

Social media's impact on mental health

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Background

A study in 2017 of over half a million eighth through 12th graders found that the number exhibiting high levels of depressive symptoms increased by 33 percent between 2010 and 2015. In the same period, the suicide rate for girls in that age group increased by 65 percent.

Smartphones were introduced in 2007, and by 2015 fully 92 percent of teens and young adults. The rise in depressive symptoms correlates with smartphone adoption during that period, even when matched year by year, observes the study's lead author, San Diego State University psychologist Jean Twenge.

A 2016 study of more than 450 teens found that greater social media use, nighttime social media use and emotional investment in social media; such as feeling upset when prevented from logging on, were each linked with worse sleep quality and higher levels of anxiety and depression

Question:

Does social media contribute to increased cases of depressed young people?

Aim:

To investigate the correlation between social media and depression within adolescence/teenagers

Sub aim:

To investigate the correlation between the severity of depression and the time spent on social media.

Hypothesis:

Social media does contribute to increased cases of depressed young people as it affects the self-image or self-confidence of young people. There will be a correlation between social media usage and negative mental health.

Method**Research method and design:**

The research method was a questionnaire with an online survey used to determine the Sample. The questionnaire and survey were online to limit face-to-face contact during the COVID-19 pandemic. The design was repeated measures as the participants that completed the survey were also used for the completion of the questionnaire.

Sample:

The mental health scale was sent to 62 people by random sampling aged 16 to 18 from which 30 were selected based on a selective sample method.

Procedure:

The sample was selected through random sampling as a link was sent to all available students at the time, the survey was conducted on Google Forms which included one question 'On a scale of 1 (being healthy) to 10 (being bad), how would you rate your mental health?'.

The participants that answered with 6 and above were sent the final questionnaire from which the results were obtained.

Once a list of participants that answered 6 and above were compiled, the questionnaire consisted of 10 questions that asked in different ways how social media affected the participants mental health. These questions were:

1. What social media apps do you frequently use? (Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp)
2. How many hours a day do you use Social Media?
3. Have you ever been a victim of Cyberbullying or committed the act?
4. Does the use of Social Media impact your productivity? If so on a scale of 1 to 8 does it affect you?
5. On a scale from 1 to 10 how does social media affect your self-image?
6. Does Social Media affect your view on others?
7. Does Social media boost your self-confidence?
8. Have you ever received support after posting something on social media?
9. How often do you post on social media? Ex: tweet, Instagram post
10. Do you think Social Media is good or bad for your mental health?

Once the responses were consolidated, the data was analyzed.

Results:

The questionnaire was sent out to the 30 participants which was collected through selective sampling. 3 out of the 30 people did not respond to the questionnaire.

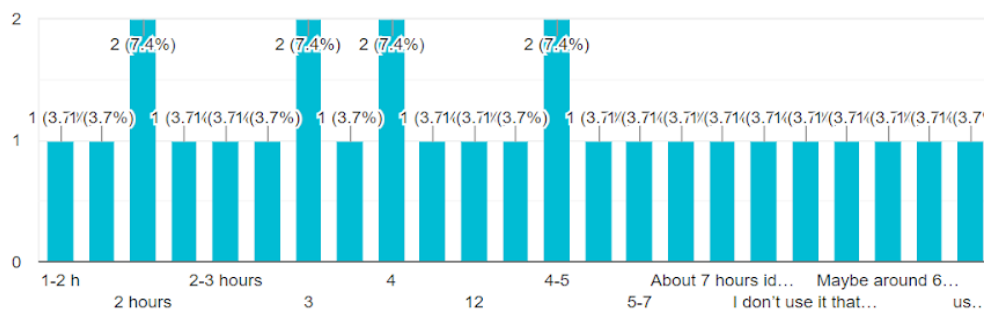
Question 1: "what social media apps do you frequently use?"

- The most common social media app used is Instagram 20 out of 27 participants (95.2%)
- The second most common social media app used is snapchat 14 out of 27 participants (51.8%)
- The third most common social media app used is tiktok 10 out of 27 participants (37.03%)
- Other social media apps such as WhatsApp, YouTube, twitter and reddit were also used.

Question 2: "How many hours a day do you use Social Media?"

How many hours a day do you use Social Media?

27 responses

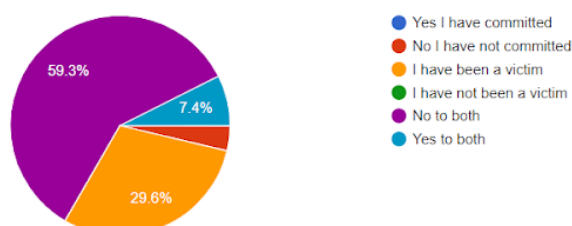


- 2 out of 27 participants said 1 hour
- 6 out 27 participants said 2 hours
- 4 out of 27 participants said 3 hours
- 5 out of 27 participants said 4hours
- 4 out of 27 participants said 5 hours
- 2 out of 27 participants said 6 hours
- 2 out of 27 participants said 7 hours
- 2 out 27 participants said 12+ hours

Question 3: "Have you ever been a victim of Cyberbullying or committed the act?"

Have you ever been a victim of Cyberbullying or committed the act?

27 responses

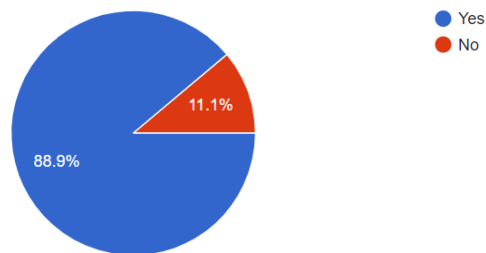


- 59.3% of the participants were neither a victim nor committed an act of cyberbullying.
- 7.4% of the participants have admitted that they have committed an act of cyberbullying.
- 29.6% of the participants were victims of cyberbullying.
- 3.7% of the participants have not committed an act of cyberbullying.

Question 4a: "Does the use of social media impact your productivity?"

Does the use of Social Media impact your productivity?

27 responses

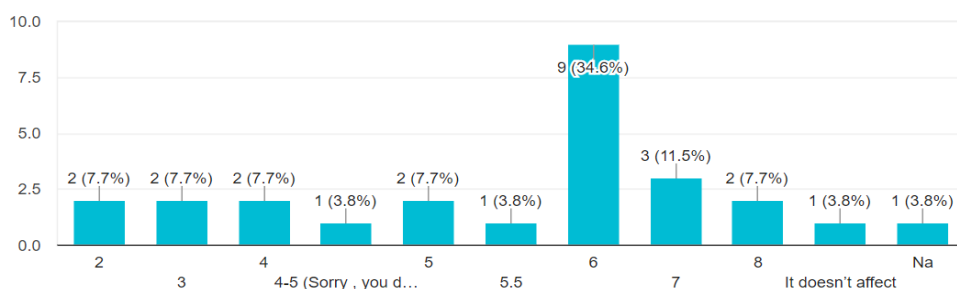


- 88.9% said yes, social media has an impact on their productivity.
- 11.1% said no, social media does not have an impact on their productivity.

Question 4b: "if yes on a scale of 1-10 how much does it affect you?"

If yes, on a scale of 1 to 8 does it affect you? (1- affects a little 8- affects alot)

26 responses

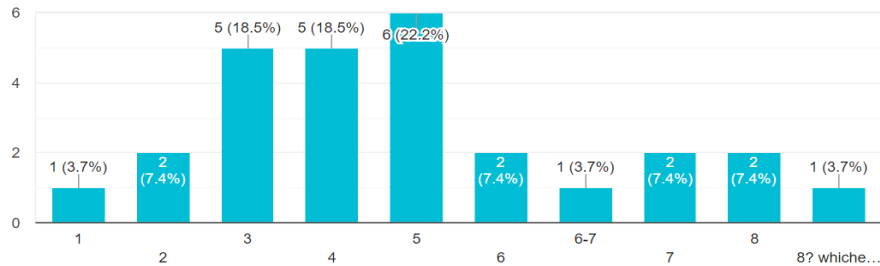


- 2 participants said 1
- 2 participants said 2
- 2 participants said 3
- 2 participants said 4
- 3 participants said 5
- 10 participants said 6
- 3 participants said 7
- 2 participants said 8

Question 5: "on a scale from 1-8, has social media affected your self-image?"

On a scale from 1 to 8 how does social media affect your self-image? (1 being best, 8 being worst)

27 responses

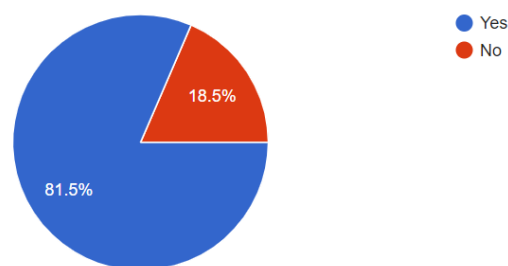


- 1 participant said 1
- 2 participants said 2
- 2 participants said 6
- 3 participants said 7
- 3 participants said 8
- 5 participants said 3
- 5 participants said 4
- 6 participants said 5

Question 6: "Does social media affect your view on others?"

Does Social Media affect your view on others?

27 responses

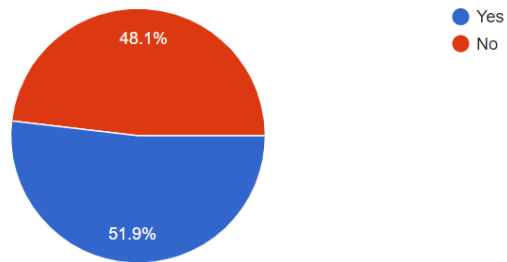


- 81.5% of the participants said yes, social media does affect your views on others
- 18.5% of the participants said no, social media does not affect your view on others

Question 7: "Does Social media boost your self-confidence?"

Does Social media boost your self-confidence?

27 responses

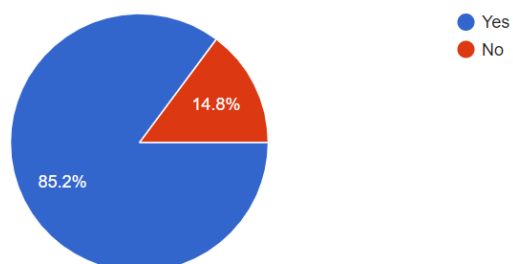


- 51.9% of the participants said yes, social media does help in boosting self-confidence.
- 48.1% of the participants said no, social media does not help in boosting their self-confidence.

Question 8: "Have you ever received support after posting something on social media?"

Have you ever received support after posting something on social media?

27 responses

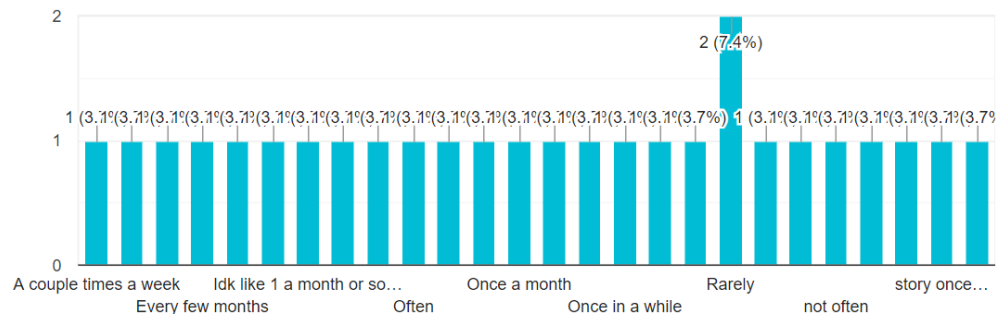


- 85.2% of the participants said yes, they receive support after posting on social media.
- 14.8% of the participants said no, they do not receive support after posting on social media.

Question 9: "How often do you post on social media? Ex: tweet, Instagram post"

How often do you post on social media? Ex: tweet, Instagram post

27 responses



- 8 participants said they post often
- 13 participants said they post rarely
- 6 participants said they never post

Question 10: "Do you think Social Media is good or bad for your mental health? and why?"

- 12 participants said that social media is bad for your mental health.
- 4 participants said that social media is good for your mental health.
- 11 participants said it depends on how the person uses their social media platforms.

Conclusion/Evaluation/ Discussions:

Finally, it may be concluded that social media does contribute to increased cases of depressed young people as it affects the self-image or self-confidence of them, however it can also be said that the severity of the impact differs upon person to person and their wellbeing prior.

According to the results, participants that spend longer time on social media and post more said that social media was bad for their mental health. All the participants scored higher on the mental health scale and used social media frequently which shows there is a correlation between the use of social media and increased cases of depression among young people.

The results provide a fair reason to believe that social media has somewhat an impact on the overall mental health status of adolescent members, the participants in this study were ensured complete anonymity and therefore increasing the overall validity of the results.

Additionally, the overall research took into consideration both qualitative and quantitative data, allowing the participants to completely express themselves with the questionnaire.

Unfortunately, due to the circumstances of the current pandemic situation, the participants could not have been interviewed face to face where further qualitative data could have been retrieved, this was not done to abide by the social distancing protocols.

However, it can be well assumed that the data extracted is fairly reliable and shows a valid correlation between the use of social media and the cases of young, depressed teenagers. Further research should demonstrate the individual factors or aspects of social media that do contribute to the case of depressed individuals, rather than the entire generalized landscape of "social media".

The research conducted could be used by parents, schools or even other young adolescents to understand how their excessive use of social media could lead to deteriorating mental health.

References:

Forbes study on how bad social media is for health

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Social medias impact on the mental health of youth <https://onlinedegrees.unr.edu/online-master-of-public-health/impact-of-social-media-on-youth-mental-health/>

Study which shows that night time , excessive social media use and etc lead to anxiety and depressive symptoms <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/tween-and-teen-health/in-depth/teens-and-social-media-use/art-20474437#:~:text=A%202016%20study%20of%20more,levels%20of%20anxiety%20and%20depression.>

Jean Twenge-psychologist who determined the rise of smartphone use and its correlation with depression and anxiety <https://childmind.org/article/is-social-media-use-causing-depression/>

Suicide rates and social media

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2167702617723376?journalCode=cpxa>