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Psychology

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DEPRESSION

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ABSTRACT

Depression among people irrespective of the age has been found to be very common, but since the last few decades the occurrence of depression is found to be successively at increase. There may be several reasons of increasing depression especially among youths, but social media seems to have its greater influence. The youths in the present contemporary world have the obsession of using social media through mobile phones where they have the Wi-Fi connection/ data packs which keep them in contact with the world around especially in the aspects of their own desire and interest. In the light of above assertion, the present study was aimed to investigate the impact of social media on depression. For this purpose, N=100 youths were taken randomly. A questionnaire on the use of social media and the depression scale were administered on the sample. The analysis of the data has revealed the positive impact of the use of social media on depression i.e., higher the use of social media higher the level of depression. The result has been discussed in detail that has shown interesting findings.

INTRODUCTION

Depression is a serious mental illness in which feelings of sadness and loss of interest last for weeks and inhibit with daily life. Depression can cause deep emotional pain for both the person who is experiencing it and, commonly, to that person's close family as well as his friends. In India, the National Mental Health Survey 2015-16 data reveals that nearly 15% Indian adults need active intervention for one or more mental health issues. One in 20 Indian suffers from depression. It is estimated that, in 2012, India had over 258,000 suicides, with the age-group of 15-29 years being the most affected.

Social media deserves a big thumbs up for helping people network for jobs and stay connected to friends and family but Some people may spend time surfing Facebook to try and try to escape their many problems. However, social media can actually become a root of unhealthy emotions. That negative cycle begins when a person spends long periods of time on social media, time taken away from other activities that might encourage better emotional health, like exercising, meeting up with friends, and engaging in other activities that provide pleasure.

“The habit of contacting too many people can cause this circular dynamic to dovetail an anxiety attack or depressive episode.” Instead, connect just with people you consider to be actual friends. Most of the research determined that the more time young adults use social media, the more likely they are to be depressed.

DEPRESSION

Depression is a potentially life-threatening mood disorder that influences 1 in 6 persons in the United States, or approximately 17.6 million Americans each year (Darvishi, Rahmani, Akbari, & Rahbar, 2013, p. 1072). Approximately 90% of people who have taken their own lives are related with having a mental disorder, which is usually found to be purely depression or a combination of multiple conditions that includes depression (Masango et al., 2008, p. 27). Data further suggests that between 59% - 87% of suicide victims, from the general population, suffered from major depression (Gonda, 2007, p. 2). The average onset age of depression is from 25-45 years old (Kessler et al., 2007, p. 362); however, it does influence individuals of all ages.

If depression is left untreated or treated inadequately, this can lead to enhance distress or even death. An estimated 400 per 100,000 depressed male patients and 180 per 100,000 depressed female patients commit suicide (Masango, Rataemane, & Motojesi, 2008, p. 27). Based on statistics gathered from 1997-2000, public mental health care patients

with a major mental illness, which comprises schizophrenia, major depressive disorders, bipolar disorders, delusional and psychotic disorders, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders, die between 1-10 years earlier than patients with non-major mental illness and between 13-30 years earlier compared to the average life expectancy of Americans (Colton, & Manderscheid, 2006, p. 4). In 2013, intentional self-harm was ranked the tenth leading cause of death in the United States, resulting in 41,149 deaths which accounted for 1.6% of the total deaths, while it ranked the highest for persons between the ages of 20-34 in second place, resulting in 9,478 deaths (Heron, 2016, p. 18-19). Between the sexes, intentional self-harm was ranked the third leading cause of death for males accounting for 6.3% of deaths, and the sixth foremost cause of death for females accounting for 3.8% of deaths (Heron, 2016, p. 8-9).

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be defined as internet-based software and interfaces that allow individuals to interact with each other, exchanging details about their lives such as biographical data, professional information, personal photos and up-to-the-minute thoughts.

Social media invented as strictly a personal tool that helps people to interact with friends and family but were later adopted by businesses that wanted to take advantage of a popular new communication method to reach out to customers, for example, by informing them of sales and offering them special coupons.

Since humanity is currently living in the technological era, there has been a major shift towards creating an online presence. This has resulted in the rise of a new generation within marketing research, referred to as Generation C, where the C stands for content, creativity, casual collapse control and celebrity (Hardey, 2011, p. 3). This new generation has become reliant on their connections and the content they produce online to define their identities (Urista, Dong, & Day, 2008, p. 217). Statistics show that 83% of 18-29-year-olds distribute their information through social media outlets (Knight-McCord, 2016, p. 22). The increased popularity of social media can be seen as a result of its ability to provide instantaneous fulfillment of its users' needs and wants (Urista et al., 2008, p. 217).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEPRESSION: RELATED STUDIES

Though, considering that social media is a comparatively new concept, there is a limited amount of research that has been conducted relating to the effect that it has on depression. One of the earliest studies was conducted in 2013 by Jelenchick, Eickhoff and Moreno (2013) from the University of Wisconsin-

Madison, which included a sample size of 190 college students, with 58% female and 91% Caucasian participants (p. 128). The aim of this study was to evaluate the association between social networking site use and depression, where participants were asked to complete a Patient Health Questionnaire-9 that was distributed in the form of an online survey (Jelenchick et al., 2014, p. 129). The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) is a diagnostic tool that is used to screen for depression, by scoring each of the nine depression criteria from the DSM-5, from '0' (not at all) to '3' (nearly every day) (Blackwell, & McDermott, 2014, p. 246). In addition to this, an experience sampling method was used to collect a weeklong amount of data about social media use habits, through periodic text messages that included surveys (Jelenchick et al., 2013, p. 129). An experience sampling method is a real-time assessment, which can be a journal or survey. The results from the PHQ-9, that measured the level of depression, were divided into three categories consisting of none, mild, and moderate to severe. The information gathered from participants resulted in 49% for none, 35% for mild and 14% for moderate to severe (Jelenchick et al., 2013, p. 129). Based on the data acquired from the experience sampling method, the average reported time spent on social media was 28 minutes (Jelenchick et al., 2013, p. 129). The results from this study, found no evidence of a relationship between social media use and clinical depression (Jelenchick et al., 2013, p. 129). Steers et al. (2014) further expanded on this research by focusing their studies on social media comparisons. These studies precisely discovered the outcome of using Facebook in a socially comparative manner, along with the length of time spent using Facebook, as it pertains to depression (Steers et al., 2014, p. 701). Study 1 had a sample size of 180 college students, which comprised of 39 males and 141 females (Steers et al., 2014, p. 707). Participants accomplished an online questionnaire that included an adaptation of the Iowa Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) and the Center for Epidemiology Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) (Steers et al., 2014, p. 708-709). The INCOM is a tool that comprises of 11 questions that are used to measure social comparison tendencies, however for this study these questions were revised to specifically pertain to comparison that occurs while using social media (Steers et al., 2014, p. 708). The CES-D is a diagnostic tool for depressive symptoms, that rates 20 self-reported items from '0' (rarely to none) to '3' (most or all the time) (Steers et al., 2014, p. 709). The results of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between the time spent on Facebook and depressive symptoms (Steers et al., 2014, p. 710).

Subsequent, a study was conducted in 2016, which focused on the amount of time and frequency individuals spent on social media outlets (Lin et al., 2016, p. 1). Participants were originally recruited by random digit dialing and address-based sampling (Lin et al., 2016, p. 1). They were then asked to complete an online survey, which resulted in a sample size of 1,787 adults between the ages of 19-32 that reside in the United States (Lin et al., 2016, p. 3). The survey asked participants about the frequency per day and amount of times per week they are on social media (Lin et al., 2016, p. 4). A global frequency score was acquired from the Pew Internet Research Questionnaire to analyze this data (Lin et al., 2016, p. 4).

Beside the above mentioned studies that explored the positive relationship between uses of social media and depression on the basis of surveys and researches, there are many ways to find yourself suffering from depression just because of social media:

- Social Media OCD
- The grass is always greener
- Neglect
- Getting dissed
- Espionage
- Stranger-Danger

- Bullying
- Oversharing
- Romantic Drama
- Simple misinterpretation

OBJECTIVE: The objective of the present research is to see the influence of social media of depression.

Hypothesis: Social media will significantly influence depression.

METHODOLOGY

Sample: For the present study, the sample consisted of N=100 youth and the sample were randomly selected from Aligarh Muslim University.

TOOLS USED:

Social Media Scale: For measuring uses of social media, a scale was developed by the author. This scale consists of 10 items. It is a 5-point scale viz., Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. This scale is highly standardized as for the purpose of ascertaining the relevance of items as well as the validity of the scale judges opinions (N=15) for each items were obtained and highly agreed items were retained in the scale. The split-half reliability of the scale was found to be r=.88.

Depression Scale: For measuring depression a scale was developed by the author. This scale consists of 12 items. Each item of the scale was measured on a 5-point scale viz., Very low extent to Very High Extent. This scale is highly standardized as for the purpose of ascertaining the relevance of items as well as the validity of the scale judges opinions (N=15) for each items and dimensions were obtained and highly agreed items were retained in the scale. The split-half reliability of the scale was found to be r=.86.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS: Kolmogrov-Smirnov (KS) statistics was applied.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It is to say in this regard that higher the use of social media, higher the level of depression. To give rationality to this finding, it is imperative to mention here that using social media at higher level it increases depression at higher level.

Table-1.1 Differential Influence of High and Low level of using Social Media on Depression

Frequencies	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	N
High on using Social Media	1 (0.03)	2 (0.1)	12 (0.5)	15 (1)	30
Low on using watching Social Media	7 (0.35)	8 (0.75)	3 (0.9)	2 (1)	
D	0.32	0.65	0.4	0	Total N=50

$$KS=4(D)^2 \frac{n_1 n_2}{n_1 + n_2}$$

$$4(.65)^2 \frac{(30 \times 20)}{30 + 20}$$

$$4(.42) \times (600/50)$$

$$1.68 \times 12$$

KS= 20.16 (Significant)

Table-1.1 highlights the impact of 'Social Media' on 'Depression'. On the basis of KS-values, KS= 20.16, it is found that 'Social Media' has its differential influence on 'Depression' as KS-value found to be statistically significant at .01 level of confidence.

Table-1.2 Differential Influence of High and Moderate level of using Social Media on Depression

Frequencies	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	N
High on using watching Social Media	4 (0.13)	7 (0.36)	7 (0.6)	12 (1)	30
Moderate on using watching Social Media	13 (0.56)	4 (0.73)	3 (0.86)	3 (1)	
D	0.43	0.37	0.26	0	Total N=53

$KS=4(D)^2 \frac{n_1 \times n_2}{n_1 + n_2}$
 $4(.65)^2 (30 \times 23 / 30 + 23)$
 $4(.42) \times (690 / 53)$
 1.68×13.01
KS= 21.85 (Significant)

The trend of result shows that higher the use of social media, higher the level of depression. It means that depression enhances as the level of using social media increases, it means both are positively related to each other. Higher the level of using social media combine with higher the level of depression.

Similarly, Table-1.2 shows the differential impact of ‘Social Media’ on ‘Depression’ it is again found that $KS= 21.85$ is found to be significant beyond .01 level of confidence which again shows that as the level of using social media increases, the level of depression among youth also increase.

Table-1.3 Differential Influence of Low and Moderate level of using Social Media on Depression

Frequencies	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	N
Low on using watching Social Media	2 (0.1)	2 (0.2)	8 (0.6)	8 (1)	20
Moderate on using watching Social Media	9 (0.39)	8 (0.73)	3 (0.86)	3 (1)	23
D	0.29	0.53	0.26	0	Total N=43

$KS=4(D)^2 \frac{n_1 \times n_2}{n_1 + n_2}$
 $4(.65)^2 (20 \times 23 / 20 + 23)$
 $4(.42) \times (460 / 43)$
 1.68×10.69
KS= 17.95 (Significant)

Therefore, it can be said that the ‘Social Media’ significantly predict or influence ‘Depression’. The data clearly reveal to the fact that using social media at moderate level leads to moderate level of depression and vice-versa using social media at low level lead to low level of depression.

Table-1.3 provides the findings pertaining to the differential influence of ‘Social Media’ on ‘Depression’. It is evident from the Table-1.3 that $KS= 17.95$ is found to be statistically significant, therefore, it clearly argues that ‘Social Media’ significantly influence ‘Depression’.

CONCLUSION

The research determined that the more time young adults use social media, the more likely they are to be depressed. The findings from this study could potentially help clinical professionals aid depressed patients.

People that engage in activities of little meaning on social media makes them feel like they are wasting time. Spending more time on social media increases the exposure to cyber-bullying, thus causing feelings of depression. And social media fuels “Internet addiction,” which is considered a psychiatric condition linked to depression. There are simply two rules which help people in order to live depression free life just because extreme use of social media.

These are:

- **Give it a rest** – If you find yourself checking Social Media every half-hour, it’s time to start weaning yourself away from it. The more you check Social Media, the more opportunity you have to get entangled in some kind of drama.
- **Be Realistic** – Keep in mind how easy it is to blow a gasket over something you’ve seen on Social Media. Remember some of those common snares: misinterpretation, accidents, oversharing, greener grass, etc. If a friend disses you on the ‘net, think to yourself, “Would they do this in real life?” If not, there may be a perfectly rational explanation, so don’t let some Social Media anomaly ruin

your day.

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