

The Impact of Social Media Fatigue on Mental Well-Being Among Young Adults

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Abstract

The widespread use of social media has transformed the way young adults communicate, access information, and maintain social relationships. However, excessive exposure to social networking platforms has also given rise to social media fatigue, a psychological state characterized by feelings of exhaustion, information overload, emotional depletion, and reduced motivation to engage with online content. The impact of social media fatigue on the mental well-being of young adults by exploring the relationship between prolonged social media use, emotional health, stress, anxiety, and overall psychological well-being. A quantitative research design is proposed, employing a structured questionnaire administered to young adults aged 18 to 30 years. The collected data may be analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression techniques to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between social media fatigue and mental well-being. The findings are expected to indicate that higher levels of social media fatigue are associated with increased psychological distress, lower life satisfaction, heightened anxiety, and reduced emotional resilience. Factors such as excessive screen time, fear of missing out (FOMO), constant social comparison, and information overload significantly contribute to social media fatigue.

Keywords: Social Media Fatigue, Mental Well-Being, Young Adults, Psychological Health, Anxiety

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the way individuals communicate, learn, and interact with society. Among these technological developments, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, TikTok, and LinkedIn have become an integral part of everyday life, particularly among young adults. These platforms provide opportunities for social interaction, entertainment, educational engagement, professional networking, and information sharing. The widespread availability of smartphones and affordable internet services has further accelerated social media adoption, making online communication an essential component of modern lifestyles. Young adulthood, generally defined as the period between 18 and 30 years of age, is characterized by significant academic, professional, and personal transitions. During this stage, individuals actively seek social connections, develop their identities, and establish career aspirations. Social media offers numerous benefits by enabling users to maintain relationships, participate in communities, access educational resources, and express themselves creatively. It has also become an important platform for entrepreneurship, activism, and knowledge dissemination. Despite these advantages, excessive engagement with social networking sites has raised concerns regarding its potential effects on psychological health. One emerging phenomenon associated with

intensive social media use is **social media fatigue**. Social media fatigue refers to a state of mental and emotional exhaustion resulting from continuous exposure to online content, excessive communication demands, information overload, and the pressure to remain constantly connected. Users experiencing social media fatigue often report feelings of stress, boredom, irritability, reduced motivation to interact online, and a desire to disengage from social networking platforms. Unlike general internet addiction, social media fatigue emphasizes psychological exhaustion caused by the overwhelming volume of digital interactions and the cognitive effort required to process large amounts of online information. Several factors contribute to the development of social media fatigue among young adults. The continuous flow of notifications, endless streams of information, frequent social comparisons, fear of missing out (FOMO), exposure to unrealistic lifestyle portrayals, online peer pressure, and cyberbullying can collectively increase emotional strain. Algorithm-driven content delivery encourages prolonged engagement, while the expectation of immediate responses to messages and updates creates additional psychological pressure. These experiences may gradually reduce users' emotional well-being and increase feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and stress. Mental well-being extends beyond the absence of mental illness and encompasses an individual's ability to cope with daily challenges, maintain positive relationships, experience emotional balance, and function effectively in personal, academic, and professional settings. Good mental well-being is associated with life satisfaction, self-esteem, resilience, and psychological stability. However, persistent exposure to stressful online environments may negatively influence these dimensions of well-being. Studies have suggested that excessive social media use is associated with increased levels of anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, reduced attention span, emotional exhaustion, and diminished overall life satisfaction, although the strength of these relationships varies depending on individual usage patterns and contextual factors. The relationship between social media fatigue and mental well-being has become increasingly relevant as digital platforms continue to dominate social interaction. Young adults represent one of the most active groups of social media users, making them particularly vulnerable to the psychological effects of prolonged online engagement. Understanding how social media fatigue influences emotional health can help identify individuals at risk and support the development of effective interventions. Educational institutions, families, healthcare professionals, and policymakers have an important role in promoting responsible digital behavior, improving digital literacy, and encouraging healthy technology use. Furthermore, the increasing integration of artificial intelligence into social media platforms has intensified user engagement through personalized content recommendations, targeted advertising, and automated notifications. While these technologies improve user experience, they may also encourage prolonged platform usage and contribute to digital overload. Therefore, examining the psychological consequences of continuous digital engagement has become essential for understanding contemporary mental health challenges. Against this background, the present study investigates the impact of social media fatigue on the mental well-being of young adults. Specifically, it seeks to examine how factors such as information overload, excessive screen time, social comparison, and fear of missing out contribute to psychological fatigue and influence emotional health. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on digital well-being while providing practical

recommendations for promoting healthier social media habits and supporting the mental well-being of young adults in an increasingly connected world.

Evolution of Social Media Usage Among Young Adults

The evolution of social media has significantly transformed communication patterns, social interactions, and information-sharing practices among young adults. From the emergence of early networking websites in the early 2000s to today's highly interactive and algorithm-driven platforms, social media has become an indispensable part of daily life. Initially, social networking sites were designed primarily to facilitate communication between friends and family through text-based interactions. Over time, technological advancements, widespread internet access, and the rapid adoption of smartphones have expanded the functionality of these platforms, enabling users to share multimedia content, participate in online communities, access educational resources, and engage in professional networking. The first generation of social media platforms, including MySpace and Orkut, introduced users to the concept of creating online profiles and maintaining virtual friendships. These platforms emphasized personal expression and community building but offered relatively limited interactive features. The launch of Facebook in 2004 marked a turning point in social networking by introducing a more structured and user-friendly platform that rapidly attracted millions of users worldwide. Subsequently, platforms such as Twitter (now X), Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, and YouTube diversified the social media landscape by offering unique forms of communication, including microblogging, photo sharing, short-form videos, professional networking, and live streaming. Young adults have consistently been the most active users of social media due to their high levels of digital literacy and familiarity with emerging technologies. Social media has become deeply integrated into their academic, professional, and personal lives. University students frequently use these platforms for collaborative learning, accessing educational materials, participating in online discussions, and staying informed about current events. Beyond educational purposes, social media provides opportunities for entertainment, creative expression, entrepreneurship, career development, and civic engagement. Many young adults use digital platforms to establish professional identities, promote businesses, develop personal brands, and connect with global audiences. The widespread adoption of smartphones and affordable mobile internet has further accelerated social media usage. Unlike earlier generations of internet users who primarily accessed social networking sites through desktop computers, young adults today remain continuously connected through mobile devices. This constant accessibility has transformed social media into an always-available environment where communication occurs in real time. Features such as instant messaging, live video streaming, personalized news feeds, and push notifications encourage frequent user engagement and increase the amount of time spent on digital platforms. Technological innovations have also reshaped the nature of social media interactions. Artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms personalize content by analyzing users' preferences, browsing behavior, and interaction history. While personalized recommendations enhance user experience by delivering relevant content, they also encourage prolonged engagement through endless scrolling, autoplay videos, and tailored advertisements. These design features increase user satisfaction but may simultaneously contribute to excessive platform use, information overload, and digital fatigue. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the reliance on social media among young adults. During periods of lockdown and social distancing, digital

platforms became essential for maintaining social connections, attending online classes, participating in virtual events, and accessing health-related information. Although social media helped reduce feelings of social isolation, increased screen time also raised concerns regarding mental health, sleep quality, emotional well-being, and digital dependence. Many young adults experienced greater exposure to misinformation, pandemic-related anxiety, and continuous online engagement, highlighting both the benefits and challenges associated with digital communication. In recent years, the purpose of social media has evolved beyond interpersonal communication. Influencer marketing, digital commerce, online activism, virtual communities, and creator economies have expanded the role of social networking platforms. Young adults increasingly use social media not only to communicate but also to generate income, build careers, seek employment opportunities, acquire new skills, and participate in social and political discussions. These developments demonstrate the growing economic and societal significance of social media in contemporary life.

Mental Well-Being: Concept and Dimensions

Mental well-being is a multidimensional concept that reflects an individual's ability to think clearly, manage emotions, maintain satisfying relationships, cope with everyday challenges, and contribute meaningfully to society. It extends beyond the absence of mental illness and encompasses positive psychological functioning, emotional balance, and social adjustment. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental well-being enables individuals to realize their abilities, handle normal life stresses, work productively, and participate actively in their communities. Consequently, mental well-being is recognized as a fundamental component of overall health and quality of life.

In recent decades, researchers have increasingly emphasized a positive approach to mental health by focusing on strengths, resilience, and life satisfaction rather than merely preventing psychological disorders. This perspective aligns with the principles of positive psychology, which highlights the importance of cultivating positive emotions, personal strengths, meaningful relationships, and a sense of purpose. Individuals with high levels of mental well-being are generally more optimistic, emotionally stable, adaptable, and capable of maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships despite experiencing life's inevitable challenges.

Mental well-being is influenced by numerous biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors. Biological factors include genetic predisposition, physical health, sleep quality, and neurological functioning. Psychological factors encompass self-esteem, emotional regulation, resilience, coping strategies, and personality traits. Social influences such as family support, friendships, educational experiences, workplace environments, and community engagement also play critical roles in shaping psychological health. In addition, environmental factors, including economic stability, cultural expectations, technological exposure, and access to healthcare services, significantly affect an individual's overall well-being.

Among young adults, mental well-being is particularly important because this stage of life involves numerous developmental transitions. Individuals often face academic pressures, career uncertainty, financial responsibilities, changing social relationships, and identity formation. Successfully navigating these transitions requires emotional resilience, effective stress management, and strong social support systems. However, increasing digital engagement, particularly through social media platforms, has introduced additional psychological demands that may influence mental well-being both positively and negatively.

Mental well-being consists of several interconnected dimensions that collectively determine an individual's psychological functioning. One of the primary dimensions is **emotional well-being**, which refers to the ability to experience positive emotions, regulate negative feelings, and maintain emotional stability. Individuals with strong emotional well-being can effectively manage stress, recover from setbacks, and maintain optimism during difficult situations. Emotional balance is essential for reducing anxiety, depression, and psychological distress.

A second important dimension is **psychological well-being**, which emphasizes personal growth, self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, and having a clear sense of purpose in life. Psychologically healthy individuals demonstrate confidence in their abilities, make independent decisions, pursue meaningful goals, and continuously develop their personal potential. They are better equipped to cope with adversity and adapt to changing circumstances. **Social well-being** represents another critical dimension of mental health. It refers to the quality of interpersonal relationships, social connectedness, community participation, and the ability to establish supportive social networks. Healthy social relationships provide emotional support, foster a sense of belonging, and contribute significantly to life satisfaction. Conversely, loneliness, social isolation, and poor interpersonal relationships are associated with increased psychological distress and reduced mental well-being.

Cognitive well-being is also increasingly recognized as an essential component of mental health. It involves effective thinking, concentration, decision-making, memory, and problem-solving abilities. Individuals with good cognitive well-being can process information efficiently, remain focused on tasks, and make sound judgments. However, continuous exposure to digital information, multitasking, and excessive social media use may contribute to cognitive overload, reduced attention span, and mental fatigue.

Another important aspect is **behavioral well-being**, which reflects healthy lifestyle practices that support psychological health. Regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, effective time management, and healthy digital habits all contribute to maintaining mental well-being. Conversely, excessive screen time, irregular sleep patterns, sedentary behavior, and unhealthy coping mechanisms may negatively affect both physical and psychological health.

Mental well-being is dynamic rather than static, meaning it changes over time in response to life experiences, environmental conditions, and individual coping abilities. Positive life events, supportive relationships, and effective stress management strategies can enhance psychological well-being, whereas chronic stress, traumatic experiences, academic pressure, financial difficulties, and excessive digital engagement may reduce it. Therefore, maintaining mental well-being requires continuous adaptation and the development of healthy coping mechanisms.

Conclusion

Social media has become an integral part of the lives of young adults, offering numerous opportunities for communication, learning, entertainment, and professional development. While these platforms provide significant social and educational benefits, their excessive and continuous use has also contributed to the growing phenomenon of social media fatigue. Information overload, constant connectivity, fear of missing out (FOMO), social comparison, and the pressure to maintain an online presence can result in emotional exhaustion and psychological stress, ultimately affecting an individual's mental well-being.

This paper highlights that mental well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, psychological, social, cognitive, and behavioral health. The increasing dependence

on social media has the potential to influence each of these dimensions, both positively and negatively. Moderate and purposeful use of social networking platforms can strengthen social relationships and facilitate access to valuable information. However, prolonged and uncontrolled use may increase anxiety, stress, loneliness, sleep disturbances, reduced self-esteem, and diminished life satisfaction, particularly among young adults who are highly engaged with digital technologies.

The study emphasizes the importance of promoting healthy digital habits and responsible social media use. Educational institutions, families, mental health professionals, and policymakers should work collaboratively to enhance digital literacy, encourage balanced screen time, and raise awareness about the psychological effects of excessive social media engagement. Social media companies also have a responsibility to design user-centered platforms that support digital well-being through features such as screen-time monitoring, notification management, and tools that encourage mindful online behavior.

Future research should investigate the long-term psychological effects of social media fatigue across different age groups, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Studies may also explore the influence of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence-driven recommendation systems, virtual reality, and immersive social platforms, on users' mental health. Longitudinal and cross-cultural research would provide deeper insights into how digital behaviors evolve over time and help develop evidence-based interventions that promote healthier technology use. maintaining mental well-being in the digital age requires a balanced approach to social media engagement. By fostering self-awareness, emotional resilience, and responsible online behavior, young adults can maximize the benefits of social media while minimizing its adverse psychological effects. Promoting digital well-being is therefore essential for supporting healthier individuals and building a more resilient and mentally healthy society.

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