



The Impact of Social Media Usage on Psychological and Social Well-being among Youth: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

The evolving social media has altered the communication trends among youngsters, and the occurrence of this is raising some questions regarding its effects on the psychological and social health of the youth. The proposed study focuses on investigating how social media use, addiction behaviour, and well-being outcomes are related in young people. Quantitative Cross-Sectional Study Design was chosen where there were 110 participants ranging from 18 to 24 years old. The main variables included in the research were the daily average usage time, the addicted score, mental score, sleep time and some conflict social issues. The outcome indicates the negative correlation of social media usage with mental well-being, which means that as social media usage increases, the well-being decreases. Moreover, it was found out that there was a strong association between the addiction of social media and sleep deprivation. Increased use of social media could lead to social conflict among people. From the results, it is evident that the use intensity of social media and the addictive nature are significant in influencing the well-being of young people. Nevertheless, one weakness of the paper includes the small number of participants used as well as the lack of longitudinal design in data collection. However, the paper makes a significant contribution to existing literature because the impact of social media use is discussed from various perspectives

Keywords:

Psychological well-being, Social media addiction, Youth, Mental health, Sleep quality

1. INTRODUCTION

It should be noted that due to the advanced level of the evolution of digital technologies, significant shifts in communication practices have occurred, particularly among younger people. Platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok have become an integral part of daily routines. These tools provide instant communication, content exchange, and social networking, which are central aspects of youth culture today (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Rideout & Fox, 2018). On the one hand, young people devote a significant amount of time to social media around the globe, and it has changed the way they build relationships, inform themselves, and communicate (Moreno & Salerno, 2026; Yue & Rich, 2023). Even so, social media has a lot of positive effects, such as improved communication and social support, there has been a growing concern about its influence on psychological and social health. During recent years, social media overuse has been associated with diverse mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020; Keles et al., 2020). The long-term effects of being exposed to online settings can also lead to negative social comparison and cyberbullying, as well as emotional burnout that can negatively impact mental health (Twenge, 2020; Vandenbosch et al., 2022). Moreover, the unceasing availability of social media may disrupt sleeping habits, especially when the consumption is carried into late-night hours, thus worsening the mental distress (Alonzo et al., 2021). In addition to personal mental health, social media affects social relations, too, and in most cases, leads to interpersonal conflicts, face-to-face communication, and isolation (Odgers & Jensen,

2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022). These issues underscore the multidimensional nature of social media in affecting young people's wellbeing.

Although the use of social media has become common, there has been an alarming trend in the rising addiction to the same by young people. Various people demonstrate compulsive usage features, including regular checking, inability to take a break, and the need to get online validation, which can cause deterioration in their well-being (Cabezas-Klinger et al., 2025; Chhabra et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the available literature has conflicting results. Although research highlights the beneficial effects of social media, including better social connectivity and the ability to get support networks, it also shows that it has adverse psychological effects on individuals (Ivie et al., 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Also, there has been an emphasis on the possible dangers of social media use, especially in a younger demographic, in large-scale policy reports and a call to conduct more rigorous empirical research to better understand their impacts (Galea & Buckley, 2024; Murthy, 2023). One of the most significant weaknesses of the existing studies is the empirical ambiguity of the student population, with the most important is the use of social media. In addition, there is a tendency among existing research to investigate the effect of social media usage on separate dimensions, either the time spent on it or particular psychological effects but not a combination of these dimensions and behaviour. The gap in the research is that it has not yet been established to conduct research simultaneously with the intensity of social media usage, addictive behavior, and the indicators of psychological and social well-being (Keles et al., 2020). In this regard, to achieve actual patterns of usage and their

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implications, an empirical approach that can be based on data is required. There are important implications of this study to various stakeholders. It can be helpful in educating teachers, parents, and policymakers want to make sure that youth utilize social media in a more healthful way, as it provides empirical data on the connection between social media use and well-being. Moreover, it also adds to the developing literature on the topic of digital behavior by taking a multidimensional perspective and approach to the issue, thus, deepening our perception of the intricate relationships between young people's wellbeing and social media use. The current study seeks to accomplish the following goals in light of the gaps that have been identified: To examine the relationship between social media usage and psychological well-being among youth. To analyze the association between social media usage and social well-being indicators. To assess the role of social media addiction in influencing psychological and social outcomes. In that regard, the current research is expected to study the relationship between social media use and mental health, evaluate its relationship with the measures of social well-being, and determine how the addiction to social media affects those outcomes in young people. The research questions that will guide the study are as follows: Does the daily use of social media have any influence on mental health Is being addicted to social media a contributor to poor sleep and other psychological outcomes Does social media use impact social relationships With use of these questions, it has been hypothesized that the more people use it, the worse their mental health score will be, the more they are addicted, the worse they will sleep, and the more interpersonal conflict they experience the more they use it.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study will investigate the relationship between young people's usage of social media and their psychological and social well-being using a quantitative research approach. A cross-sectional empirical study design was used, in which the data were analyzed all at once without any alteration. The design is appropriate for identifying trends, correlations, and patterns between variables related to social media use and well-being measures.

2.2 Data Source and Sample

The research is based on secondary data with 110 people. The sample is a youth group, with mostly students in the age bracket of about 18-24 years, which is a high-user population on social media sites (Amina Salamat, 2025). The sampling method may be referred to as convenience sampling because the information was gathered by using easily available participants instead of a probabilistic sampling strategy. Even though this methodology is convenient in data collection, it can reduce the generalizability of the results to a larger population.

2.3 Data Preparation and Reduction

The initial data was analysed through a process of data preparation and reduction before being analysed to ensure that the data was relevant, consistent and easy to analyse. The information obtained in Kaggle included a larger scope of variables but only the variables which would be related to the purposes of current study were kept. In particular, the variables connected with the intensity of social media use preference, addiction behavior, and indicators of well-being (mental

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health score, sleep duration and social conflict) were chosen to be analysed. All missing, inconsistent and irrelevant values were strictly checked and avoided when needed to ensure data quality. Also, the dataset was narrowed down to include the respondents who fit the target population of youth (around 18-24 years) and also ensures that it is within the scope of the study. The unnecessary or redundant variables that did not play any role in measuring psychological or social well-being were eliminated in order to make the analysis framework simpler. Due to the procedure, a clean dataset of 110 valid observations was obtained and further statistical analysis was done. This focused on the reliability of the results because it concentrated on the critical variables and reduced noise and possible bias in the data.

2.4 Variables Description

The research uses both independent and dependent variables to examine the connection between social media use and well-being. The independent variables are the average hours of daily use, most frequently used platform, and addicted score, as a combination of which constitutes the scope and character of social media use. Dependent variables include mental health score, hours of sleep at night, social media conflicts and relationship status that are collectively considered to indicate the psychological and social well-being of the respondents.

2.5 Measurement of Constructs

In this research, quantitative indicators that were present in the dataset were used to operationalise the constructs. The intensity of engagement in the use of social media was measured in terms of the average amount of time spent on social media a day. Addicted score was used to measure social

media addiction, which is used to determine the extent of dependence on social media. The mental health score was used as the direct indicator to assess psychological well-being, and the number of sleep hours per night was used as an indirect indicator. Social well-being was assessed with the help of variables like conflicts over social media, which were indicative of interpersonal problems, and relationship status, which indicated the patterns of social interaction.

2.6 Data Analysis Techniques

A combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data. The properties of the sample and the main variables were summarised with the help of descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation. The strength and direction of relationships between well-being indicators, addiction, and social media usage were studied by correlation analysis. The predictive relationships were also analysed with the help of regression analysis, namely, the impact of the average number of hours of daily use on the addiction score's impact on the mental health score on the number of sleep hours every night. Also, group comparisons were done where necessary to determine differences in categories including most used platform. All calculations were done via Microsoft excel functions and tools.

2.7 Tools and Software

The statistical analysis was performed through the usage of Microsoft Excel and Python program only to perform the data cleaning and the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression modelling and graphic representation of the findings.

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2.8 Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards of research concerning data related to human beings are followed. The data collected in the current study was found in a publicly available source (Kaggle) and does not include any personally identifiable information, which guarantees the anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents. Since the study is founded on secondary data analysis, there was no direct contact with the participants and, thus, no risk or harm was inflicted on people.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive profile of respondents and key variables of the study are shown in Table 1. There were 110 youth respondents in the dataset with ages between 18 and 24 years. The sample mean age was 20.65 years (SD = 1.40) and this showed that the respondents were mainly young adults. The highest percentages were found in the

respondents of the age 19 years (23.6%), 20 years (23.6%), 21 years (21.8%), and 22 years (20.9%). Only a small proportion of participants were aged 18 years (1.8%), 23 years (4.5%), and 24 years (3.6%). The mean of the time the respondents spent on social media was 4.77 hours (SD = 1.20) per day, which implies that on average, the respondents spent a significant amount of their time on social networking sites. The average mental health was 6.32 (SD = 1.07) and the average night sleep duration was 6.93 hours (SD = 1.11). The average score of addiction was 6.27 (SD = 1.65) that is a moderate to high level of social media dependency. Also, the average social mediatisation associated with social media use (Table 1).the usage trends of youth are dominated by visual-driven and highly engaging platforms (Table 1) In terms of platform preference, Instagram (26.4%), TikTok (24.5%), and Facebook (19.1) were the most common platforms meaning that conflicts score was 2.74 (SD = 0.95), which is in the range of moderate interpersonal.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents and Main Study Variables (N = 110)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Age	20.65	1.4	18	24
Avg_Daily_Usage_Hours	4.77	1.2	1.5	8.5
Mental_Health_Score	6.32	1.07	4	9
Sleep_Hours_Per_Night	6.93	1.11	3.8	9.5
Addicted_Score	6.27	1.65	2	9
Conflicts_Over_Social_Media	2.74	0.95	0	4

3.2 Social Media Usage Patterns

Trend of daily social media usage shows that the majority of the respondents were moderate and

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heavy users. More precisely, 55.5% of the respondents were moderate (3.1-5.0 hours/day) users, and 37.3% of participants were high users (>5 hours/day). Low usage (less than 3 hours/day) is only noted to be 7.3% indicating that the sample has a high tendency of using social media intensively. Platform usage is presented in Figure

1, where it is possible to observe that Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook occupy the leading position within the preferences of users. These media focus on pictorial materials and the ongoing engagement that can affect the behavioral patterns and well-being outcomes.

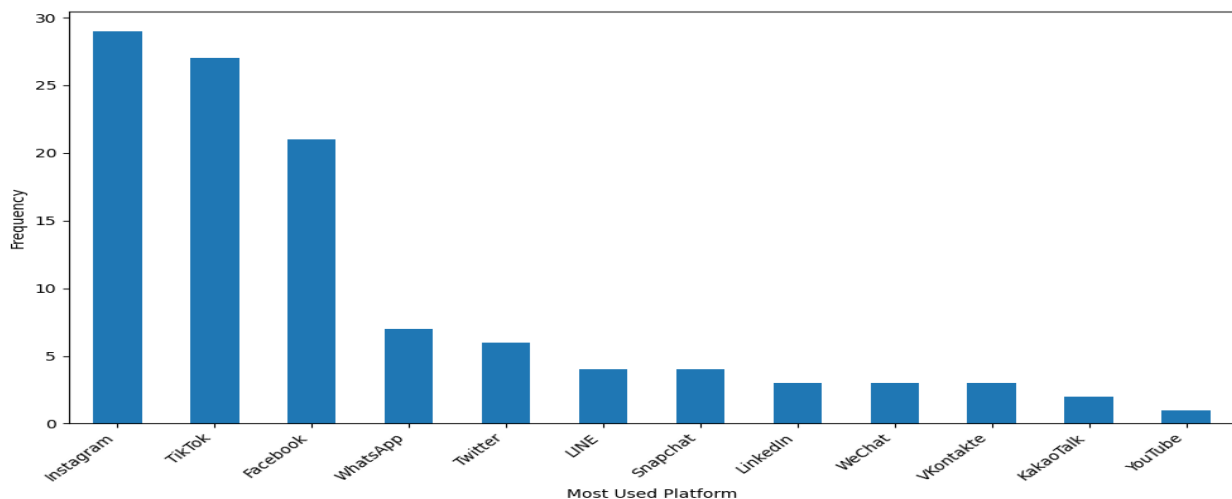


Figure 1. Platform Usage Distribution

3.3 Psychological Well-being Analysis

Analysis of the correlation showed that there exists a strong and statistically significant negative correlation between the average daily hours of use and mental health score ($r = -0.764$, $p < 0.001$),

meaning that the more time one spends on social media, the worse their psychological health is. In a similar fashion, addicted score was found to have a strong negative relationship with sleep hours per night ($r = -0.763$, $p < 0.001$), implying that addicted score is strongly associated with less sleep time

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Social Media Use and Well-being Variables

	Avg_Daily_Usage_Hours	Mental_Health_Score	Addicted_Score	Sleep_Hours_Per_Night	Conflicts_Over_Social_Media
Avg_Daily_Usage_Hours	1	-0.764	0.818	-0.807	0.784
Mental_Health_Score	-0.764	1	-0.946	0.725	-0.883
Addicted_Score	0.818	-0.946	1	-0.763	0.944

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Sleep_Hours_Per_Night	-0.807	0.725	-0.763	1	-0.689
Conflicts_Over_Social_Media	0.784	-0.883	0.944	-0.689	1

Moreover, the hours of daily usage were negatively correlated with the hours of sleep ($r = -0.807$) and positively correlated with social media conflicts ($r = 0.784$). The addicted score showed a very strong negative correlation with mental health score ($r = -0.946$) and strong positive correlation with conflicts over social media ($r = 0.944$) (Table 2). These results suggest that overuse as well as addiction is a serious contributor to psychological strain.

Figure 2 represents the visual representation of the relationship between the use of social media and mental health, indicating an evident downward trend in the number of hours of usage and mental health ratings.

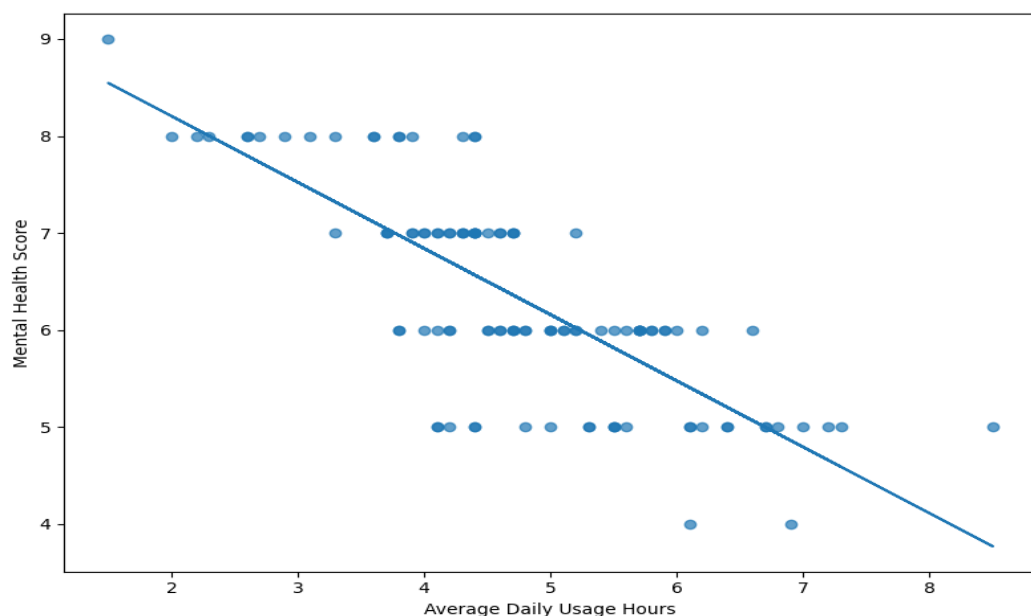


Figure 2. Average Daily Usage Hours and Mental Health Score

Moreover, social media addiction and sleep duration are also described by the correlation shown in Figure 3 that shows a negative tendency

to be consistent, which means that the more a person scores higher on the addiction scale, the fewer hours of sleep he or she has.

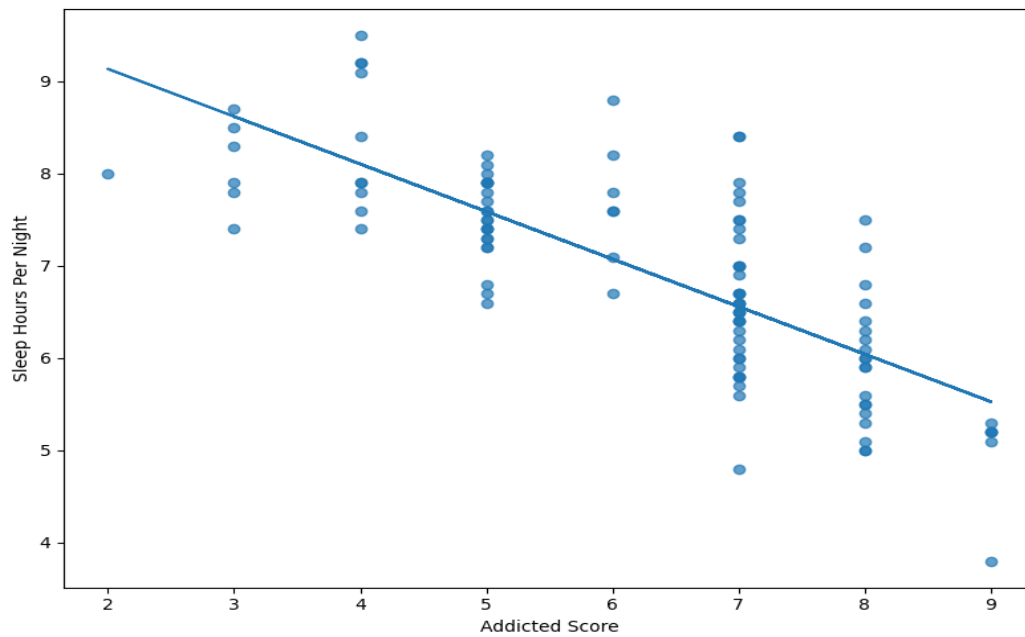


Figure 3. Addiction score vs sleep hours

3.4 Social Well-being Analysis

The review of the variables of social well-being showed that the tension connected with the use of social media was quite frequent. Respondents who identified no conflict in their lives were only 2.7 % of the total respondents and moderate conflict of 38.2% and high levels of conflict were 22.7 %. This implies that a significant percentage of young people have interpersonal problems related to the use of social media. Regarding the relationship status, 55.5% of the respondents were single, 39.1% were in a relationship, and 5.5% were in a

complicated relationship status. The more striking observation is that relationship status can add a context to the relationships, but the correlation between usage intensity and conflict is observed. The average conflict score rose steadily with usage types: 1.13 low user, 2.44 moderate user and 3.49 high user, which shows that the more people use social media, the more tension exists between them (Table 3). The social media conflict distribution is graphically represented in Figure 4 where the majority of respondents are in moderate to high conflict groups.

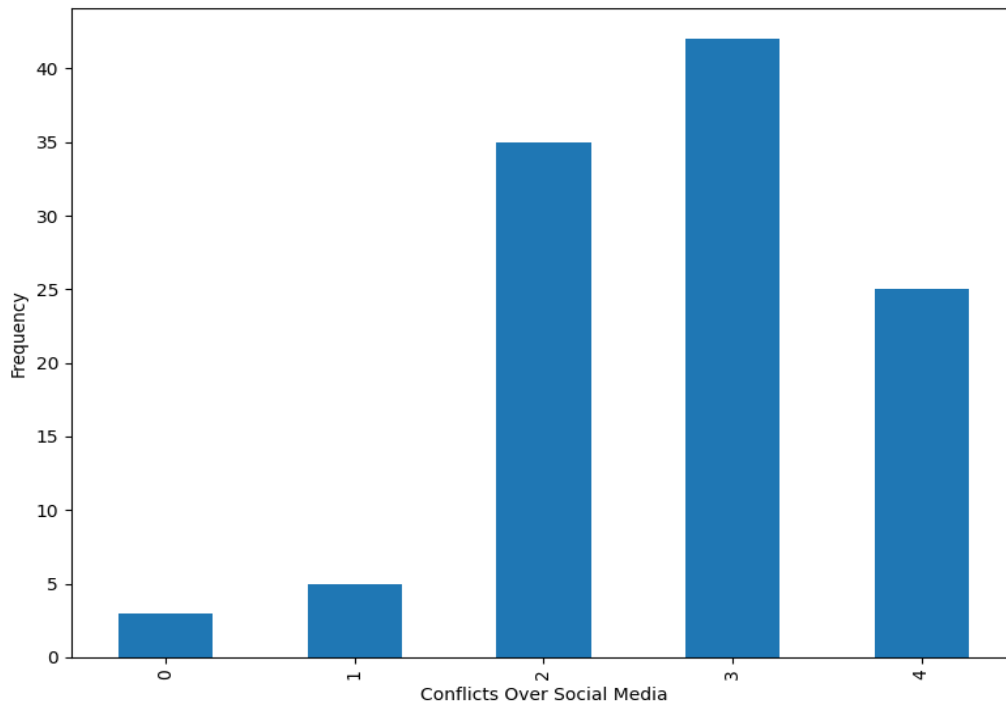


Figure 4. Conflict Distribution

3.5 Regression Analysis

To address predictive relations between social media use and psychological outcomes, two regression models were estimated to investigate predictive relationships. In Model 1, average daily usage hours significantly predicted mental health score ($\beta = -0.682$, $t = -12.31$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 58.4% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.584$). This means that the high use of social media is a powerful indicator

of low mental health. In Model 2, addicted score significantly predicted sleep hours per night ($\beta = -0.515$, $t = -12.26$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 58.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.582$). This implies that the extent of addiction is a major factor that leads to a decrease in the duration of sleep. Both models were statistically significant and attest the adverse effect of excessive use of social media on psychological well-being (Table 3).

Table 3. Regression Results

Model	Variable	B	SE	t	p	R_squared
Model 1	Intercept	9.57	0.272	35.136	< 0.001	0.584
Model 1	Avg_Daily_Usage_Hours	-0.682	0.055	-12.31	< 0.001	0.584
Model 2	Intercept	10.165	0.272	37.327	< 0.001	0.582
Model 2	Addicted_Score	-0.515	0.042	-12.261	< 0.001	0.582

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of Findings

The results obtained in this paper demonstrate a definite and stable connection between the use of social media and the psychological and social well-being of young people. In particular, the greater the daily use and the levels of addiction, the lower were mental health scores and the duration of sleep. These findings indicate that overindulgence in social media can be a cause of psychological stress, such as stress, emotional exhaustion, and low well-being. The first reason could be that the constant exposure to edited information on the internet may cause the appearance of negative social comparison and cognitive load, which eventually influence the mental state (Singh et al., 2026; Suhag & Rauniyar, 2024). The contribution of addiction behavior seems to be of special importance in this regard. The high correlation between the scores on addiction and mental health as well as sleep outcomes suggests that excessive use of social media can intensify adverse impacts on the psyche. The emotional regulation can be disrupted by such behavioural patterns as constant checking, fear of missing out (FOMO), and reliance on online validation, making people more vulnerable to mental distress (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2017; Cabezas-Klinger et al., 2025). Another critical pathway that was identified in this study is sleep disruption. The adverse correlation between addiction and the duration of sleep indicates that excessive screen time and particularly at late hours can disrupt circadian pattern and sleep quality. This is consistent with the evidence showing that nighttime social media consumption delays the onset of sleep and decreases the efficiency of sleep, which subsequently have a harmful effect on mental

health (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2019). Thereby, the interaction between high usage and addictive behavior results in a virtuous circle of poor sleep and worsening psychological health.

4.2 Comparison with Existing Literature

The study's findings are largely in line with the body of research that links excessive social media use to negative mental health outcomes. A number of studies have indicated such relationships between high use, symptoms of depression, and psychological distress in adolescents and young adults (Cabezas-Klinger et al., 2025; Vannucci et al., 2020). Moreover, the identified correlation between social media addiction and decreased sleep correlates with the existing studies indicating the negative impact of online activity on sleep patterns (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2019). The findings also reflect the studies that highlight the importance of problematic or addictive patterns of use as opposed to time spent online. To exemplify, Boer discovered that problematic social media use is a better predictor of well-being outcomes compared to the frequency of its general use (Boer et al., 2022). In a similar manner, Choi also pointed out that the character and design of online communication may affect perceived social capital and well-being, which indicates that qualitative features of use are also important (Choi et al., 2023). The results however differ with other studies that assert that social media's impact on mental health is comparatively minor or situational. To illustrate, time spent on social media was not one of the strongest factors that could influence the mental health of adolescents, as reported by (Panayiotou et al., 2023). This inconsistency can be explained by the variation in

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the method of measurement or the use of addiction-related variables in the current study, which can give a more sophisticated insight into the patterns of use.

4.3 Theoretical Implications

The results of this study give credence to key theoretical paradigms which explain the correlation between the use of social media and well-being. To begin with, the findings are consistent with behavioral addiction theory according to which the overuse of rewarding digital activities may result in dependence and adverse psychological consequences (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2017). The presence of a close correlation between the addiction scores and mental health indicators in the study supports the notion that social media may be used as an addictive behaviour, just like other digital dependency types. The second finding is consistent with social displacement theory that states that when an individual indulges himself/herself too much in online activities, it leads to not having enough time for others in real life, hence deteriorating their relationships and causing feelings of loneliness (Choi et al., 2023). The prediction regarding the increase in the frequency of conflicts and social tension among heavy users supports the opinion that excessive involvement of the heavy user may disturb relations between individuals rather than enhance them. Moreover, the results support the use of the emerging computing and data-oriented techniques for understanding the online behavior, which emphasize the need for integrating the degree of utilization, behavioral trends, and consequences of psychological motivation (Shazwani Kamarudin et al., 2025). These models emphasize the multi-

dimensional and complicated nature of the influence of social media on well-being.

4.4 Practical Implications

The results of this research have a number of significant practical implications for the stakeholders such as students, educators, parents, and policy makers. To begin with, awareness campaigns should be conducted where young people should be informed about the psychological dangers of overindulging and being addicted to social media usage. These programs would be able to facilitate healthier usage behavior and self-control. Second, the findings put forward the significance of digital detox methods, including reducing screen time, particularly at the time of bed, and encouraging offline experiences. Social media can be used to promote healthy consumption habits and ensure that the adverse impact of social media on sleep and mental health is reduced. Third, the role of parents and schools should be to monitor and control the use of social media by the youth. With the appropriate guidelines and conducive conditions, young people can be able to engage in healthier digital practices. Similarly to the recommendations provided at the policy level, the general effects of the use of social media on the well-being of young people should also be addressed in terms of the public health efforts (Murthy, 2023). On the whole, these practical interventions are necessary to minimise the risks of excessive use of social media and encourage a more balanced and healthy digital lifestyle among young people.

5. CONCLUSION

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Using a cross-sectional database, the current study examined the relationship between young people's psychological and social well-being and their usage of social media. The findings imply that social media use has a significant impact on well-being outcomes, particularly psychological health. Higher daily usage levels were linked to worse mental health scores, and a high degree of addiction was strongly correlated with a shorter sleep duration. These results show that the amount of time devoted to social networks, as well as the level of addiction, is a significant determinant of young people's well-being. Social effects were observed; however, they were evaluated on the basis of a few indicators. Despite making a contribution to knowledge, there are some limitations in terms of the research. The first limitation lies in the sample size that comprises 110 respondents. Furthermore, there are only several variables used for measuring social well-being, which may fail to reflect the complexities of social processes and relationships. The study is cross-sectional, and, therefore, it is impossible to prove the causation between the use of social media and well-being. Further research should consider these limitations, especially when increasing the sample size and using it for improving the validity of the research. It is proposed that longitudinal designs are utilized in order to understand causal relationships. In addition, further research is supposed to use more indicators that refer to well-being such as loneliness, social support, and anxiety/depression scales.

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