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MITIGATING STRESS USING SOCIAL MEDIA: A STUDY OF DIFFERENT AGE-GROUP INDIVIDUALS IN KOLKATA

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ABSTRACT

In the above project, a study on the effects of social media in Kolkata with an emphasis on stress is carried out. A Questionnaire is used for data collection for a total number of 100 respondents in total. Different age groups were considered: below 25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, above 55 years analysis of data is done in the overall sample as well as for different age groups and comparison is also provided between the overall sample and sample for all groups. Our findings indicate that 64% of the respondents think that social media cannot help us in reducing stress. Although, only the age group of 18-25 in which 53.33% of the respondents mainly consists of individuals from those who just started college to those who just started their first jobs after doing graduation and some post-graduation thinks that social media can help us in reducing stress and at the other extreme 80% of the individuals who belong to the age group of above 55 years thinks that social media cannot be used as a medium to reduce stress.

KEYWORDS

social media, stress, age groups.

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INTRODUCTION

Social media speak of technology that deals with sharing ideas, thoughts, and data using a virtual network. Social media is based on the internet and provides the users quick access to electronic content such as images, documents, videos etc. Users take part in social media communication using electronic devices like computers, mobile phones and tablets via web-delivered applications or software. Whereas social media is pervasive in Europe and America, a country in Asia such as Indonesia leading the list as per social media usage is concerned. A little over 4.5 billion individuals make use of social media, as of October 2021 (Dollarhide, August 31, 2021, What is Social Media?)

Initially, social media dealt as a medium of exchange of information with families and friends. A little later, social media was used as a business tool by organizations around the globe to extend their reach to customers in an economical manner. The potential of social media is to bridge the gap among people irrespective of their location. Since its inception, no field has evolved like social media. Newer apps are getting developed and are competing with older ones. Apps such as Clubhouse, and TikTok has matched the popularity of the older apps like Instagram, Youtube, Facebook etc. In considering the United States alone, the social media population will reach almost 257 million by 2023 (Dollarhide, August 31, 2021, Understanding Social Media)

Social media can be used for a variety of purposes like sharing photos, gaming, networking, sharing of videos, online reviews and many other activities. Social media is even utilized to reach out to voters by the politicians and the people working in different government departments. In addition to that, social media is used to find job opportunities and helps in searching for individuals with similar kinds of mindsets and passions. Furthermore, it helps the collection of proper information about the market on time, targets the potential customers, and assists the company's promotion of services and products (Dollarhide, August 31, 2021, Types of Social Media)

Social media is beneficial in many ways too. It helps us in discovering what is going on in and around the world without experiencing any kind of delay, staying in touch with friends who are quite far away from each other. It also assists in accessing any kind of information just with the help of a mouse click. The whole world seems very much accessible without moving from the point of location of the electronic devices which are used as a medium for information retrieval. As per the study conducted by the pew research centre which is located in the United States in Washington D.C., social media is positively associated with having an increased number of friends and enhancing the diversification of the individual's network. As teenagers are mostly attached to social media, 57 per cent of them initiate their friendship journey virtually (Dollarhide, August 31, 2021, Benefits of Social Media)

Social media has its share of dark sides too. One of the features which are common among individuals of different age groups relates to addiction. Suspicion, absent-mindedness, and stress are some of the other factors that are considered the side effects of stress. Depression is another major symptom that is heavily linked to social media. Sharing fallacious information is also a very common trait that is experienced in social media (Dollarhide, August 31, 2021, Examples of Social Media)

Social media can give rise to a considerable amount of distress, especially among teenagers. A sense of comparison is an intrinsic quality that is experienced among teenagers, without them realizing that they are involved in this. If they feel inferior in some aspects like looks while making a comparison among their friends a sense of loss in dignity is experienced within them which gives rise to distress. Friends commencing a relationship, a smaller number of like in their posts are some of the other factors which can hurt them leading to distress. Disembarking from this addiction is a difficult thing. Mindfulness is one of the prime techniques to deal with distress. Performing activities like running, yoga activities, offline friendship, and chilling in nature are some of the tasks which can make teenagers escalate their self-acceptance leading to winning a fight against one of the most dangerous mental problems, i.e., distress (Ehmke, n.d., Managing Social Media Stress with Mindfulness).

From a negative viewpoint, social media usage for elderly people may lead to the adoption of unhealthy information by dint of the communities in the online mode. This may lead them to mishandle their data and to become a sufferer of maleficent behaviour. From a positive point of view, participating in social media can help people gain information regarding health-related troubles. Furthermore, social media can aid in recovering from the problem of isolation together with supplementing feelings of supremacy and self-awareness (Leist A.K., 2013)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As humans are social creatures and it is in our instinct from the day we were born to have some or other form of interaction (Beier & Spelke, 2012; Bornstein, Suwalsky, & Breakstone, 2012). Indeed, from the viewpoint of the evolutionary process, being connected socially is something that let us remain lively and in good health. Almost 92.6 per cent of people access the internet using mobile devices. 4G coverage reached a little over 80 per cent by 2020 and is estimated to reach around 95 per cent by 2027 with 5G network connectivity slowly spreading, information sharing has become a lot faster (Ericsson, 2020, Network coverage forecast). Nonetheless, all kinds of exchange of views that take place via social media are not equal. As per Neuropsychological research on the social habit of human beings, distinct regions of our brain are affected by dissimilar sorts of interactions that takes place via social networking sites (Young S.N., 2008). Social media has garnered more attention than anything else at the time even when it was at a nascent stage. As of 2020, a little more than 3.6 billion people around the globe use social media which is forecasted to reach 2025 and around 4.41 billion (Statista, 2022, Number of social network users worldwide from 2017 to 2025). Owing to this, social media may be interpreted as a medium in which people not only exchange information with others but also get rid of the phenomenon known as the fear of missing out or FOMO.

Stress is one of the prime, rudimentary causes and corresponds to a long-time bodily illness that affects our health mentally in an adverse manner. Stress is elucidated as something which is regarded as suffering in which interaction takes place between a person and their surroundings (Cohen, Miller, and Rabin 2001). The coping skill of a person is an important factor that helps one to deal with stress. Stress is a sole, inescapable trait that leads to health hazards utilizing affecting a wide range of negative emotional states and bodily pathways (McEwen and Stellar 1993). Even information regarding mental states, and soliciting support are some of the pieces of information which are shared among individuals in addition to pursuing their interests and preferences. Studies have found the indicators of self-discovery which examine ADHD, personality, consumption of alcohol, schizophrenia, and depression. Posts made on social media about the experiences concerning travel and work are considered semantic characteristics of stress related to events (Lin et al., 2014). Chronic stress and events which are stressful are both distinct and separate. For example, exam preparation is considered to be a stressful event, while feeling flooded with duties is deemed as chronic stress.

(De Choudhury et al., 2013) were probably the first group of researchers who carried out extensive studies about social media for predictions of depression. (Tsugawa et al., 2015) based on the postings made on Twitter predicted a connection with depression for the users whose mother tongue is Japanese. (Lim M.S. and Choi S.B., 2017) found in their study that social media networking sites induced stress affects the user's response both behaviorally and psychologically. Exhaustion related to emotional factors switch intentions, user resistance is the three factors that lead to an elevation in the stress level which takes place due to the interactions on social networking sites. Furthermore, coping as a mediating variable leads to alleviation of the user's resistance and emotional exhaustion. (Bucher E. et al., 2013) found in their study that being literate is an important factor to cope with stress. It is because being literate helps an individual in better retrieval and processing of information.

(Revathy V.R. et al., 2018) found in their study that, 10% of the people who were part of the survey posted on their Facebook up-to-date information regarding content about stress. Women who are less than 25 years meticulously noticed the posts made concerning stress and other similar topics on social media. Women who are more than 35 years of age constitute only 5% who keep themselves updated with stress-related content. Nearly 45% of the respondents who are quite young used the heart symbol while reacting to posts which helps in reducing the amount of stress that they have acquired from their everyday schedule. Nearly 45% of the formats of videos on Youtube, provide us with much-needed information about getting assistance in fighting stress and depression. 35% of the formats of the videos talk about displaying information about workouts and exercises in countering stress and depression. The majority of the women find Facebook to be a more important medium compared to Youtube for getting relief from stress and depression. (Wang Q. et al., 2011) mentioned about Social media is negatively correlated with grades of the university students. As per the findings, 2/3rd of the students are using one or more social media sites in the classroom and this leads to a hindrance in understanding the lectures in the classes and this is reflected in their grades. 57% of the respondents in the survey admitted that they are less productive due to the influence of social media in their lives. Several studies in the past revealed that compared to Men, Women are involved in a greater manner in making posts on Social networking sites and making comments on posts made by other people (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, 2011). Women have also a greater number of online friends in comparison with Men (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). (Sundaram A., 2017) discussed in the study about individuals who are a moron and get pleasure by making fun of others, and belittling others. Youth who falls in the age range from thirteen to nineteen are becoming victims of depression more nowadays compared to the pre-social media period. Even adults feel frustrated and may fall victim to depression due to social media because of the non-responsiveness of their tweets on Twitter and posts on Facebook. Social media also promotes terror by directing messages in an encrypted form to a large number of people and many attacks in the present era are due to this reason. Thus, the above points discussed proves that social media is a culprit in many ways and thus must be used in such a manner that this kind of negativities can be minimized. (Coto M. et al., 2017) discussed concerning a feeling of loneliness as one of the major problems faced by elderly people. The wide range of networks that are used for communication like laptops, smartphones, tablets, etc. devices is helping the elderly people to remain connected to their near and dear ones. Even elderly people who are not able to move from one place to another due to their health are also benefitted due to these social networking sites. They can get connected with professionals in the health sector and can get information related to diseases that are specific to them.

Recent research by (Brailovskaia J., 2021) in the study using cross-sectional analysis for both countries: namely, Italy and Germany revealed that social media usage has a positive association with symptoms of stress and burden. Furthermore, the symptom of stress mediates the relationship between burden and social media use. Longitudinal analysis which was conducted in Germany corroborates the same results. (Ngien A. & Jiang S., 2021) proposed and tested a moderated mediation route from the usage of social media to that of stress in the young adult population during the time of the pandemic. As per the study, Social media is unsuccessful in establishing a direct relationship which affects the stress of the young adults. (Winstone L. et al., 2022) mentioned the discrete categories of social media usage on different stressors in the digital world. Wastage of time, a feeling of guilt in the digital world, vulnerability to the detrimental content and privacy risks are some of the digital stressors mentioned in the study. Strengthening emotional and social means in offline mode and encouragement of efficacious application of private settings may ameliorate pliability at odds with different sources of stress in the digital world. (Arrivillaga C. et al., 2022) found that stress and depression related to social media usage is a burgeoning issue among the youth population. Intelligence related to the psyche is having no significant impact on social media use. (Matang M. et al., 2022) mentioned in the study that issues related to conflict, such as lowering of achievement in the academic field, uneasiness, isolation, stress, and dignity are affected by the usage of social media. (Rodriguez M. et al., 2022) usage of social media in both active and passive forms was found to have an insubstantial effect on symptoms of depression for the majority of the individuals.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the usage of social media by different age-group individuals in the selected city.
2. To study the impact of Social Media on mitigating stress among different age-group individuals.

METHODOLOGY

The primary data has been collected by asking different questions from the respondents using surveying with the help of a Questionnaire. The Secondary data has been collected from various books, journals, annual reports, magazines, newspapers, published papers, websites, etc. The study has been conducted in the selected city of Kolkata. The respondents of the research study comprised of the different age-group individuals using social media. The questionnaire used for studying the usage of social media and its impact on mitigating stress was based on both closed and open-ended types. A total of 436 questionnaires were distributed to people in and around Kolkata in the form of hardcopy and also by utilizing creating Google forms. 400 Questionnaires (Male =204 and Female =196) were used to conduct the research and 36 responses were rejected because they were incomplete. Percentages were calculated for every question as mentioned in the questionnaire considering all age groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

The demographic profile of the respondents in the selected city of Kolkata has been discussed in detail as follows:

GENDER: Based on gender, respondents have been classified into two categories viz. male and female. Analysis has revealed that out of a total number 51% were males whereas 49% are females. The results show that male respondents are more willing to respond as compared to their counterparts.

AGE: Based on age, 154 respondents (38.5%) the below the age of 25 years followed by 80 respondents (20%) from the age (26-35 years), 72 respondents (18%) from the age (36-45 years), 60 respondents i.e 15% falls in the age above 55 years followed by 34 respondents (8.5%) from the age (46-55 years), were considered.

MONTHLY FAMILY INCOME: As far as the monthly family income of the respondents is concerned, respondents have been divided into four categories viz. Less than Rs.20,000; ranging between Rs.20,000-30,000; ranging from 30,000-40,000 and above Rs.40,000. More than half of the total numbers of respondents (52%) have a monthly family income ranging from Rs.30,000-to 40,000 followed by those with a family income above Rs.40,000 (21 %), that is followed by respondents having family income ranging from 20,000-to 30,000 (19%) and remaining with income below Rs.20,000 (8%) respectively.

QUALIFICATION: Respondents are divided into four categories based on qualification. As revealed from the data majority of the respondents are under-graduates (45%), followed by the respondents who are postgraduates (24%), graduates (21%) and others (10%).

FINDINGS**TABLE 1**

Statements	<25 yrs	26-35 yrs	36-45 yrs	46-55 yrs	> 55 yrs
Affected by Stress	63.33	30	27.77	41.18	33.33
Social media makes sad/happy	66.67	40	38.88	17.65	41.18
Use 4 or more sites	46.67	20	20	17.65	20
Prefer WhatsApp	53.33	50	61.11	100	53.33
Spend 0-2 hrs on Social Media	40	45	61.11	100	53.33
Follow news on Social Media	28.26	38.71	45.16	42.86	43.48
Do not face inferiority complex	76.67	65	72.22	82.35	86.67
Depression	30	36.67	50	35.29	73.33
Interaction on Social Media Sites	90	75	72.22	58.82	60
Interact with personally known	63.33	55	77.77	94.12	86.67
Difference in the behavior/ personality	66.67	20	33.33	23.53	40
Popularity	53.33	40	55.55	76.47	66.67
Activities are informative	40	25	33.33	35.29	60
Provokes further stress	50	25	66.67	23.53	53.33
Age group 10-20 yrs affected	46.67	46.67	16.67	23.53	53.33
Reducing Stress	46.67	75	61.11	58.82	80

Percentage of the respondents (100%)

- **44% of respondents are affected by stress in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group (below 25) years are mostly affected with 63.33% and respondents in the age group of (36-45) years are least affected with 27.77%.
- **48% of respondents replied that social media affects them by making them sad as well as happy in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age (below 25) years constitute 66.67% (highest) and respondents in the age of (46-55) constitute 17.65% (lowest) who are affected by social media using both sadness and happiness.
- **31% of respondents replied that they use 4 or more social media sites in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group (below 25) years constitute 46.67% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (46-55) constitute 17.65% (least) who uses 4 or more social media sites.
- **55% of respondents replied that they prefer WhatsApp over other social media sites in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age of (below 25) years constitute 53.33%, as well as respondents in the age group (above 55), constitute 53.33% who prefer WhatsApp over other social media sites and WhatsApp is the least popular among the age group of (46-55) years with 41.18%.
- **58% of respondents replied that they spend anywhere between 0-2 hours on social media daily in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age bracket of (46-55) years constitute 100% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (below 25) constitute 40% (lowest) who spend anywhere between 0-2 hours on social media daily.
- **38.62% of respondents replied that they follow information about news on social media in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age bracket of (36-45) years constitute 45.16% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (below 25) constitutes 28.26% (lowest) who follow information about news on social media.
- **80% of respondents replied that they do not face any kind of inferiority complex on social media in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group (above 55) years constitute 86.67% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (26-35) constitutes 65% (lowest) who do not face any kind of inferiority complex on social media.
- **44% of respondents replied that they do not spend more time on social media when they are depressed in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group (above 55) years constitute 73.33% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket (below 25) constitute 30% (lowest) who do not spend more time on social media.
- **74% of respondents replied that sometimes they interact with people on social media sites in the overall sample.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group (below 25) years constitute 90% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (46-55) constitute 58.82% (lowest) who sometimes interact with people on social media sites.
- **73% of respondents replied that they generally interact on social media with only those people whom they know personally.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group of (46-55) years constitute 94.12% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (26-35) constitutes 55% (lowest) who responded that they generally interact in social media with only those people whom they personally.
- **35% of the respondents feel that there is a difference in the behaviour/personality of a person on social media and reality.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group of (below 25) years constitutes 66.67% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (26-35) constitutes 20% (lowest) who responded that they generally feel that there is a difference in the behaviour/personality of a person on social media and reality.
- **52% of the respondents agree that popularity in social media is prioritized a lot nowadays.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group (46-55) years constitute 76.47% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket (26-35) constitutes 40% (lowest) who feels that social media is prioritized a lot nowadays.
- **34% of the respondents feel that activities in social media are quite informative.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group (above 55) years constitute 60% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (36-45) constitutes 33.33% (lowest) who feel that activities in social media are quite informative.

- **42% of the respondents believe that social media provokes further stress for a person who is already provoked.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group of (36-45) years constitute 66.67% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (46-55) constitute 23.53% (lowest) who believe that social media provokes further stress for a person who is already provoked.
- **37% of the respondents feel that the age group 10-20 years is mostly affected due to social media.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group (above 55) years constitute 53.33% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket (36-45) constitute 16.67% (lowest) think that age group 10-20 years is affected due to social media.
- **64% of the respondents think that social media cannot help us in reducing stress.** While analyzing the sample of each group, it is found that respondents in the age group of (>55) years constitute 80% (highest) and respondents in the age bracket of (below 25) constitutes 46.67% (lowest) think that social media cannot help us in reducing stress.

CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that life has become much simpler after the advent of social media. There are many positive sides of social media like it makes us more socially aware, makes conversations have become much simpler, problems of loneliness especially for the elderly people can be removed, stress and depression can be relieved to some extent using reading about stress-related activities and following videos about meditation, exercise and other related activities to combat stress and depression, connecting with doctors to help you get the solution to your health issue immediately. Similarly, there are many negative sides to it like attention disorder for school and college students, making friendships with the unknown person which may give rise to problems for the individual, resorting to social networking sites while we are stressed and depressed and seeing that there is less number of liking, sharing, a retweet of your status and feeling unimportant which further increases our stress and makes us more depressed, getting too much online oriented and not making time for important persons in our life including family members, aberrations in the proper sleep patterns which results in the reduction of memory etc. So, it must be used for resolving problems, learning new things, and making quality friendships rather than falling a victim to stress and depression, suffering from insomnia etc. issues to make our life much happier and stress-free.

RECOMMENDATIONS

People should not spend more time on social networking sites and make sure that they are reading informative materials leading to broadening of their knowledge. It may make a positive impact in the society and help the community, city and at large the country to prosper and play a role as a torchbearer for the future generations to come. Special care should be taken by the elders in the family to make sure their child should not get involved in activities utilizing social media which leads to an aggressive nature in them, maintaining a perfect balance between social networking sites and studies, jobs, giving time to family, etc. activities which are more important than the addiction of these sites just to check the status, tweets again and again and see who reacted to it and how many followers they may have and the growth rate of followers etc.

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