The Effects of Social Media on the Well-being of Youth: An Empirical Evidence from Central Kerala

Mestin P C¹, Ajesh Antony¹, Dr. Paul Jose P², Liyana E Antony³

¹Assistant Professor, Research Department of Commerce, St Thomas College (Autonomous) Thrissur. University of Calicut ²Professor, Tharananellur Arts & Science College, Irinjalakuda, Thrissur. University of Calicut

³Student, Master of Commerce Research Department of Commerce, St Thomas College (Autonomous) Thrissur. University of Calicut.

Email: pcmestin@gmail.com

This study investigates the effects of social media on the mental and emotional health of young people in central Kerala, with a particular emphasis on the usage patterns of the participants and their wider implications. The study examines the frequency and motivations behind young social media users and discovers that the majority do so for communication, enjoyment, and education. In addition, research highlights the negative aspects of social media usage. These include concerns about security and privacy, addiction, and cyberbullying, in addition to excessive screen time. The results of the study indicated that although there were no significant differences in the levels of anxiety or annoyance between the genders, one gender felt more alone, which suggests that understanding emotional reactions to social media may call for a gender-sensitive strategy. Additionally, age had no discernible impact on the sample's emotional health. Overall, the results show how social media use and teenage well-being are complicatedly related, highlighting the need for policies that would lessen the bad effects while promoting beneficial connections with these platforms. This study provides insightful new information for stakeholders and policymakers in the current youth and social media debate.

Keywords: Social Media Use, Mental Health, Emotional Well-being, Youth and social media, Gender sensitive strategies, youth policy and social media.

1. Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of everyday life. Although social media can serve as a medium for self-expression and social engagement, excessive use of the platform has been associated with detrimental impacts on mental health, including an increase in feelings of anxiety and sadness. In recent years social media has been associated with the mental health

of individuals especially those who are in their adolescent age. It should come as no surprise that parents, scientists, and legislators are worried about the effects of social media use on youths' well-being. There has been much research on this subject, but the results are still conflicting, which leads to contentious discussions about whether youths' usage of social media is harmful, irrelevant, or even beneficial to their wellbeing

Technology has taken over in recent years and brought about some significant developments on a worldwide scale. The barrier of distance has shrunk as a result of technological advancement, and new channels are emerging to link people everywhere. Social networking sites like Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, and others are visited hourly or daily by over 66.66% of internet users, serving as a medium for connecting and communication. (Yachna et al., 2022) While "media" refers to a medium or tool (such as the internet), "social" refers to connecting or engaging with people. A set of online communication networks that enable users to associate, connect, collaborate, and communicate globally is referred to as social media. Among the most popular social networking sites are Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These websites give users the ability to instantly connect with their loved ones no matter where they live by allowing them to exchange thoughts, photos, and plans. Youth's social skills and communication are seen to be negatively impacted by social media and online contact.

The digital world of social networking is like a wild frontier, full of both opportunities and risks, especially for young people. With all the different social media technologies available, young folks can do so much - from connecting with friends to blogging, vlogging, gaming, chatting, downloading music, sharing their creations, and collaborating with others. But there are five important things to consider in this new social media landscape: identity, privacy, ownership and authorship, credibility, and participation. These issues determine the social and ethical responsibilities of young people using social media platforms. It's a powerful tool that can help them grow and develop in so many ways.(Kumar, 2019).

Statement Of Problem

Social media is a complex world for today's teens and youth Forbes recently reported that 67% of adolescents report feeling worse about their own lives because of the use of social media. Same percentage of them feel that there is a reduction in self-esteem due to the use of social media. Majority of their respondents find solace and support on social media platforms during tough times and adolescents who spend more than three hours a day on social media was having increased risk of mental health issues. These alarming findings at global level make it inevitable for a similar study in Kerala.

The purpose of current study is to examine how youth use social media, with an emphasis on comprehending how it affects different facets of their lives. Determining how much social media platforms impact youths behaviour, mental health, interpersonal relationships, academic performance, and general well-being is the main focus of the problem statement. In addition, it looks into how adolescent people use social media, what kinds of content appeal to them, and any possible concerns connected to problematic or excessive use. By tackling these problems, the study hopes to shed light on the ways in which social media can influence adolescent people's experiences and growth in the connected world of today. This study will have implications which help in dealing with adolescents having mental health issues,

education, and formulation of social policies that help young people navigate the challenges of online social environments.

Objectives Of The Study

- To study the usage of social media among youth in central Kerala.
- To analyse the impact of social media usage among youth in central Kerala.
- To determine the consequences of the usage of social media on youth in central Kerala.

2. Methodology

For this study, a descriptive research design is employed. Data analysis is done using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Probability and non-probability sampling techniques are used to choose the sampling size. Thrissur district from central Kerala was selected for the study. Seven municipalities constitute Thrissur district. Chalakudy, Chavakkad, Wadakancherry, Kodungallor, Irijalakuda, Guruvayoor, and Kunnamkulam. Five of these seven municipalities were chosen by lottery method. By using the convenience sampling technique, 40 respondents were chosen from each municipality. Thus yielding a sample size of 200 respondents. For the study, both primary and secondary data were used. The basic data is gathered via the sample survey approach. Google forms were used to distribute primary data among the youth age group from the Thrissur district.

Research hypothesis: Level Of Impact Of Social Media Usage Among Youth

H0: there is no significant difference between the impact of social media with respect to respondents gender.

H1: There is significant difference between the impact of social media with respect to respondents gender.

Research hypothesis: Level of Consequences of Social Media Usage Among Youth

H0: there is no significant difference between the consequences of social media with respect to their gender.

H1: There is significant difference between the consequences of social media with respect to their gender

Research hypothesis: impact of social media with respect to their age.

H0: there is no significant difference between the consequences of social media with respect to their age.

H1: There is significant difference between the consequences of social media with respect to their age.

Social Media Use and the Well-Being of Youth: A Literature Review

Young people's lives have been greatly touched by the social media platforms' explosive rise. Although social media provides a platform for self-expression and interaction, there are *Nanotechnology Perceptions* Vol. 20 No. S10 (2024)

possible hazards to the wellbeing of young people. The relationship between young well-being and social media use is examined in this literature review, which looks at recent studies.

Social Media and Mental Health

Numerous researches have discovered links between youth mental health outcomes and higher social media use. Yoon et al.'s meta-analysis from 2019 found a weak but substantial negative relationship between teenage well-being and social media use, especially when it came to self-esteem and life satisfaction. Teenagers who used social media and electronic gadgets more frequently had higher levels of depressed symptoms and thoughts of suicide, according to Twenge and Campbell's (2019) research.

The directionality of these effects is still unknown, though. Coyne et al.'s (2020) longitudinal study raises the possibility that there may be a reciprocal association between social media use and mental health, with social media use precluding depressed symptoms in the future and vice versa. Furthermore, Orben and Przybylski (2019) stress the significance of taking individual characteristics and contextual factors into account when arguing that the impacts of social media on adolescent well-being are modest and inconsistent.

Ravi Kant (2020) Social media addiction is now being considered as psychological disorder in all around the world. This study aims to determine level of social media addiction. Social media addiction level shows a continuous increase in daily life internet consumption. It was found that among the participants most of them were addicted to social media. Most of the participants didn't have addiction to social media. Social Media Addiction was not significantly differing on the basis of gender, but male students were more addicted to social media

Social Media and Identity Development

Social media is a big part of the identity-formation process during the adolescent years, which is crucial. Youth can experiment with various facets of their identities through social media, which offers a platform for self-expression and exploration (Nesi & Prinstein, 2019). On the other hand, negative effects including low self-esteem and body image issues can also result from the need to maintain a favourable online persona and participate in social comparison (Cohen et al., 2018).

Social Media and Social Relationships

Social media can both enhance and hinder social relationships among youth. Social media can, on the one hand, help people keep up their current friendships and make new ones (Nesi et al., 2018). Nevertheless, studies also point to the possibility of social displacement brought on by excessive social media use, in which time spent online takes the place of in-person contacts (Twenge et al., 2019). Furthermore, negative effects including loneliness and social anxiety have been connected to experiences of cyberbullying and online social isolation on social media (Casale et al., 2020).

Uses and Gratification Theory on social media

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), posits that individuals choose media and content to fulfill their psychological and social needs. This theory identifies five primary needs that drive media consumption: (1) personal integrative *Nanotechnology Perceptions* Vol. 20 No. S10 (2024)

needs, which enhance credibility and status; (2) affective needs, which relate to emotions, pleasure, and feelings; (3) cognitive needs, focused on acquiring information and knowledge; (4) tension release needs, aimed at providing escape and diversion; and (5) social integrative needs, which involve interaction with family and friends. In a similar vein, the Dual Factor Model of Facebook Use introduced by Hofmann and Nadkarni (2013) highlights two key motivational factors for using Facebook: the need to belong, which encompasses the desire for social acceptance and affiliation, and the need for self-presentation, which pertains to managing one's public image.

Individuals are drawn to social media features that resonate with their personal characteristics and derive satisfaction from their use (Ryan et al., 2014). The Uses and Gratifications Theory suggests that understanding the factors influencing media consumption can shed light on its widespread appeal (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Research has categorized users based on this theory into various typologies, including relationship maintenance (connecting offline networks online), entertainment (engaging in passive social activities), companionship (using Facebook to alleviate loneliness), surveillance gratifications (viewing photos and status updates), and escape (using Facebook to distract from worries and improve mood) (Ryan et al., 2014). In this research the questions is adopted from uses and gratification theory.

Analysis

Table 1 Descriptive analysis

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	80	40
	Female	120	60
	Total	200	100
Age	18-25	189	94.5
-	25-35	11	5.5
	Total	200	100
Education Qualification	High school	5	2.5
_	Diploma	1	.5
	UG	141	70.5
	PG	53	26.5
	Total	200	100
Occupation	Student	170	85
	Business	1	.5
	Employee	29	14.5
	total	200	100
Use of Social media	Always	41	20.5
	Usually	57	28.5
	Often	53	26.5
	Sometimes	45	22.5
	Rarely	4	2.0
	Total	200	100
Number of social media	1	14	7
platforms	2	76	38
	More than 3	110	55
	total	200	100

Interpretation

The sample comprised 200 respondents, with a gender distribution of 40% male (n = 80) and *Nanotechnology Perceptions* Vol. 20 No. S10 (2024)

60% female (n = 120), indicating a higher representation of females. A significant majority (94.5%, n = 189) were aged 18-25, suggesting that the results predominantly reflect the perspectives of a younger demographic. Educationally, most respondents held undergraduate degrees (70.5%, n = 141), followed by postgraduate qualifications (26.5%, n = 53), with only a small percentage having completed high school (2.5%, n = 5) or holding a diploma (0.5%, n = 1). Occupationally, 85% (n = 170) identified as students, while 14.5% (n = 29) were employees, indicating a student-centric sample. In terms of social media usage, 20.5% (n = 41) reported using platforms "always," and 55% (n = 110) used more than three platforms, reflecting high engagement levels. Overall, these statistics highlight a predominantly young, well-educated, and female sample that is highly active on social media, providing a contextual foundation for understanding their emotional states and social media behaviours in subsequent analyses.

Influence of social media

	Table 2 Influence of social media				
	Frequency	Percent	<u>-</u>		
Valid	Positively	36	18.0		
	Instantly	32	16.0		
	positive				
	Neutral	116	58.0		
	Instantly	9	4.5		
	negative				
	Negatively	7	3.5		
	Total	200	100.0		

(Source: primary data)

Table 2 represents the influence of social media on respondents. 58% of respondents states that neutral and 18% as well as 16% stated that social media influence positively and other respondents state that social media influences them negatively.

The Extent Of Social Media Influence On Behaviour And Actions

THE EXTENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON BEHAVIOUR AND ACTIONS

	Table 3 social media influence						
Frequency Percent							
Valid	To a large extent	46	23.0				
	Seldomely	119	59.5				
	never	35	17.5				
	Total	200	100.0				

(Source: primary data)

Table 3 shows to which extent the social media influence on behaviour and actions. From 200 respondents, 119(59.5%) states that seldom social media influence in their behaviour and action, 46(23%) respondents states to a large extent social media influence and only 35 (17.5%) respondents state it will not influence their behaviour and action.

Table 4 Accepting Of Strangers Friend Request On Social Media

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	19	9.5
	No	135	67.5
	Maybe	46	23.0
	Total	200	100.0

(Source: primary data)

Table 4 shows the acceptance of strangers friend request through social media. Among 200 respondents, 135(67.5%) respondents stated that they will not accept strangers' friend requests and 46 (23%) respondents stated they may accept it and 19(9.5%) respondents stated they accept the friend request other than their friends or family. Overall negative attitude is visible in accepting strangers friend request.

Table 5 Impact Of Social Media On Overall Wellbeing

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	Frequency	Percent			
Positive impact	20	10.0			
Negative impact	21	10.5			
Both positive andnegative impact	149	74.5			
No impact	10	5.0			
Total	200	100.0			

(Source: primary data)

Table 5, shows how social media impacts the overall wellbeing. Among 200 respondents, 149(74.5%) respondents have positive and negative impacts while using social media platforms, around 21(10.5%) respondents have negative impacts and 20(10%) respondents have positive impacts by using social media.

Table 6 Addiction to social media

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	Frequency	Percent			
Yes	61	30.5			
No	78	39.0			
Maybe	61	30.5			
Total	200	100.0			

(Source: primary data)

Table 6 represents the addiction regarding the use of social media. Among 200 respondents, 78(39%) respondents are not addicted to social media, 61 (30.5%) respondents are addicted and 61(30.5%) state that they may be addicted to social media.

Table 7 ANALYSIS OF USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

	N	Mean	Std Deviation
For communication	200	3.945	1.11724
For educational purpose	200	3.72	1.07114
Just for Fun and Entertainment	200	4.11	0.99643
Downloading / uploading of music and videos	200	3.665	1.20417
Organize events	200	3.385	1.08288
Online shopping	200	3.44	1.1504

Opportunity to find jobs	200	3.42	1.1961
Academics	200	3.04	1.1855
Journalism	200	3.145	1.1665
Fake love affair	200	2.73	1.398

(Source: Primary data)

The top purposes with the highest mean scores are: for Fun and Entertainment (Mean = 4.11, SD = 0.99643)For communication (Mean = 3.945, SD = 1.11724) For educational purposes (Mean = 3.72, SD = 1.07114) data highlights that entertainment, communication and education are the primary drivers of social media use, while other purposes like academics, journalism and fake love affairs are less common motivations. The standard deviations point to some variability in responses for each purpose.

ANALYSIS OF CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Table 8 consequences of social media

	Mean	Std Deviation
Risk of hacking	3.44	1.15
Financial loss	3.23	1.102
Cyber bullying	3.53	1.168
Privacy concerns	3.42	1.099
Time consuming	3.82	1.20
Cause of distraction	3.61	1.18
Less social interaction	3.30	1.13
Health issues	3.35	1.16
Navigate feelings/ emotions	3.2	1.19
Addition	3.54	1.21

(Source: primary data)

The analysis of social media consequences reveals significant concerns among users. The highest mean score is for "Time Consuming" (M = 3.82, SD = 1.20), indicating widespread recognition of time wastage. "Cyber Bullying" (M = 3.53, SD = 1.168) and "Addiction" (M = 3.54, SD = 1.21) are also notable concerns. Privacy issues (M = 3.42, SD = 1.099) and the risk of hacking (M = 3.44, SD = 1.15) reflect an awareness of security threats. Overall, users acknowledge a range of negative impacts, highlighting the need for strategies to address these challenges effectively.

Hypothesis Testing Level Of Impact Of Social Media Usage Among Youth

Table 9 test of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smir	rnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
For communication	Statistic 0.232	df	200	Sig. 0.000	Statistic 0.829	df 200	Sig. 0.000
For educational purpose	0.233		200	0.000	0.878	200	0.000
Just for fun an entertainment	d0.264		200	0.000	0.807	200	0.000

Downloading/ upload music, videos	ling0.235	200	0.000	0.868	200	0.000
Organise events	0.185	200	0.000	0.904	200	0.000
Social media use online shopping	for0.220	200	0.000	0.898	200	0.000
It offers opportunity find jobs	to0.216	200	0.000	0.898	200	0.000
Academic frauds	0.173	200	0.000	0.915	200	0.000
Journalism	0.186	200	0.000	0.908	200	0.000
Fake love affair	0.167	200	0.000	0.881	200	0.000

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test assessed whether the variables follow a normal distribution. The null hypothesis is that the data is normally distributed.

For all nine variables, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic is significant (p < 0.001), with p-values of 0.000. This means that for each variable, the null hypothesis of normality is rejected at the 0.05 significance level. The Shapiro-Wilk test was also performed to evaluate normality. Like the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the null hypothesis is that the data follows a normal distribution. Based on the above table, it can be inferred that the Shapiro-Wilk test also indicates a significant deviation from normality for all nine variables, as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test did.

Hypothesis 2:

H0: there is no significant difference between the impact of social media with respect to their gender.

H1: There is significant difference between the impact of social media with respect to their gender.

In order to test the significance of difference in the impact of social media with respect to their gender wise classification, Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted at 5% level of significance.

Table 10 – Hypothesis testing

		Frustration	Depression	Loneliness	positivity
	Anxiety		•		
Mann- Whitney U	4750.500	4345.500	4452.000	3815.500	4798.500
Wilcoxon W	7990.500	11605.500	11712.000	11075.500	12058.500
Z	-0.128	-1.189	-0.909	-2.560	-0.004
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.898	0.235	0.363	0.010	0.997
 a. Grouping 					
Variable:Gender					

Table 10 The results indicate that there are no significant gender differences in anxiety, frustration, depression, and positivity, as evidenced by the non-significant p-values (all > 0.05). However, a significant difference was found in loneliness (p = 0.010), suggesting that

one gender experiences higher levels of loneliness than the other. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender differences in emotional well-being, particularly regarding feelings of loneliness.

shows that there is significant difference between the impact of social media with respect to their gender in case of loneliness (P value less than 0.05) and no significant difference between the impact of social media with respect to their gender in case of other factors (P value more than 0.05). Hence, reject the null hypothesis for loneliness and retain null hypothesis for remaining factors. It indicates that as the gender varies there is difference in the impact of social media in case of loneliness.

Hypothesis 3

H0: there is no significant difference between the impact of social media with respect to their age.

H1: There is significant difference between the impact of social media with respect to their age.

In order to test the significance of difference in the impact of social media with respect to their age wise classification, Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted at 5% level of significance.

Table 11 – Hypothesis testing

	Anxiety	Frustration	Depression	Loneliness	positivity
Mann-	990.000	1019.000	1038.000	1006.000	938.500
Whitney U					
Wilcoxon W	1056.000	1085.000	1104.000	18961.000	1004.500
Z	-0.275	-0.115	-0.008	-0.187	-0.567
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.783	0.908	0.993	0.852	0.571

a. Grouping Variable: Age

The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare the emotional states of anxiety, frustration, depression, loneliness, and positivity between age groups. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between the two age groups. The results indicate that there are no significant differences in anxiety, frustration, depression, loneliness, and positivity between the age groups, as evidenced by the non-significant p-values (all > 0.05). This suggests that emotional states are not significantly influenced by age in the given sample.

3. Findings and Conclusion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the motivations, perceptions, and emotional states associated with social media use among the participants. The analysis reveals that entertainment, communication, and education are the primary drivers of social media engagement, with these purposes garnering the highest mean scores. This suggests that users are primarily drawn to social media for its ability to facilitate enjoyment, interaction, and learning. However, the study also highlights significant concerns regarding the negative consequences of social media use, with time consumption, cyberbullying, and addiction emerging as the most pressing issues. Users also demonstrated an awareness of potential

privacy and security risks, such as hacking threats. These findings underscore the need for strategies to mitigate the harmful effects of social media while promoting its positive aspects.

Interestingly, the study found no significant differences in emotional states like anxiety, frustration, or positivity between genders. However, one gender reported experiencing higher levels of loneliness, emphasizing the importance of considering gender-specific emotional responses to social media use. Similarly, age did not appear to be a significant factor in influencing emotional well-being in this sample. These results highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between social media use and emotional states, suggesting that individual differences and contextual factors may play a crucial role in shaping these dynamics.

As social media continues to permeate various aspects of daily life, it is essential to develop a comprehensive understanding of its impact on user well-being. The findings of this study contribute to this understanding by providing a nuanced perspective on the motivations, perceptions, and emotional experiences associated with social media use. However, further research is needed to explore these dynamics more deeply and develop effective interventions to promote healthier online behaviours and foster positive social media experiences for users of all ages and genders.

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