



Impact of Social Media on Anxiety Among College Students

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Abstract

In the modern digital era, social media has become an inseparable part of students' lives. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat are widely used for communication, entertainment, and educational purposes. Although social media provides various advantages, excessive use has been linked with increasing levels of anxiety among college students. The present research paper aims to examine the relationship between social media usage and anxiety among college students. The study highlights how online comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), cyberbullying, and academic distraction contribute to psychological stress. Secondary data and previous research findings have been used to understand the growing impact of social media on mental health. The study concludes that controlled and mindful use of social media can reduce anxiety and improve emotional well-being among students.

Keywords: Social Media, Anxiety, College Students, Mental Health, FOMO

Introduction

Social media has transformed human communication and interaction in the 21st century. College students spend a significant amount of time on digital platforms for sharing information, entertainment, and maintaining social relationships. While social networking sites provide opportunities for learning and social connection, excessive engagement often affects students psychologically.

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health issues among college students. It is characterized by feelings of fear, nervousness, tension, and excessive worrying. Constant exposure to social media content creates pressure to appear successful, attractive, and socially active. Students often compare themselves with others online, which negatively affects self-esteem and emotional stability.

The rapid growth of internet accessibility and smartphone use has increased dependency on social networking applications. Many students feel uncomfortable or stressed when they are unable to access social media accounts. This dependency may lead to sleep disturbances, reduced concentration, and emotional imbalance.

The present study focuses on understanding how social media influences anxiety among college students and identifies major psychological and social factors responsible for this issue.

Concept of Anxiety

Anxiety is a psychological state involving excessive fear, tension, and nervousness. According to the American Psychological Association, anxiety includes emotional, cognitive, and physical symptoms such as restlessness, sweating, rapid heartbeat, and difficulty concentrating.

Symptoms of Anxiety

1. Rapid heartbeat
2. Difficulty sleeping
3. Restlessness and nervousness

4. Overthinking
5. Lack of concentration
6. Irritability and emotional instability

Social Media and Student Life

Social media plays an important role in the daily life of students. It helps students communicate with peers, access educational content, and stay informed about current events. However, excessive social media use may negatively influence mental health.

Students spend several hours daily scrolling through posts, watching videos, and interacting online. Continuous exposure to idealized lifestyles and achievements of others creates unrealistic expectations. As a result, students may feel inferior, lonely, or unsuccessful.

Factors Through Which Social Media Causes Anxiety

1. Social Comparison

Students compare their appearance, lifestyle, and achievements with others on social media. Such comparisons reduce self-confidence and increase feelings of dissatisfaction.

2. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

FOMO refers to the fear that others are enjoying better experiences without them. Students constantly check notifications and updates to avoid feeling excluded.

3. Cyberbullying

Negative comments, online harassment, and trolling can deeply affect students emotionally. Victims of cyberbullying often experience stress, fear, and depression.

4. Academic Distraction

Excessive use of social media reduces concentration on studies. Students may procrastinate, resulting in academic pressure and anxiety.

5. Sleep Disturbance

Late-night use of smartphones and social media affects sleep quality. Poor sleep increases emotional stress and mental fatigue.

Review of Literature

Several researchers have studied the relationship between social media and anxiety among students.

- Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020) found that excessive social media use is associated with increased anxiety and depression among young adults.
- Primack et al. (2017) reported that students who spent more time on social networking sites experienced greater social isolation.
- Woods and Scott (2016) observed that nighttime social media use negatively affects sleep and psychological well-being.

- Przybylski et al. (2013) explained that FOMO significantly contributes to anxiety and emotional distress among adolescents and students.

These studies indicate that uncontrolled social media use may harm students' mental health.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the impact of social media on anxiety among college students.
2. To identify major factors responsible for anxiety caused by social media.
3. To understand the psychological effects of excessive social media use.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data collected from journals, books, research articles, and online academic sources. Information related to social media use and anxiety among college students was reviewed and analyzed systematically.

Discussion

The findings of previous studies suggest that social media has both positive and negative effects on students. While it helps in communication and learning, excessive use leads to emotional stress and anxiety.

Students who spend long hours online often experience pressure to maintain a perfect image. Continuous comparison with others reduces self-esteem and increases insecurity. Social media addiction also affects academic performance and sleep patterns.

Moreover, cyberbullying and online criticism create emotional trauma among students. Anxiety becomes more severe when students depend heavily on social approval through likes, comments, and followers.

Therefore, balanced and mindful use of social media is essential for maintaining mental well-being.

Conclusion

The study concludes that excessive use of social media significantly contributes to anxiety among college students. Factors such as social comparison, FOMO, cyberbullying, and academic distraction increase psychological stress. Although social media offers opportunities for communication and learning, uncontrolled use negatively affects emotional health.

Students should be encouraged to maintain a healthy balance between online and offline life. Educational institutions and parents should spread awareness regarding responsible social media usage and mental health management.

Recommendations

1. Students should limit daily screen time.
2. Colleges should organize mental health awareness programs.
3. Counselling services should be provided for students facing anxiety.
4. Students should participate in physical and social activities offline.
5. Mindfulness and stress-management practices should be encouraged.

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