A Comprehensive Exploration of Students Perception of Social Media Addiction of Being Gen Z Incipient Delinquency

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to provide a thorough analysis of students' perspectives on social media addiction as an emerging problem for the new generation. With the proliferation of social media platforms and their increasing integration into daily life, concerns have arisen about the potential addictive nature of these platforms and their impact on students' well-being. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gain a holistic understanding of the issue. Data will be collected from a diverse sample of students across various educational institutions, and the findings will be used to identify key factors contributing to social media addiction and its implications on academic performance, mental health, and social relationships. The study will shed light on potential interventions and coping strategies to address this emerging problem effectively.

INTRODUCTION

The new generation, often referred to as Generation Z or Gen Z, comprises individuals born roughly between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. This generation has grown up in a digital age, surrounded by technology and the internet, making them the first true digital natives. Social media has played a significant role in shaping the lives of these young individuals, profoundly influencing how they communicate, socialize, and interact with the world around them. social media has transformed how the new generation communicates, shares information, and navigatestheir social relationships. Understanding their relationship with social media is crucial for educators, parents, and policymakers to address both the positive and negative impacts of social media on this tech-savvy generation.

Aspects of the background of social media usage among the new generation:

1. Proliferation of Social Media Platforms: The new generation has witnessed the rapid proliferation of social media platforms over the years. From early platforms like MySpace and Friendster to the dominance of Facebook and the rise of newer platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter, social media has become an integral part of their daily lives.

2. Mobile Connectivity: The widespread adoption of smartphones has made social media easily accessible to the new generation. They can connect to social media platforms anytime and anywhere, allowing for constant connectivity and communication with peers.

3. Communication and Socialization: Social media platforms have become primary channels for

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communication and socialization among the new generation. They use these platforms to stay in touch with friends and family, share experiences, and express themselves creatively.

4. Personal Branding and Identity: Social media has become a platform for self-expression and personal branding. Gen Z users curate their online identities, carefully selecting what they share to present a specific image of themselves to their peers and the public.

5. Content Creation: Gen Z is not only consumers of social media content but also active creators. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have empowered them to express their creativity and showcase their talents to a global audience.

6. Influence on Culture and Trends: Social media has had a significant impact on shaping cultural norms, fashion trends, and social issues. Memes, challenges, and viral content spread rapidly, influencing the collective consciousness of the new generation.

7. Mental Health and Well-being: While social media offers many benefits, it has also been linked to potential negative effects on mental health. The constant exposure to curated images and the pressure to maintain an ideal online image can contribute to anxiety, stress, and low self- esteem among some users.

8. Privacy and Security Concerns: With the widespread use of social media, there are concerns about privacy and data security. Gen Z users need to be aware of the potential risks associated with sharing personal information online.

9. Online Activism and Advocacy: Social media has provided a platform for Gen Z to engage in social and political issues actively. They use these platforms to advocate for causes they believe in and mobilize support for various movements.

Growing concerns about social media addiction

Growing concerns about social media addiction have arisen due to the increasing prevalence of social media use and its potential impact on individuals' well-being. Here are some key reasons why social media addiction has become a matter of concern:

1. Excessive Usage: Social media platforms are designed to be engaging and addictive, leading users to spend significant amounts of time scrolling through feeds, watching videos, and interacting with content. Excessive usage can lead to a loss of productivity and neglect of real- life responsibilities.

2. Impact on Mental Health: Studies have shown that excessive social media use can be linked tonegative effects on mental health, such as increased feelings of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem. Constant comparison to others and the pressure to maintain a certain online image can contribute to these issues.

3. Sleep Disturbances: Late-night social media usage, especially in bed, can disrupt sleep patterns and lead to sleep deprivation. The blue light emitted by screens can interfere with the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep.

4. Social Isolation: Paradoxically, heavy social media use can lead to social isolation and reducedface-to-face interactions. Excessive reliance on online interactions can replace meaningful real- life connections, leading to feelings of loneliness and disconnection.

5. Cyberbullying and Online Harassment: Social media platforms can become breeding grounds for cyberbullying and online harassment. Users, particularly young people, may become targets of offensive or hurtful content, leading to emotional distress and negative effects on mental health.

6. FOMO (Fear of Missing Out): Social media platforms often portray idealized and curated versions of people's lives, leading to the fear of missing out on exciting experiences or events. This can contribute to anxiety and dissatisfaction with one's own life.

7. Impact on Academic Performance: Excessive social media use can lead to a decline inacademic performance, as students may prioritize online activities over studying or completing assignments.

8. Impulsive Behaviors: Social media addiction can lead to impulsive behaviors, such as constantly checking notifications or responding to messages during inappropriate times (e.g., during classes or important meetings).

9. Difficulty Disconnecting: Social media addiction can make it challenging for individuals to disconnect from their devices and take breaks from the digital world, leading to a constant need for validation and connection.

10. Physical Health Concerns: Extended screen time from social media usage can contribute to physical health issues, such as eyestrain, neck pain, and sedentary lifestyles.

Given the potential negative impacts on mental and physical health, relationships, and academic performance, it is essential for individuals to be aware of their social media usage habits and to adopt healthy strategies for managing their online presence. Additionally, raising awareness and providing support for those struggling with social media addiction is crucial in addressing this growing concern.

Psychological factors contributing to social media addiction

Social media addiction can be influenced by various psychological factors that make individuals more susceptible to excessive and compulsive use of social media platforms. Here are some key psychological factors that contribute to social media addiction:

1. Reward System Activation: Social media platforms are designed to trigger the brain's reward system through likes, comments, shares, and notifications. The release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward, reinforces the behavior, leading to a cycle of seeking validation and positive feedback.

2. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO): FOMO refers to the anxiety or fear of missing out on exciting events or experiences that others share on social media. Individuals with higher FOMO may engage in constant checking and scrolling to stay connected, leading to addictive behavior.

3. Self-Presentation and Social Comparison: Social media provides a platform for self- presentation, where individuals curate their online personas. The desire to portray an idealized version of themselves or to compare their lives with others can lead to excessive social mediause.

4. Escape and Coping Mechanism: Social media can serve as an escape from real-life stressors and negative emotions. For some individuals, using social media excessively becomes a coping mechanism to deal with

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anxiety, loneliness, or boredom.

5. Fear of Social Rejection: Social media addiction can be fueled by a fear of social rejection or exclusion. The need to belong and fit in with peers can drive individuals to maintain a constant online presence.

6. Impulsivity: Individuals with higher levels of impulsivity may be more prone to social media addiction. The instant gratification and easy access to social media content cater to impulsive behaviors.

7. Self-Esteem and Identity: For some individuals, social media serves as a platform to enhance self-esteem and construct their identity. The validation received through likes and comments can become addictive and reinforce their sense of self-worth.

8. Loneliness and Social Isolation: Social media can act as a substitute for face-to-face interactions, especially for individuals experiencing loneliness or social isolation. The perceived social connection offered by social media can become addictive.

9. Social Approval and Peer Influence: The desire for social approval and the influence of peer groups can drive excessive social media use. The fear of missing out on conversations or events can push individuals to stay continuously engaged on social media platforms.

10. Neuroticism and Emotional Regulation: Individuals with higher levels of neuroticism may bemore prone to social media addiction as a way to regulate emotions and seek distraction from negative feelings.

It's important to note that social media addiction is a complex issue influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and environmental factors. Not everyone who uses social media extensively develops an addiction, but certain psychological vulnerabilities can increase the likelihood of problematic usage patterns. Addressing social media addiction requires a multi- faceted approach, including individual awareness, education, digital literacy, and support systems to promote responsible and balanced social media use.

Existing interventions and coping strategies

Addressing social media addiction requires a multi-faceted approach that includes interventions and coping strategies to promote responsible and balanced social media use. We have found some existing interventions and coping strategies that individuals, parents, educators, and policymakers can consider:

1. Digital Detox and Time Management: Encourage periodic digital detoxes where individuals take breaks from social media for a specified period. Use time management techniques, such as setting specific time limits for social media use, to prevent excessive usage.

2. Mindfulness and Self-Awareness: Practice mindfulness to become more aware of one's social media habits and their impact on well-being. Develop self-awareness about triggers and emotions associated with social media use.

3. Digital Literacy Education: Incorporate digital literacy education into school curricula to teachstudents about responsible social media use, privacy settings, and critical thinking regarding online content.

4. Strengthening Real-Life Relationships: Encourage face-to-face interactions and engagement inactivities that

promote meaningful social connections. Prioritize spending time with friends and family in person rather than solely relying on virtual interactions.

5. Setting Boundaries: Establish personal boundaries for social media use, such as not using social media during meals, study sessions, or before bedtime.

6. Unplugging Before Bed: Avoid using social media or screens at least an hour before bedtime to improve sleep quality.

7. Digital Well-being Tools: Use digital well-being tools and features available on social media platforms to set time limits and receive notifications about excessive usage.

8. Parental Guidance and Support: Parents can set rules and limits on their children's socialmedia usage, monitor their activities, and engage in open discussions about responsible digital habits.

9. Peer Support and Community Involvement: Encourage peer support and communityinvolvement to reduce reliance on social media as the primary source of social validation.

10. Seeking Professional Help: Individuals experiencing severe social media addiction and itsnegative impacts on mental health should seek professional help from therapists or counselors.

11. Engaging in Offline Activities:Encourage participation in offline hobbies, sports, or creativeactivities to reduce screen time and foster a sense of fulfillment outside of social media.

12. Positive Role Models: Promote positive role models who use social media responsibly andauthentically to inspire others to do the same.

13. Using Productivity Tools: Utilize productivity apps or time management tools to stay focusedand minimize distractions during study or work hours.

These interventions and coping strategies are not exhaustive, and the effectiveness may vary for different individuals. Combining multiple approaches and customizing interventions based on individual needs and circumstances can lead to more successful outcomes in addressing social media addiction and promoting digital well-being. Additionally, raising awareness about the potential negative impacts of excessive social media use and fostering a culture of responsible digital habits can contribute to a healthier online environment for everyone.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Mixed-methods approach: A mixed-methods research design combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. This approach allows researchers to complement and triangulate findingsfrom different data sources, providing a deeper and more well-rounded insight into the phenomenon under study. When applying a mixed-methods approach to studying social media addiction among students, researchers would use both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather data and conduct analysis. Here's how the research design could be structured:

1. Quantitative Phase:

Objective: The quantitative phase aims to collect numerical data to quantify the prevalence and extent of social media addiction among students.

Data Collection: Researchers developed a structured questionnaire or survey based on existing Social Media Addiction Scales (e.g., SMAS, Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale) and other relevant measures.

Sample Selection: A diverse sample of students from different educational institutions were randomly or purposively selected to participate in the survey.

Data Collection Method: Surveys were administered either online or in-person, depending on thepreferences of the participants.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages, were used to analyze quantitative survey responses. Inferential statistics may be employed to identify relationships between social media addiction and other variables of interest, such asdemographics or mental health indicators.

The comprehensive analysis will provide valuable insights into the perspectives of students regarding social media addiction, contributing to a better understanding of this emerging problem. The findings will aid in developing targeted interventions and promoting healthy social media usage among the new generation. This research article comprises a general survey in strong support to prove the above points, these survey is based on 300 college going studentswho frequently used social media.
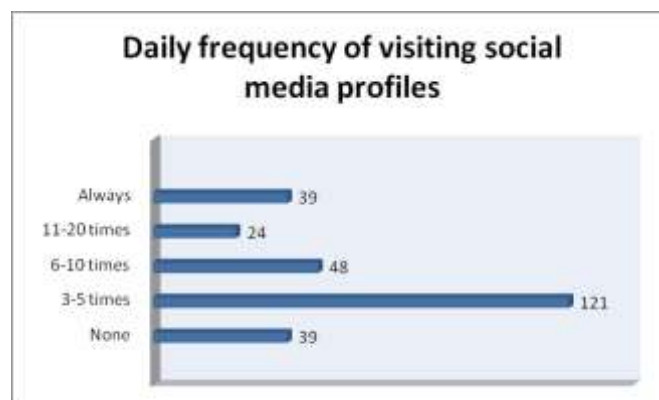
Table 1. Properties of the Target Group

Gender		
Female	162	59.8
Male	109	40.2
Total	271	100
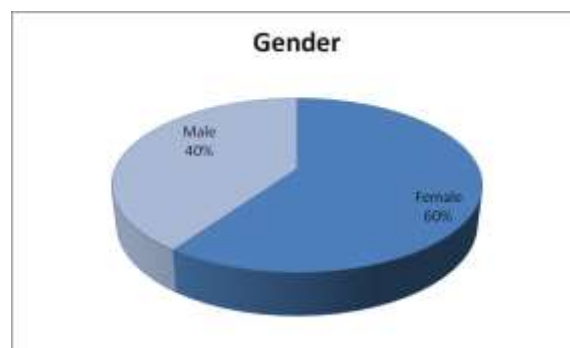
Age		
13	2	0.7
14	36	13.3
15	57	21
16	61	22.5
17	69	25.5
18	42	15.5
19	4	1.5
Total	271	100
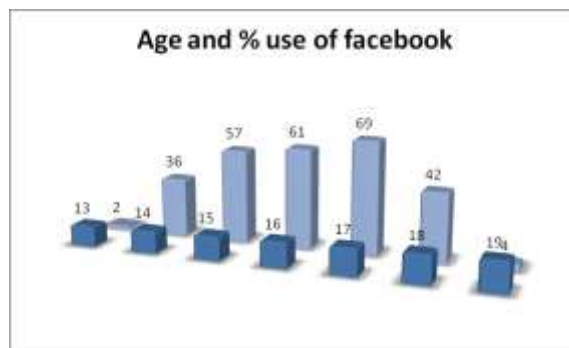
Daily frequency of visiting social media profiles		
None	39	14.4
3-5 times	121	44.6
6-10 times	48	17.7
11-20 times	24	8.9
Always	39	14.4
Total	271	100

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Daily time spent on the Internet		
None	26	9.6
Less than 1 hour	86	31.7
1-3 hours	124	45.8
4-6 hours	26	9.6
7 hours and more	9	3.3
Total	271	100

Daily time spent on the Internet
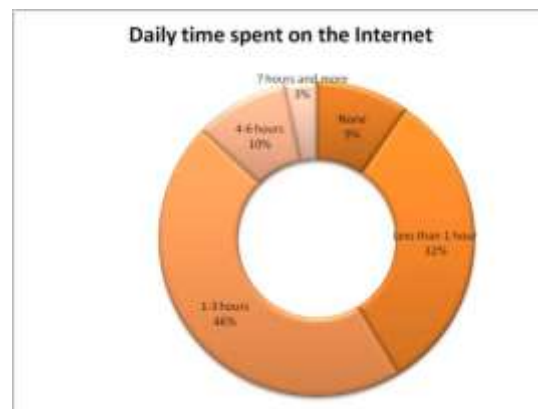
As it can be observed from Table 1, 162 (59.8%) of the participants who filled out the questionnaire are female, while 109 (40.2%) are male participants. Age distribution is as follows:there are 2 participants in age 13, 36 in age 14, 57 in age 15, 61 in age 16, 69 in age 17, 42 in age18, and 4 in age 19. 26 (9.6%) of the participants state that they spend no time on the Internet ina day, while 86 (31.7%) of them spend less than one hour, 124 (45.8%) spend 1-3 hours, 26 (9.6%) spend 4-6 hours, and 9 (3.3%) of them spend 7 and more hours on the Internet on a daily basis. 39 (14.4%) of the participants say that they spend no time visiting social media profiles, while 121 (44.6%) of them visit 3-5 times, 48 (17.7%) visit 6-10 times, 24 (8.9%) visit 11-20 times, and 39 (14.4%) of the participants visit always in a day.

2. Qualitative Phase:

- Objective: The qualitative phase aims to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and the underlying reasons behind social media addiction in-depth.
- Data Collection: Researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants from the survey sample.
- Sample Selection: Participants for qualitative interviews were selected based on specific characteristics, such as high scores on the social media addiction scale or diverse perspectives.
- Data Collection Method: One-on-one or focus group interviews were conducted, allowing participants to share their narratives and insights freely.
- Data Analysis: Thematic analysis or content analysis were used to identify recurring themes and patterns in the interview data. Qualitative findings will be used to enrich and provide context for the quantitative data.

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Construction of the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS): to construct a strong SMAS we selected 25 questions which allowed the students mental health, social health, hedonic perspective, aesthetic perspective. The analysis has been done on 100 students.

Table 6. Social Media Addiction Scale

| Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
How often do you find yourself spending more time on social media platforms than you initially intended?	32	9	22	101	106
Do you feel restless or irritable when you are unable to access social media for an extended period?	33	22	43	108	65
To what extent has social media use negatively impacted your academic or work performance?	38	26	65	84	57
How frequently do you experience the urge to check your social media accounts, even in inappropriate or inconvenient situations?	35	23	57	75	78
Have you unsuccessfully attempted to cut down on your social media usage in the past?	84	55	49	42	40
How often do you prioritize social media activities over spending time with family and friends?	42	37	49	71	72
Have you ever concealed the amount of time you spend on social media from those around you?	51	34	44	71	70
How much do you agree with the statement, "I feel anxious when I haven't checked my social media accounts for a while"?	57	40	48	60	65
Have you experienced distress or mood swings due to negative feedback or interactions on social media?	28	22	50	78	91
To what extent do you feel your self-esteem is influenced by the number of likes, comments, or shares your social media posts receive?	34	28	48	87	71
How often do you use social media to escape from negative emotions or problems in your life?	53	43	60	64	49

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Do you find yourself constantly thinking about or planning what you will post on social media next?	48	40	73	70	38
How often do you neglect important responsibilities or tasks because of social media use?	71	40	82	47	30
Have you ever experienced conflict with others due to your social media habits?	103	56	48	32	31
To what extent do you feel in control of your social media use, rather than feeling compelled to use it?	65	59	65	47	32
Do you use social media while driving, at work, or during other situations that require your full attention?	26	43	80	65	49
Have you tried to cut back on social media but found yourself quickly returning to previous usage levels?	47	51	80	54	36
How often do you experience fear of missing out (FOMO) if you don't check social media regularly?	45	36	86	69	30
Do you neglect other important activities (e.g., work, study, social interactions) to spend more time on social media?	66	49	67	58	28
How often do you use social media to escape from negative feelings or emotions?	62	31	41	67	65
Have you experienced conflicts or disagreements with others due to your excessive social media use?	57	34	45	79	54
Do you feel a strong need to constantly check notifications and updates on social media?	68	43	60	50	47
How often do you check social media first thing in the morning or right before going to bed?	15	32	52	85	85
How often do you experience mood swings or irritability when you are unable to use social media?	36	26	59	93	56
Have your relationships with family or friends been negatively affected by your excessive social media use?	50	27	52	61	81

3. Integration of Findings:
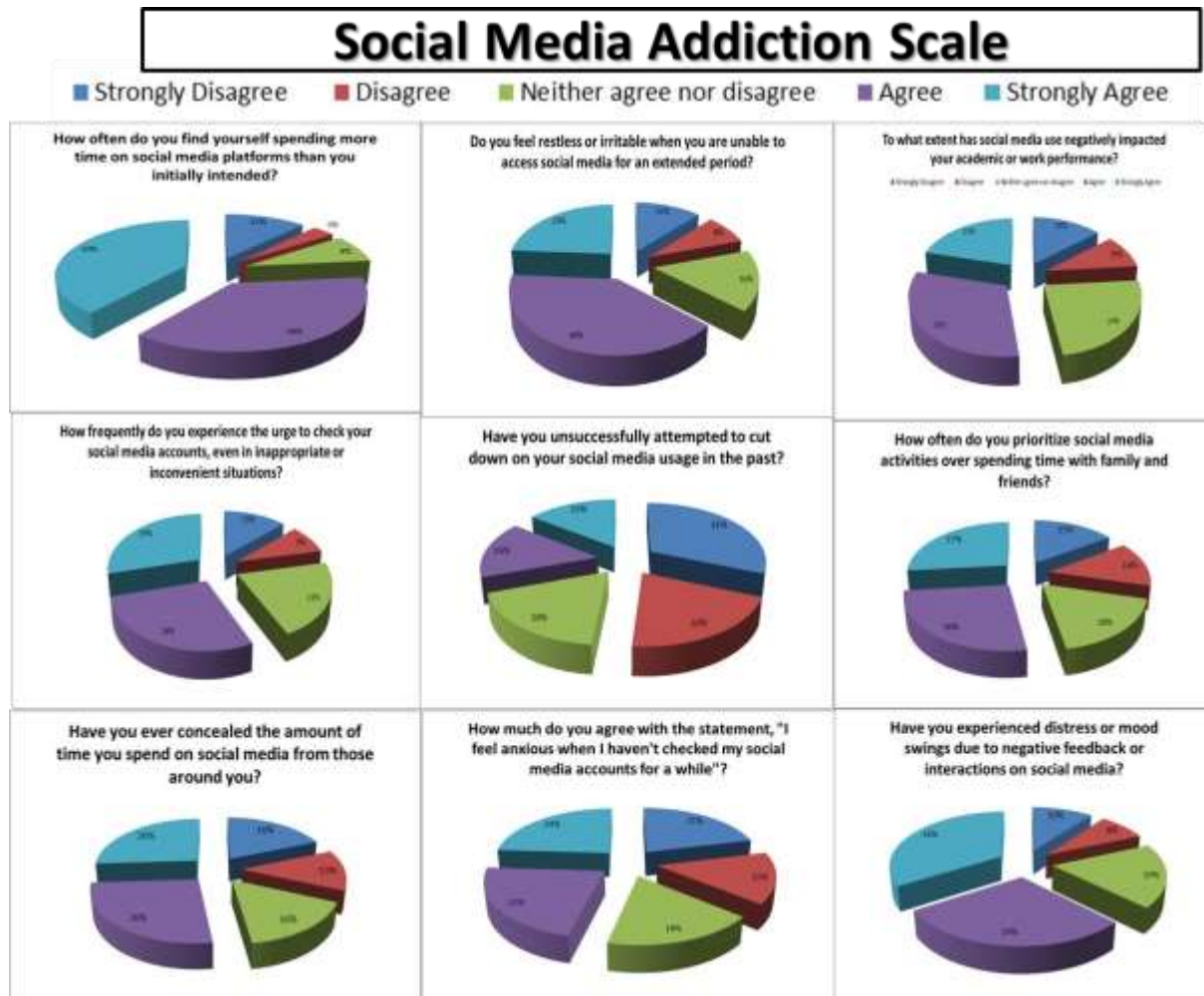
Social Media Addiction Scale
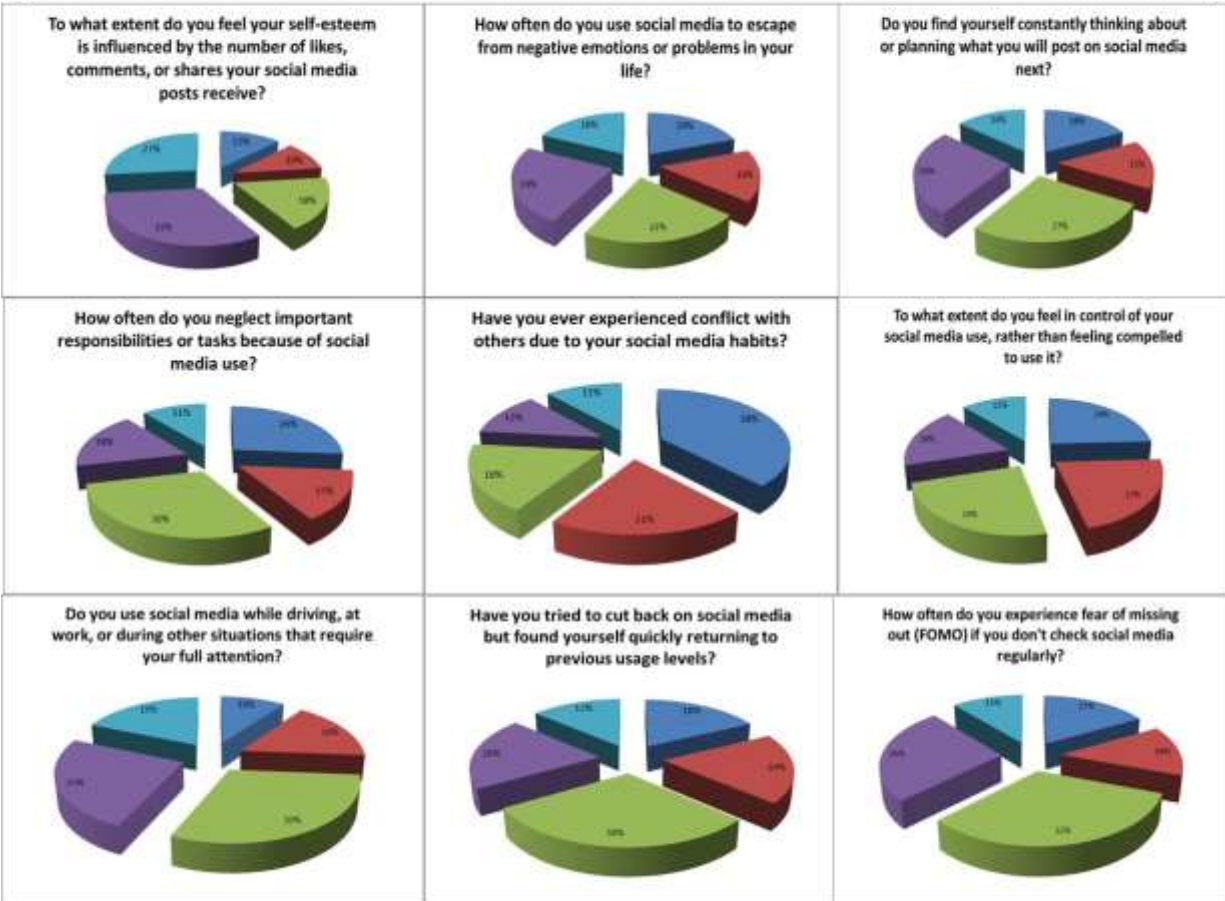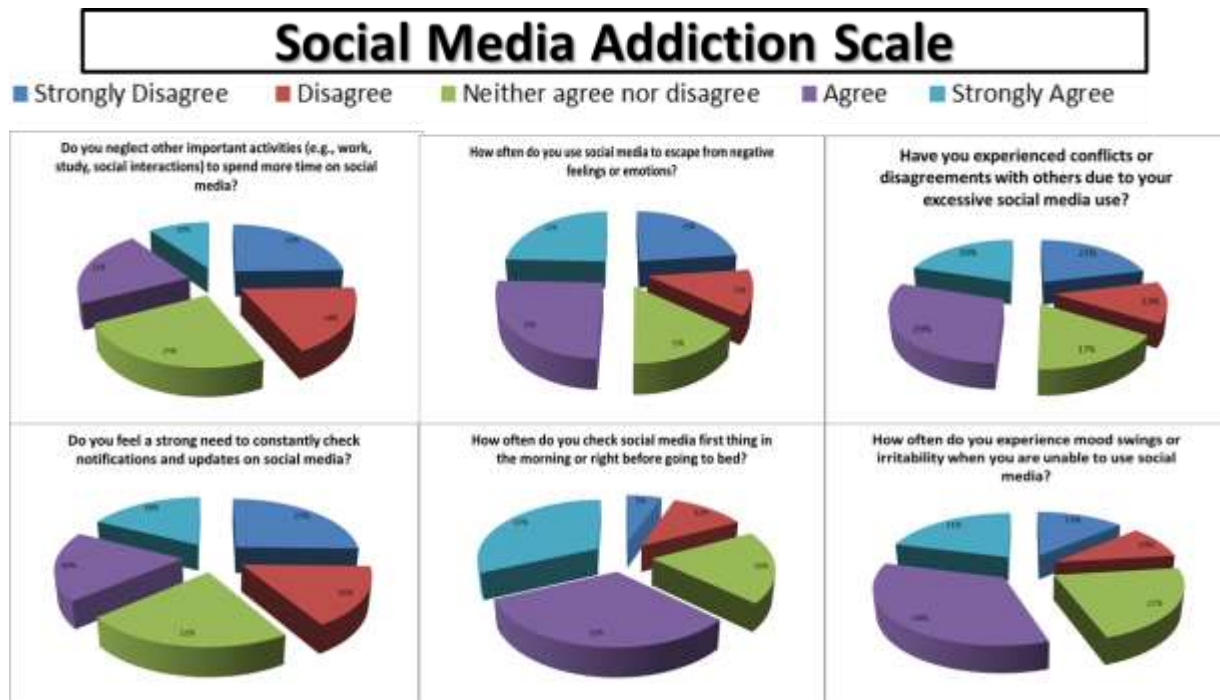
Implications for educators, parents, and policymakers

Social media addiction in students has significant implications for educators, parents, and policymakers. Addressing this issue requires a collaborative effort and the implementation of targeted strategies to promote responsible social media use and protect students' well-being. Hereare some key implications for each group:

1. Educators:

- Digital Literacy Education: Incorporate digital literacy education into the curriculum to teach students about responsible social media use, online privacy, critical thinking, and digital citizenship.

- Awareness and Education: Raise awareness among students about the potential negative impacts of excessive social media use on academic performance and mental health.

- Promote Healthy Habits: Encourage students to take breaks from screens and engage in offline activities to promote a balanced lifestyle.

- Create Safe Online Environments: Foster a positive online environment in schools and ensure that students feel safe from cyberbullying and harassment.

2. Parents and Guardians:

- Model Responsible Behavior: Set a positive example by demonstrating responsible socialmedia use and limiting screen time in front of children.

- Open Communication: Encourage open and non-judgmental communication with children about their online experiences, challenges, and feelings related to social media.

- Establish Boundaries: Set age-appropriate rules and boundaries on social media use, screen time, and

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devices, taking into account the child's maturity and developmental stage.

- Monitor Online Activities: Monitor children's online activities and ensure they are engaging with age-appropriate content and social interactions.

- Support for Offline Activities: Encourage participation in extracurricular activities and hobbies to promote a well-rounded lifestyle beyond social media.

3. Policymakers:

- Regulations and Guidelines: Develop and implement regulations or guidelines to protectchildren and adolescents from harmful content and practices on social media platforms.

- Digital Well-being Initiatives: Allocate resources for digital well-being initiatives, promoting responsible social media use and raising awareness about potential risks.

- School Partnerships: Collaborate with educational institutions to incorporate digitalliteracy education into school curricula and support students' well-being.

- Research and Data Collection: Invest in research on social media addiction amongstudents to better understand its prevalence, impacts, and effective interventions.

4. Mental Health Professionals:

- Screening and Intervention: Develop and implement screening tools to identify studentsat risk of social media addiction and provide appropriate interventions and support.

- Counseling and Support Services: Offer counseling and support services to studentsexperiencing mental health issues related to social media addiction.

5. Community and Social Media Platforms:

- Promote Digital Well-being Features: Encourage social media platforms to incorporate features that promote digital well-being, such as usage tracking, notifications aboutexcessive use, and tools for managing screen time.

- Online Community Support: Create online communities and resources that offer support for individuals struggling with social media addiction, fostering a sense of belonging and understanding.

By working together and taking a proactive approach, educators, parents, policymakers, mental health professionals, and social media platforms can create a safer and healthier online environment for students. This collective effort can help mitigate the negative impacts of social media addiction and foster responsible digital habits among the new generation.

Recommendations for addressing social media addiction among students

Addressing social media addiction among students requires a comprehensive approach thatinvolves various stakeholders, including educators, parents, policymakers, and mental health professionals. Here are some recommendations to tackle social media addiction among students effectively:

1. Digital Literacy Education:

- Integrate digital literacy education into school curricula to teach students about responsible social media use, privacy, critical thinking, and online safety.

- Provide workshops and seminars for students, parents, and educators on the impact of social media on mental health and well-being.

2. Set Age-Appropriate Limits:

- Parents should set age-appropriate limits on social media use for their children, taking into account developmental stages and maturity levels.

- Encourage younger children to engage in more face-to-face play and offline activities to foster healthy social interactions.

3. Promote Offline Activities:

- Encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities, sports, arts, and hobbies tobalance their time spent on social media with real-life experiences.

- Emphasize the importance of physical activity and spending time outdoors to promote overall well-being.

4. Digital Detox and Screen-Free Zones:

- Encourage regular digital detoxes, where students take breaks from social media for a specific period.

- Establish screen-free zones in schools, homes, and bedrooms to reduce the temptation of constant social media checking.

5. Parental Involvement and Communication:

- Encourage parents to be actively involved in their children's online activities and communicate openly about social media use and experiences.

- Promote positive and non-judgmental discussions about the potential risks and benefits of social media.

6. Peer Support and Positive Role Models:

- Create peer support groups where students can discuss their challenges related to social media and provide encouragement to adopt healthier online habits.

- Promote positive role models who use social media responsibly and authentically.

7. Social Media Well-being Features:

- Encourage social media platforms to incorporate well-being features, such as usage tracking, notifications about excessive use, and tools for managing screen time.

- Support the development of tools that promote meaningful interactions and reduce addictive design elements.

8. Mental Health Support:

- Schools and institutions should offer counseling services and support systems to help students struggling with social media addiction and related mental health issues.

- Raise awareness about available mental health resources and encourage students to seek help when needed.

9. Positive Reinforcement:

- Recognize and reward students who exhibit responsible social media behavior and prioritize offline interactions.

- Highlight the benefits of using social media for educational and positive purposes.

10. Collaborative Efforts:

- Foster collaboration between schools, parents, mental health professionals, and policymakers to create a cohesive approach to tackle social media addiction.

- Involve social media platforms in discussions about promoting responsible use and well-being.

By implementing these recommendations, educators, parents, policymakers, and other stakeholders can collectively work towards mitigating social media addiction among students and fostering a healthier digital environment for the new generation. The key is to strike a balance between the benefits of social media and its potential negative impact, guiding students to develop responsible and mindful online habits.

Summary of key findings

1. Prevalence: Social media addiction is a growing concern among students, particularly adolescents and young adults. Studies have shown that a significant proportion of students exhibit signs of addictive behaviors related to social media use.

2. Negative Impact on Academic Performance: Excessive social media use has been associated with decreased academic performance. Students who spend more time on social media may neglect their studies, leading to lower grades and reduced academic engagement.

3. Mental Health Effects: Social media addiction has been linked to adverse mental health outcomes in students. It is associated with higher levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem. Comparisons to idealized online images and cyberbullying are among the factors contributing to these mental health issues.

4. Sleep Disturbances: Excessive social media use, especially before bedtime, can disrupt sleep patterns and lead to sleep disturbances in students. The blue light emitted by screens can interferewith the production of melatonin, affecting sleep quality.

5. Impact on Social Relationships: Paradoxically, social media addiction can lead to reduced face-to-face interactions and feelings of social isolation among students. Heavy reliance on online connections may replace meaningful real-life relationships, leading to feelings of loneliness and disconnection.

6. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO): Students who experience FOMO are more likely to engage excessively with social media platforms to avoid the fear of missing out on exciting events or experiences shared by others.

7. Coping Mechanism and Escapism: Some students turn to social media as a coping mechanism to escape from stress, anxiety, or real-life problems. Social media provides a temporary distraction from negative emotions.

8. Impulsivity and Overuse: Impulsive behavior is associated with higher social media addiction risk. Students who have difficulty controlling their urges and impulsively check social media are more susceptible to addiction.

9. Privacy and Security Concerns: Some students may inadvertently share sensitive information or engage in risky behavior on social media, leading to potential privacy and security risks.

10. Positive Aspects: While social media addiction poses various challenges, it also has positive aspects. Social media provides opportunities for networking, information sharing, and online activism, allowing students to connect with others and express themselves on important social and political issues.

It's important to note that the landscape of social media and research on social media addiction may have evolved since my last update. These findings highlight the need for continued research,education, and support systems to address social media addiction and its impact on students' well-being effectively.

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