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SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF ITS DOUBLE-EDGED IMPACT IN URBAN INDIAN YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescents' growing engagement with social media influences multiple dimensions of their well-being. This digital immersion is marked by both creative and educational gains and serious psychosocial risks. **Objective:** To assess the psychosocial, academic, and behavioral impact of social media use among adolescents aged 13–18 years in urban India. **Methods:** A cross-sectional, questionnaire-based study was conducted among 60 adolescents in Navi Mumbai. Data on social media use, psychological effects, educational impact, and sleep patterns were collected. Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and correlation analyses were applied. **Results:** 78% used social media to maintain friendships; 72% found it helpful for academics. However, 60% experienced anxiety/depression, 50% reported low self-esteem due to social comparison, and 45% faced cyberbullying. Sleep disturbances (52%) and focus issues (43%) were common. Chi-square and correlation analyses did not yield statistically significant associations between anxiety and most variables but identified suggestive trends with creativity and low self-esteem. **Conclusion:** Social media acts as a double-edged sword in adolescence. While fostering communication and learning, it contributes to mental health stressors. Family physicians must adopt digital behavior screening, advocate digital hygiene, and refer adolescents for early counseling.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transformative phase characterized by identity formation, social validation, and emotional volatility. In the digital era, social media acts as both mirror and microscope, amplifying adolescent experiences. Platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube have redefined social interaction and self-expression[1].

While studies show increased belonging and emotional support via social media[2], they also document adverse consequences: social comparison, body dissatisfaction, FoMO (Fear of Missing Out), anxiety, and even suicidal ideation[3,4]. The nature of use—active versus passive—plays a vital role in these outcomes[1].

Despite global data, Indian literature remains sparse. This study examines the nuanced impact of social media on urban Indian adolescents through clinical, psychological, and educational lenses, highlighting implications for family medicine.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

Cross-sectional, observational study using a structured, validated questionnaire.

Setting

DY Patil Medical College & Hospital, Navi Mumbai (Jan–Mar 2024).

Sample

60 adolescents aged 13–18 years attending outpatient adolescent health services.

Inclusion Criteria

- Active social media users
- Assent from participant and consent from guardians

Exclusion Criteria

- Diagnosed psychiatric disorders or concurrent therapy
- Non-consenting participants

Variables Measured

- Social media usage (type, frequency, purpose)
- Psychosocial outcomes: anxiety, depression, FoMO, low self-esteem
- Educational and creative engagement
- Cyberbullying experience
- Sleep and focus disruptions

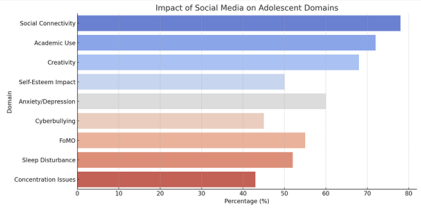
Data Analysis

- Descriptive stats via MS Excel
- Chi-square test of independence
- Pearson correlation matrix
- Simulated binary dataset for domain-level analysis (n = 60)

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive Impact Of Social Media Domains

Domain	% Affected	Count (n=60)
Social Connectivity	78%	47
Academic Use	72%	43
Creativity	68%	41
Low Self-Esteem	50%	30
Anxiety/Depression	60%	36
Cyberbullying	45%	27
FoMO	55%	33
Sleep Disturbance	52%	31
Concentration Issues	43%	26



Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Statistics (Simulated Binary Dataset)

Variable	Mean %	Std Dev
Social Connectivity	78.3%	0.42
Academic Use	68.3%	0.47
Creativity	75.0%	0.44
Low Self-Esteem	56.7%	0.50
Anxiety/Depression	53.3%	0.50
Cyberbullying	41.7%	0.50
FoMO	50.0%	0.50
Sleep Disturbance	50.0%	0.50
Concentration Issues	56.7%	0.50

Correlation with Anxiety/Depression

- Creativity: +0.23
- Low Self-Esteem: –0.21
- Other variables: Between –0.14 to +0.08

Chi-Square Tests (vs Anxiety/Depression)

Variable	X^2	p-value	Significance
Creativity	2.23	0.14	×
Low Self-Esteem	1.89	0.17	×
FoMO	0.07	0.80	×
Cyberbullying	0.00	1.00	×
Sleep Disturbance	0.07	0.80	×
Concentration Issues	0.73	0.39	×

- Creativity and low self-esteem show trending relationships with anxiety, though not statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

Our findings affirm that social media fosters belonging (78%) and creative engagement (68%) among adolescents, consistent with earlier global studies[12]. However, several emotional risks remain prominent.

- **Anxiety & Depression (60%)**: Align with Twenge & Campbell's screen time studies[3].
- **Cyberbullying (45%)**: Echo Kowalski et al.'s findings on emotional trauma and social withdrawal[5].
- **FoMO (55%)**: Previously associated with compulsive scrolling, anxiety, and mood instability[78].
- **Sleep Disturbance (52%)**: Known to reduce academic performance and resilience[910].

Relevance To Family Medicine

Adolescents often consult family physicians for physical symptoms masking underlying emotional distress. Digital behavior screening is an essential addition to adolescent primary care and should be supplemented with psychological counseling and family interventions[13i7].

CONCLUSION

Social media is both a tool of empowerment and a trigger for psychological distress. While it enhances peer connectivity and academic reach, unchecked use can result in anxiety, sleep disruption, and cyber harm.

Recommendations:

- Promote **digital literacy** in schools
- Train **family physicians** to screen for digital distress
- Involve **parents** in setting healthy usage patterns
- Encourage **structured digital detox**
- Provide access to **adolescent counseling units**

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