (n=107)		95%CI		P	LL	UL
	M	SD	M	SD	t(df)	SD			
Academic	19.93	5.38	18.89	5.01	1.46(213)	1.45	-.36	2.43	
Socialization	11.31	3.23	12.01	2.99	1.65(213)	1.65	-1.5	.134	
Entertainment	9.74	3.26	8.82	3.10	2.11(213)	2.11	.06	1.77	
Information	8.63	2.51	8.86	2.49	.674(213)	.674	-.90	.443	
Mental W-B	46.44	8.45	43.11	9.61	2.70(213)	2.70	.89	5.76	

DISCUSSION

Present study results indicated that all the purposes of social media usage like academic, socialization, entertainment, and information have a significant positive relationship. However, an inverse relationship between social network usage and psychological well-being could not be proved in the present sample of young adults. Most of the research participants use social media for academic purposes and men reported high mental well-being as compared to women. A plethora of research was conducted to establish the association among social network usage and mental health. For example, research was conducted to explore whether spending plenty of time on social network lower psychological well-being and the study showed; there is an inverse relation between digital network usage with psychological well-being the study also suggests as an increase in digital media usage also increases cyberbullying which indirectly lower psychological well-being of that person²².

The research was carried out to explore the correlation between the frequency of Instagram and psychological well-being, idealized image among women. The data was collected from 129 women of the age range 18-35 years. The result showed that more use of Instagram, lower self-esteem, and self-satisfaction. Therefore, there is a negative correlation between Instagram usage and psychological well-being among women²³.

Another study was done to investigate the association between social network usage and mental well-being among South Korean students. The result showed that there is no direct relationship between technology usage and psychological well-being but reducing the use of social media has a relationship with improving psychological well-being. Hence result showed that there was an inverse correlation of social network usage and psychological well-being among south Korean students²⁴.

Likewise, research was done to investigate the association of social-media usage with psychological well-being. The population was adults working class of which 60 adults were from the government sector and 60 from the private sector. The result shows a negative relation of social media usage with psychological well-being²⁵. Another research was done to investigate the relation of internet usage and mental well-being among adults. The main purpose was to explore the relation among internet usage, loneliness, life satisfaction, and mental well-being. And the result showed that there was an inverse correlation between internet usage and psychological well-being. The more people are exposed to the internet, the less their psychological well-being will be²⁶.

The research was accompanied in Pakistan to explore the association of network usage with the psychological well-being of women. 240 women were selected, and it was purposive sampling. The results did not show a direct connection of social media usage with psychological well-being but spending greater time on social media not only drained the energy but also the sleep cycle got effect which indirectly led to the poor mental well-being of a person²⁷.

The research was carried out in Pakistan, district Mirpur, AJ, and Kashmir. The aim of the study was to explore the correlation of social media usage with mental well-being among undergraduate students. The result showed that there was a direct correlation between social media usage and mental well-being. This study also concluded that WhatsApp is at the highest rank among all other social media as students used WhatsApp to be in contact with their friends²⁸.

Another research was done in Pakistan and the purpose of the study was to explore the association between social media usage, Narcissism, and mental well-being among young adults. The data was collected from different private universities. The result showed that there was a positive relation between social-media usage and psychological well-being and a negative relation between narcissism and social media usage. The study also

revealed no gender difference in social media usage and mental well-being²⁹.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that young adults' use of social media has not an inverse connection with mental health, and they mostly use it for academic purposes. However, men and women are different on the mental well-being scale, and men with high well-being reported for the present sample.

Limitations: Financial limitations followed by low man power for follow-ups. There was a lack of educational and clinical management plans for young adults.

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