

Effects Of Social Media on the Mental Health of Women

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Abstract:

This study explores the impact of social media on the mental health of women in India, focusing on both its positive and negative effects. The research investigates how engagement with social media influences emotional well-being, with a particular focus on stress, anxiety, self-expression, and social support. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire that assessed various dimensions of social media use, including its role in enhancing happiness and confidence, managing emotions, and providing emotional support. Results revealed that while social media offers a platform for self-expression, support, and mental health awareness, it also contributes to increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation. Prolonged use of social media was linked to emotional exhaustion and a pressure to maintain a perfect online persona. Positive feedback and engagement with mental health professionals or organizations were found to improve well-being, whereas comparison with others and the pressure to portray a perfect life negatively impacted mental health. The study concludes that social media can serve as both a beneficial and detrimental tool for mental health, emphasizing the need for balanced usage and the promotion of mental health resources. women should be educated about managing their digital presence mindfully, setting boundaries, and prioritizing self-validation over external praise.

Keywords: Social media, mental health, women, stress, anxiety, self-expression, social support, emotional exhaustion, online communities, mental health awareness.

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of daily life, shaping the way individuals interact, share experiences, and communicate. In India, where the use of digital platforms has skyrocketed in recent years, social media plays a prominent role in connecting people, providing information, and offering support. For women in particular, social media has become a space for empowerment, self-expression, and networking. It provides a platform for women to voice their opinions, find communities of like-minded individuals, and share personal experiences, including those related to mental health. However, as social media continues to evolve, concerns about its impact on mental well-being have emerged. The relationship between social media and mental health is complex, with both positive and negative outcomes being reported in various studies.

While some argue that engaging with others on social media enhances happiness, confidence, and emotional support, others highlight its detrimental effects, such as increasing stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation. Women, in particular, may experience unique challenges due to the societal pressures reflected in social media spaces, such as body image issues, the need to maintain a "perfect" online persona, and constant comparison with others. Seeking validation and worrying about how others perceive us on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook can contribute to heightened anxiety, depression, and a skewed sense of self, particularly among teenagers and young adults (Abas, Hussin, Hardi, Hashim). These dynamics can have profound effects on their mental health, influencing their self-esteem, sense of validation, and overall emotional state. Prior studies suggest a correlation between heightened social media use and an increase in mental health problems (Ivie, Pettitt, Moses, Allen, (2020)). In addition to these negative consequences, social media has also emerged as a powerful tool for mental health awareness and support, offering valuable resources and connections to mental health professionals and support groups. Given the increasing reliance on social media for social interaction, self-expression, and mental health-related information, it is essential to understand the broader implications of social media use on mental well-being. This study aims to examine how women in India engage with social media platforms, the

effects of this engagement on their mental health, and the potential for social media to both support and exacerbate mental health challenges. By exploring these dimensions, the research seeks to provide insights into how women navigate the digital space and how social media can be both a source of empowerment and a potential trigger for emotional distress.

Literature Review

Bashir, H., & Bhat, S. A. (2017) explored the effect of social media on the mental health of the younger generation, emphasizing that this group is highly susceptible to mental health problems due to their active engagement with social media. The authors suggest that more research is needed to understand the connection between social media use and mental health issues, particularly for the younger generation.

Singh, L., Singh, P. K., & Arokiasamy, P. (2016) investigated the relationship between social networks and depression among rural elderly adults in Varanasi, India. It found that a strong social network, particularly with friends and neighbours, acted as a protective factor against depression. The study highlights the importance of building social networks and community centers to support older adults' mental health.

Singh, P., & Pathak, S. (2022) investigated the negative and positive impact of social media on women in India before and after the COVID-19 outbreak. This paper is based on secondary data and case studies. Authentic websites, articles, and research papers have been reviewed for writing this research paper. It has been shown that social media plays very important role to raise awareness about various privacy settings which women can use on various platforms for their safety.

Sharma, A., Sanghvi, K., & Churi, P. (2022) focused on the relationship between social comparison, colourism, and mental health issues linked to Instagram use among young adults in India. The study found that social comparison through Instagram can lead to colourism and mental health problems, with a significant positive relationship between age and these issues. The study stresses the importance of raising awareness about these issues to safeguard users' well-being.

Faqihi, F. A., Qutob, R. A., Subh, R. H. M., Aljathalin, L. A. M., Alshalan, L. Z., Yati, S. M. A., & Alzahrani, S. S. (2024) explored the impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents in Saudi Arabia. It revealed that excessive use of social media, especially platforms like Twitter, negatively affects sleep patterns and contributes to mental health issues, particularly among older adolescents (ages 16-24). The study suggests that fostering in-person friendships and creating technology-free zones could help mitigate the negative effects of social media on mental health.

Meena, P. S., Soni, R., Jain, M., & Paliwal, S. (2015) assessed the prevalence of social networking site addiction and associated psychological problems among medical students in India. It found that excessive use of social networking sites (SNS) was associated with increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. The study highlights the need for further research to explore the psychological impact of SNS addiction, especially among students.

Statement of the Problem

The widespread use of social media has transformed the way individuals interact, share experiences, and access information. However, there is growing concern about the potential negative impact of social media on mental health, particularly among women in India. While social media platforms offer opportunities for connection, self-expression, and access to mental health resources, they also contribute to heightened stress, anxiety, body image issues, and social comparison. The effects of social media usage on mental well-being are particularly pronounced among younger women, who are more active users of these platforms and face societal pressures related to appearance, achievement, and lifestyle. Despite the extensive use of social media, there is insufficient understanding of its complex role in shaping mental health, with both positive and negative implications for emotional well-being. This study aims to explore the effects of social media on the mental health of women in India, examining the balance between the benefits and challenges of digital engagement.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is to explore the effects of social media on the mental health of women, focusing on both its positive and negative impacts. The research examined the frequency and types of social media use, and how they contribute to various aspects of mental well-being, including stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, social isolation, and self-esteem. It also investigated how social media serves as a platform for self-expression and emotional support, as well as the role of social comparison and validation in shaping mental health. Furthermore, the study consider demographic factors such as age, education, and socioeconomic status to understand how different groups of women experience the effects of social media. Through this comprehensive approach, the research aims to provide a better understanding of the complex relationship between social media engagement and mental health among women in India, with the goal of offering insights into how social media can be used more mindfully to protect and promote mental well-being.

Research Methodology

Research Design: Descriptive Research Design.

Sources of Data:

Primary Data - The primary data was collected through surveys and structured interviews. The survey include a structured questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions to gather information on social media usage patterns, mental health indicators, and personal experiences related to emotional well-being.

Secondary Data- Secondary data was collected from existing literature, reports, academic articles, and studies that focus on the impact of social media on mental health.

Sample Size: 150

Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling.

Sampling Universe: The sampling universe consists of women aged 18 and above from various regions in India.

Tools used for the Study: Percentage Analysis, Descriptive Statistics, and Factor Analysis.

Limitations Of The Study

- There may be limitations in terms of the diversity and representativeness of the sample.
- There are limitations in the geographic diversity of the sample.

Analysis and Interpretation**Demographic variables of the respondents**

Demographic variables	Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Marital Status	Married	118	78.7
	Separated	7	4.7
	Window	25	16.7
	Total	150	100.0
Nature of work	Home Maker	61	40.7
	Salaried	50	33.3
	Entrepreneur	25	16.7
	Others	14	9.3

	Total	150	100.0
Education Qualification	Undergraduate	53	35.3
	Postgraduate	55	36.7
	Professional	42	28.0
	Total	150	100.0
Number of hours of using social media in a day	Frequently	22	14.7
	One hour	32	21.3
	Two hours	45	30.0
	More than 2 hours	51	34.0
	Total	150	100.0

The distribution of respondents based on marital status indicates that the majority of the respondents 78.7%, were married, 4.7% of the respondents were separated, and 16.7% were widowed. The distribution of respondents based on the nature of work reveals that 40.7% were homemakers, 33.3% were salaried employees, 16.7% were entrepreneurs, and 9.3% were others. The educational qualification of the respondents indicates that 35.3% were undergraduates, 36.7% were postgraduates, and 28% possessed professional qualifications. The number of hours of social media usage per day indicates that 14.7% used social media frequently, 21.3% used it for one hour, 30% used it for two hours, and 34% used it for more than two hours.

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Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test for Effects of Social Media on the Mental Health of Women

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.759
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	686.273
	Df	276
	Sig.	.000

A factor analysis was conducted to explore the effects of social media on the mental health of women. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was found to be .759, indicating that the sample size is adequate for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a chi-square value of 686.273 with 276 degrees of freedom, which was statistically significant, $p < .001$. This suggests that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, and therefore, factor analysis is appropriate for the data.

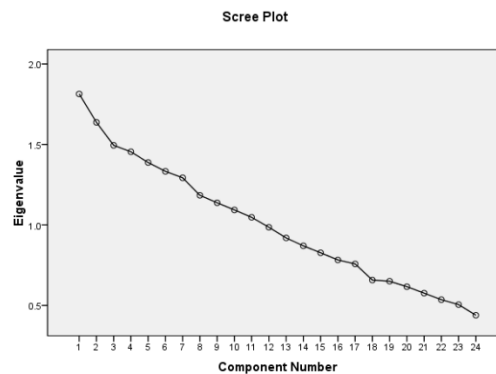
Total Variance Explained for Effects of Social Media on the Mental Health of Women

Component	Initial Eigen Values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.814	7.558	7.558	1.814	7.558	7.558	1.466	6.107	6.107
2	1.638	6.823	14.381	1.638	6.823	14.381	1.383	5.762	11.868
3	1.495	6.228	20.609	1.495	6.228	20.609	1.374	5.726	17.595
4	1.455	6.060	26.670	1.455	6.060	26.670	1.368	5.699	23.294
5	1.388	5.783	32.453	1.388	5.783	32.453	1.363	5.680	28.974
6	1.333	5.554	38.007	1.333	5.554	38.007	1.354	5.641	34.614
7	1.293	5.388	43.394	1.293	5.388	43.394	1.324	5.516	40.131
8	1.184	4.934	48.328	1.184	4.934	48.328	1.321	5.503	45.634
9	1.138	4.740	53.068	1.138	4.740	53.068	1.313	5.472	51.106
10	1.093	4.555	57.623	1.093	4.555	57.623	1.307	5.446	56.552
11	1.047	4.364	61.987	1.047	4.364	61.987	1.304	5.435	61.987
12	.986	4.107	66.094						
13	.919	3.831	69.925						
14	.870	3.626	73.550						
15	.827	3.446	76.997						
16	.783	3.261	80.257						
17	.758	3.158	83.415						
18	.658	2.740	86.156						
19	.650	2.710	88.865						
20	.616	2.568	91.433						
21	.576	2.401	93.835						
22	.536	2.232	96.066						
23	.505	2.104	98.170						
24	.439	1.830	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to examine the total variance explained by the components in understanding the effects of social media on the mental health of women. The analysis revealed that the first eleven components had eigenvalues greater than 1, collectively explaining 61.987% of the variance in the data.

Specifically, the first component accounted for 7.558% of the variance, the second component explained 6.823%, the third accounted for 6.228%, the fourth for 6.060%, the fifth for 5.783%, and the sixth for 5.554%.

Scree plot for Effects of Social Media on the Mental Health of Women



Rotated Component Matrix for Social Media on the Mental Health of Women

Rotated Component Matrix							
	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Engaging with others on social media enhances my happiness and confidence.	.040	-.134	.030	-.136	.027	.004	.034
Spending time on social media increases my levels of stress and anxiety.	.070	.329	.012	.476	-.092	-.174	.220
Social media serves as a platform that helps me manage my emotions through self-expression.	.762	.058	.066	.066	-.063	.036	.098
Prolonged use of social media results in emotional exhaustion and a sense of being overwhelmed.	.106	-.189	-.093	.072	-.051	-.015	.574
Social media provides valuable information regarding mental health resources available in India.	.028	.685	-.106	.000	.074	.074	-.124
Utilizing social media to seek support or counselling for mental health concerns.	-.084	.061	-.026	-.161	.390	.242	.439
Mental health awareness campaigns on social media	.043	-.020	.104	.286	.231	-.072	-.006

have motivated me to seek help when necessary.							
Following mental health professionals or organizations on social media for guidance and support.	.012	-.106	.122	.180	.045	.657	.072
Participated in online mental health workshops or webinars that I discovered through social media.	.193	-.006	.100	-.028	-.733	-.012	.098
Experiencing anxiety or stress when I do not receive prompt responses to my posts or messages on social media.	-.125	-.376	-.010	.150	-.085	.265	.292
Despite having numerous connections on social media, I feel isolated and lonely.	-.039	-.143	.066	.039	-.044	-.726	.103
Social media amplifies my feelings of anxiety regarding both personal and professional aspects of my life.	.049	-.135	-.121	.796	.020	.170	-.085
I have experienced feelings of sadness or depression after engaging with social media.	-.017	-.011	.777	.021	.134	.017	-.097
Social media has facilitated my understanding of mental health issues and strategies for managing stress or anxiety.	.360	-.123	.251	-.037	.653	.076	.119
I frequently compare my achievements with those of others on social media, which negatively impacts my mental health.	-.478	-.084	.096	.213	.115	-.170	.185
Positive feedback (such as likes and comments) on my posts on social media increases my sense of validation.	-.226	.076	-.266	-.034	-.041	.144	-.141
The lifestyle content shared on social media makes me	-.006	.640	.064	-.059	-.096	.025	.072

feel as though I am not achieving enough in my own life.							
Observing others achieve similar goals on social media boosts my confidence and life satisfaction.	.131	-.013	-.032	.055	.033	.025	.059
I feel pressured to present a perfect image of my life on social media, which negatively affects my mental well-being.	.494	-.284	.009	.143	.189	-.287	-.075
Social media has provided me with a supportive community to help me navigate personal challenges.	-.003	-.073	.022	.040	.024	.075	-.715
I feel more connected to individuals who share similar experiences through social media.	.164	.041	.610	-.240	-.263	.023	.044
Online communities and support groups on social media provide me with comfort.	.067	.118	.007	-.012	.085	-.175	-.031
Social media allows me to share my personal experiences and receive encouragement from others.	.290	.037	-.393	-.420	.070	-.062	.039
The connections I maintain through social media have contributed to a reduction in my feelings of loneliness.	.117	.107	.117	.060	.027	-.124	-.037
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.							
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.							

The matrix revealed that the items loading on each component were associated with specific dimensions of social media's impact on mental health. The factors taken for the study are social media provides valuable information regarding mental health resources available in India (0.685), following mental health professionals or organizations on social media for guidance and support (0.657), social media has facilitated my understanding of mental health issues and strategies for managing stress or anxiety (0.653), the lifestyle content shared on social

media makes me feel as though i am not achieving enough in my own life (0.640), i feel more connected to individuals who share similar experiences through social media (0.610).

Social Media on the Mental Health of Women

Particulars	N	Mean	SD
Social media provides valuable information regarding mental health resources available in India.	150	3.21	1.283
Following mental health professionals or organizations on social media for guidance and support.	150	3.00	1.153
Social media has facilitated my understanding of mental health issues and strategies for managing stress or anxiety.	150	3.25	1.301
The lifestyle content shared on social media makes me feel as though I am not achieving enough in my own life.	150	3.19	1.363
I feel more connected to individuals who share similar experiences through social media.	150	3.18	1.237
Valid N (listwise)	150		

The survey on the effects of social media on women's mental health indicates that respondents generally perceive social media as providing valuable information regarding mental health resources available in India. The findings further indicate that respondents moderately follow mental health professionals or organizations on social media for guidance and support. The respondents also perceive that social media facilitates their understanding of mental health issues and strategies for managing stress or anxiety. In addition, respondents acknowledge that the lifestyle content shared on social media makes them feel as though they are not achieving enough in their own lives. Furthermore, respondents report feeling more connected to individuals who share similar experiences through social media. Overall, the findings indicate that social media plays a moderate role in influencing women's awareness, perceptions, and emotional experiences related to mental health.

Findings

Demographic variables of the respondents

Most of the respondent are married and homemaker. Most of the respondents completed their post-graduate degree and frequently (more than two hours) using social media in a day.

Suggestions

- It is important to encourage individuals to connect with supportive and positive communities online. Fostering engagement in groups that focus on mental health, personal growth, or shared hobbies can help women maintain a balanced and uplifting experience on social media.
- Platforms should prioritize content that promotes inclusivity, positivity, and personal empowerment.
- Online campaigns, infographics, and partnerships with mental health organizations can be used to raise awareness about available services, hotlines, and counselling options.
- Despite having numerous connections, feeling isolated and lonely remains a concern. Encouraging smaller, more focused groups, and offline meetups (when possible) can help reduce feelings of isolation. Additionally, platforms should promote community-building features that go beyond 'likes' and 'comments' and focus on fostering authentic interactions.
- Platforms should emphasize content that celebrates self-acceptance and the value of self-love and encourage users to seek validation from within rather than relying solely on external praise.

- Educating users about digital detox, taking breaks, and managing screen time can reduce the impact of social media on mental well-being. Platforms should also offer features like reminders to take breaks and provide content related to managing stress and anxiety.

Conclusion

Social media plays a dual role in the mental health of women in India, offering both opportunities for empowerment and potential risks to emotional well-being. On the positive side, engaging with others on social media enhances happiness and confidence, particularly when users connect with supportive communities and use the platform as a space for self-expression. Social media also provides valuable resources and information about mental health, increasing awareness and offering access to workshops and webinars that can help women manage their emotional challenges. The ability to express emotions and connect with like-minded individuals can serve as an emotional outlet, promoting a sense of belonging and support.

However, despite the positive aspects, the study highlights several negative implications of social media use. Many women report feelings of loneliness and isolation, despite having numerous connections, which underscores the gap between virtual connections and meaningful, real-life relationships. Furthermore, social media amplifies anxiety, especially related to personal and professional aspects of life, as women often compare themselves to others, leading to negative emotional outcomes. The need for external validation through likes and comments can also contribute to decreased self-esteem and reliance on online approval for emotional well-being.

To mitigate these adverse effects, it is essential to promote a healthier approach to social media usage. Encouraging emotional self-expression, increasing access to mental health resources, and fostering more meaningful interactions online are vital steps in making social media a supportive tool for mental health. Additionally, women should be educated about managing their digital presence mindfully, setting boundaries, and prioritizing self-validation over external praise. By balancing the benefits and challenges of social media, women can navigate the digital space in a way that promotes their mental well-being and fosters a positive, supportive online environment.

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