

A STUDY ON SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

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ABSTRACT:

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of our lives, extending even to children. From the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic saw a rapid increase in media device usage and Internet access. Adolescents often connected to the Internet independently, primarily using platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Accordingly, a 2021 CENSIS report revealed a further increase in smartphone use by adolescents, reaching 95%. In particular, the majority of adolescents (59%) admitted they use smartphones even more frequently than in the past, with daily use exceeding 3 hours in 46% of cases. Adolescents accessed the Internet alone (59%), consulting social media, mostly Instagram (72%), TikTok (62%), and YouTube (58%). The major objectives are To examine the effects of social media usage on children's self-esteem and mental health, To analyse how social media influences children's behaviour and social interactions, To identify the potential risks and benefits associated with children's social media activities. The research method followed is empirical research. The data is collected through a questionnaire and a sample size is 202. Convenience sampling method is adopted in the study to collect the data. The samples were collected from the general public with special reference to the Chennai region. This review aims to highlight the risks associated with social media use among children and adolescents, identifying early indicators of emerging problems and proposing preventive measures. Public and medical awareness must rise over this topic and new prevention measures must be found, starting with health practitioners, caregivers, and websites/application developers. Pediatricians should be aware of the risks associated with a problematic social media use for the young's health and identify sentinel signs in children as well as prevent negative outcomes in accordance with the family.

KEYWORDS: Social media, Children, Addiction, Mental health, Social interactions.

INTRODUCTION:

Media device use is increasing year by year in India as well as in many other countries. A recent report indicated that in 2019, 85.8% of Indian adolescents aged 11–17 years regularly used smartphones, and over 72% accessed the Internet via smartphones. Almost 95% of Indian families with a child had a broadband internet connection. Internet connection was mostly used to communicate with friends and to use social networks. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic represented one of the greatest

disruptions for everybody's everyday life, in India as well as around the world. From the beginning of the pandemic period, media devices and Internet access rapidly increased. Accordingly, a 2021 CENSIS report revealed a further increase in smartphone use by adolescents, reaching 95%. In particular, the majority of adolescents (59%) admitted they use smartphones even more frequently than in the past, with daily use exceeding 3 hours in 46% of cases. Adolescents accessed the Internet alone (59%), consulting social media,

mostly Instagram (72%), TikTok (62%), and YouTube (58%). In this context, social interaction over the Internet or simply consulting social networks may play an important role in the lives of many young people, influencing their self-esteem and well-being. Without proper guidance and monitoring of Internet usage, the young may be exposed to several risks, including cyberbullying, which affects 7% of children aged 11–13 years and 5.2% of 14–17-year-old adolescents, or stalking, which affects more than 600 minors in India. On social media, young people are more vulnerable and may display risky behaviours, including substance abuse, sexual behaviours, or violence.

On the other hand, media and social networks are present in almost every home and are considered a great resource for everyone, including children and adolescents. Especially during the lockdown, Internet usage enabled communication with peers and the continuity of activities such as school teaching. Social media services facilitate various forms of communication, both verbal and visual, through internet-based networking, bringing people together and enabling instant connections and interactions, such as likes or comments. There was also an educational use of smartphones and social media during the lockdown, serving as tools for information and education.

Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking are currently defined as social media. As social media integrate into daily life, regulatory models are required to address the broad range of challenges they pose to the community, including privacy and protection of sensitive data.

Media usage is associated with some adverse consequences, especially for the most vulnerable people. The health emergency had a significant impact on the mental and psychological health of adolescents, causing changes in their routines and daily activities. Forced isolation increased anxiety and stress,

especially among the most fragile individuals, such as children and adolescents, leading to changes in habitual lifestyles. The greatest risk was taking refuge in excessive use of smartphones, electronic devices, and social networks, resulting in a **“digital overdose”**.

A recent survey conducted by India investigated the relationship with media devices during the pandemic, examining the habits of adolescents regarding media and social networks. It underlined that 15% of them declared they **“cannot stay without”** their media device.

The aim of this study is to focus on the risks correlated to social media use by the young, identifying signs of rising problems, and engaging in preventive recommendations.

OBJECTIVE:

- To examine the effects of social media usage on children's self-esteem and mental health.
- To analyse how social media influences children's behaviour and social interactions.
- To identify the potential risks and benefits associated with children's social media activities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. **(Hidayat, Erniwati, and Ismail 2024)** This study examines how Facebook influences the social relationships of Makassar City teenagers and government efforts to address its adverse effects. Through qualitative methods like interviews, discussions, observation, and document analysis, it finds that Facebook has both positive and negative impacts. Positively, it facilitates friendships and positive communication, but negatively, it can lead to offense and apathy towards relationships. Government initiatives focus on socialization campaigns and promoting responsible social media use.

However, privacy concerns pose challenges, requiring further attention to effectively mitigate negative impacts.

2. **(Potvin Kent et al. 2024)** A study examined food marketing by top Canadian influencers popular with 10-12-year-olds on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok from June 2021 to May 2022. Results showed YouTube had the highest food marketing rate (1 per 0.7 posts), followed by TikTok (1 per 10.2 posts) and Instagram (1 per 19.3 posts). Fast food (21%), soft drinks (13%), snacks (11%), and candy/chocolate (11%) were most promoted. Common marketing techniques included fun/cool appeals (37%) and product consumption displays (25%). Alarming, 83% of promoted brands/products were classified as less healthy, highlighting the need for government regulation to protect children from unhealthy food marketing on social media.
3. **(Ippolito and Pressman 2024)** A descriptive qualitative study examined the influence of social media and gaming practices on academic performance among 8-11-year-old children. The research involved 28 students who completed a questionnaire and 9 one-on-one interviews. Findings revealed themes including student self-agency with social media and gaming, significance of overuse, and academic values reflected in behaviors. Children spent significant time on social media and gaming, leading to distraction from schoolwork and potentially affecting academic performance. Insights from this study can inform digital parenting strategies and guidance from educators.
4. **(Idris 2024)** Excessive electronic media use in preschoolers has detrimental effects on cognitive, social, and physical development. It impacts behavior, language, social skills, and sleep patterns. Parents play a crucial role in mitigating these effects by controlling and monitoring media consumption. It's essential to recognize and address the negative impacts of electronic media on children's welfare.
5. **(Jayawickrama 2024)** This research investigates the role of Sinhala-language YouTube channels in promoting health habits among children. Interviews with parents and content analysis of ten channels reveal a lack of health education content. Commercial interests often prioritize entertaining content over informative material, potentially undermining healthy habits. Parents struggle to monitor children's screen time, raising concerns about sedentary behavior. Education for content creators and regulatory guidance are suggested to address these issues.
6. **(Ramish, Ashraf, and Nasir 2023)** This study investigates the impact of social media, particularly Facebook, on sleep deprivation among youngsters in Karachi. It includes 151 participants sampled conveniently through an online questionnaire. Findings suggest a connection between high social media usage and sleep deprivation, with participants reporting late-night usage and shortened sleep duration. Regression analysis confirms the hypotheses. These results emphasize the need for youngsters to regulate their social media usage to improve sleep quality and overall well-being.
7. **(Perry et al. 2023)** Social media is widely used by adolescents, offering connections and relationships, but also leading to feelings of exclusion and victimization. Excessive usage can foster negative behaviors and psychological challenges. Awareness of these effects is

crucial for parents and school staff to support teenagers and develop coping skills and self-regulation programs for social media use.

8. **(Islam and Rezaul Islam 2023)** The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased social media usage among children, driven by social isolation and reduced physical activity. A content analysis approach revealed excessive screen time and negative impacts on child development, including cognitive, physical, emotional, and social aspects. This highlights the importance of addressing excessive screen time and promoting alternative activities for healthy child development amidst the pandemic.
9. **(Uniyal, Singh, and Chaudhary, n.d.)** The research explores the link between social media usage and inferiority complex among 150 university students in Uttarakhand, India. Correlation and regression analyses reveal a positive relationship between social media usage and inferiority complex, with various usage subscales serving as significant predictors. Problematic social media use poses risks for enduring psychological issues, impacting mental health and fostering inferiority complexes.
10. **(Mahalwal 2023)** The study examines the relationship between social media usage, happiness, and psychological well-being among 104 young adults in Delhi. Results indicate a significant positive relationship between social media use, psychological well-being, and happiness, but no significant impact of social media use on happiness and psychological well-being across different socio-economic groups. Overall, increased exposure to social media correlates with higher happiness and psychological well-being.
11. **(Ximeng et al., n.d.)** This research delves into the intricate relationship between psychological impact, social media involvement, and social support among undergraduate students. It aims to address social anxiety and enhance psychological well-being by exploring factors such as loneliness, self-esteem, fear of negative evaluations, social media use, and social support.
12. **(Ahmed 2023)** This study examines how social contagion, particularly on social media, impacts sexual behavior and increases stress levels. It reveals that individuals adopt behaviors based on social media observations, leading to confusion, anxiety, and distress. This underscores the importance of understanding social media's role in shaping behaviors and identities.
13. **(Saini and Mir 2023)** Social media transforms education, offering instant communication and access to resources. Despite benefits, challenges like distractions persist. This research explores social media's impact on education, guiding educators to optimize benefits while addressing challenges.
14. **(Cohen et al. 2023)** This study investigates the association between social media screen time, lifestyle behaviors, and health outcomes among young adults in Southern California. Findings suggest a positive correlation between depressive symptoms and negative correlation with body mass index (BMI) among social media users. However, no association was found for BMI, depressive symptoms, or cumulative risk score for screen time ≥ 3 hours. Participants identified social media as both beneficial and harmful to mental health, highlighting the need for proactive public health measures and platform modifications.

15. **(Alavi 2023)** Social media significantly impacts youth, who are often glued to the internet. Excessive use can lead to psychological disorders, affecting physical development, sexuality, and identity. It isolates youth and alters their lifestyle, both positively and negatively. This paper discusses the negative physiological impact of social media on youth, highlighting the risk of spending more than three hours daily on social media, according to Global Web Index.
16. **(Li and Pan 2023)** This paper examines the use of social media by left-behind children, focusing on its impact on their socialization and media literacy. It highlights that high media literacy leads to less dependence on harmful content, while low literacy results in excessive dependence. Social media serves as a vital tool for left-behind children to connect with the world, obtain information, and build relationships. Understanding its impact can aid in leveraging social media to enhance their socialization and inform policy decisions.
17. **(Chang and Lee 2023)** This study examines media literacy among elementary students with language disorders to enhance therapeutic approaches. Out of 40 participants, 36 were included. Results show significant media use, particularly in games, animation, and YouTube. While proficient in media device use, they struggle with evaluating online information and media production. Understanding their media literacy status can optimize therapeutic interventions.
18. **(Youssef and Al Malek 2023)** This research examines social media's impact on formal and informal learning among Ajman's school-level children, moderated by social and personal integrative needs. Results show significant effects on both learning types, with social needs influencing informal learning. This underscores social media's role in children's education in the UAE.
19. **(Wahyuni et al. 2023)** This study investigates the impact of social media on the learning process of children aged 6-12 years. Quantitative methods, including online interviews and questionnaires via Google Forms, were used. Findings suggest social media significantly affects children's learning, both at school and home, reducing effectiveness due to excessive usage. The study recommends further research on this topic and acknowledges limitations in scope.
20. **(Pertiwi, Suminar, and Ardi 2022)** A study with 647 Gen Z adolescents found that self-esteem positively affects well-being, while social media dependency has a negative impact. Social media dependency mediates the relationship between self-esteem and well-being. Motives for social media use matter: maintaining existing relationships worsens the negative impact, while meeting new people and socializing lessen it. This underscores the need to address self-esteem and motives in interventions promoting healthy social media use among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY:

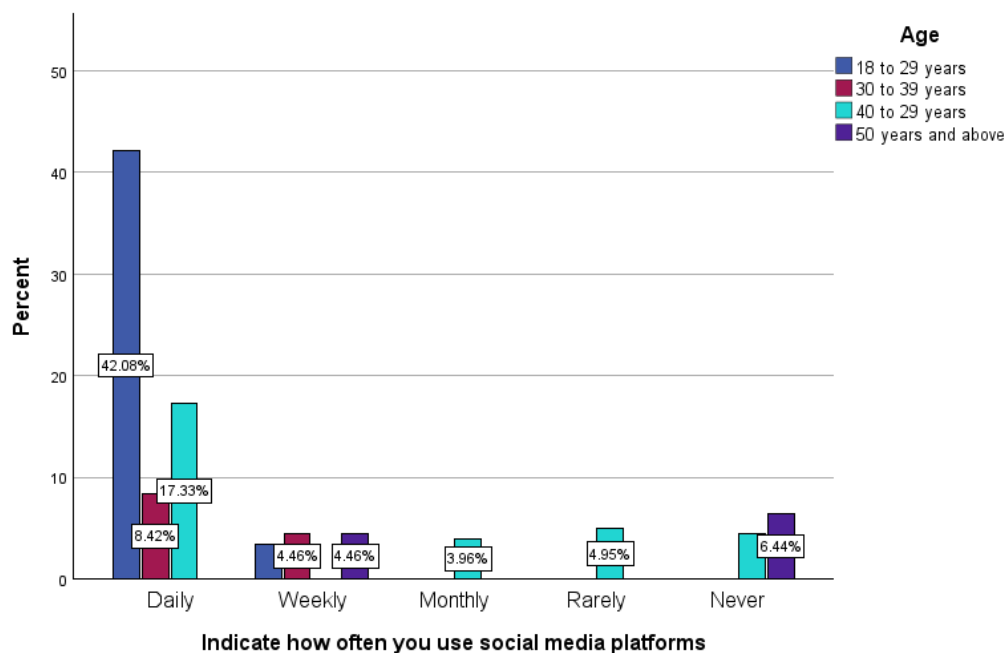
The research method followed is empirical research. The data is collected through a questionnaire and a sample size is 202. Convenience sampling method is adopted in the study to collect the data. The samples were collected from the general public with special reference to the Chennai region. The independent variables are gender, age, education qualification, occupation, marital status of the respondents. The dependent variables are: Have you ever experienced cyberbullying on social media, whether you compare yourself to others based on their

social media posts, To address social media problems against children. The researcher used

graphs to analyse the data collected.

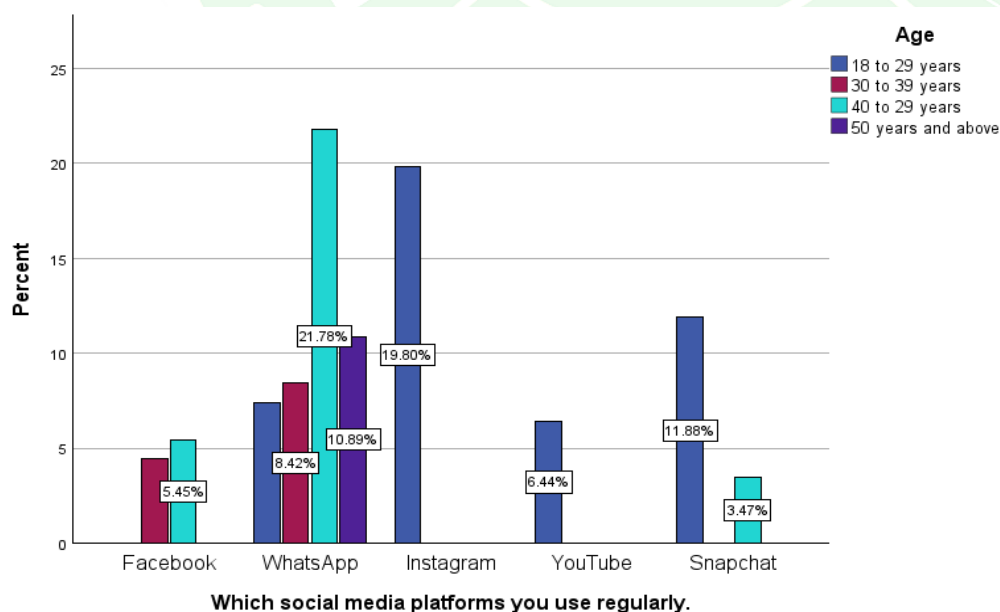
ANALYSIS:

FIGURE 1



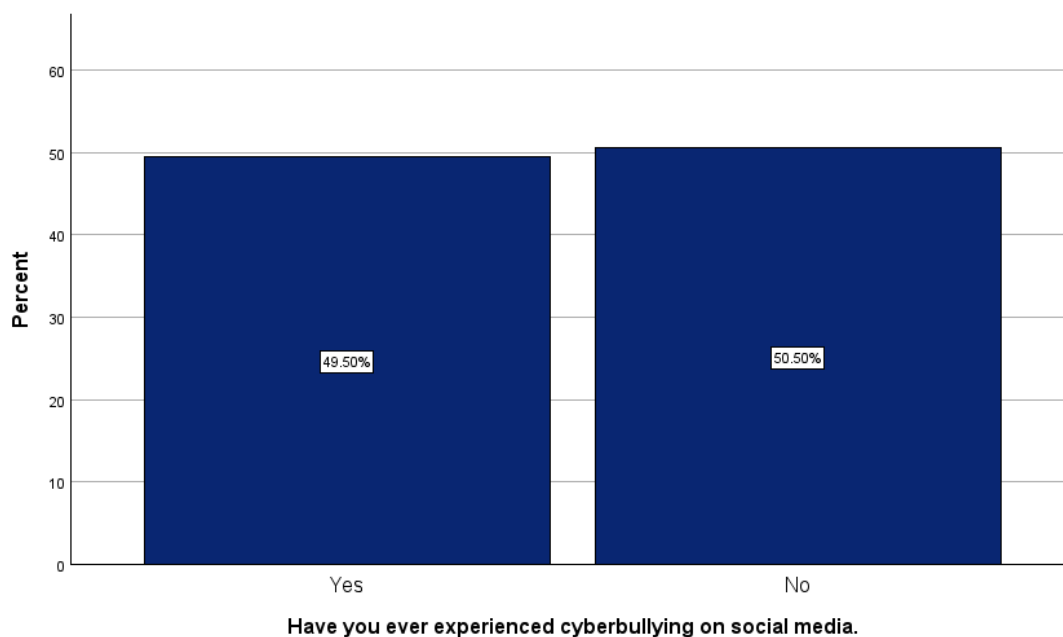
LEGEND: Figure 1 bar chart shows the percentage analysis on how often you use social media platforms with reference from age group

FIGURE 2



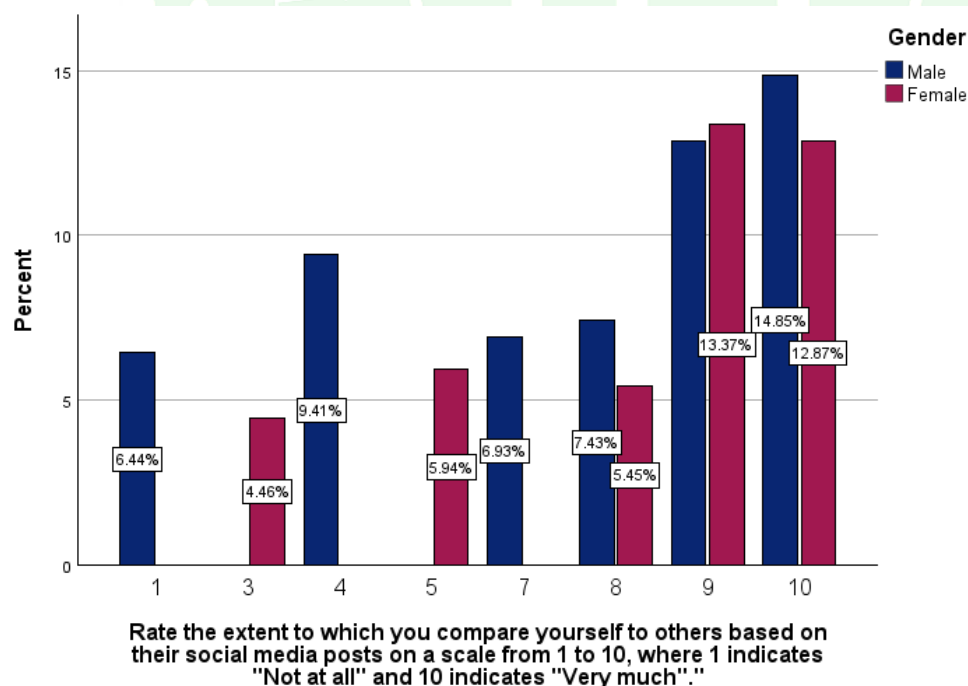
LEGEND: Figure 2 bar chart shows the percentage analysis on which social media platforms you use regularly with reference from age group

FIGURE 3



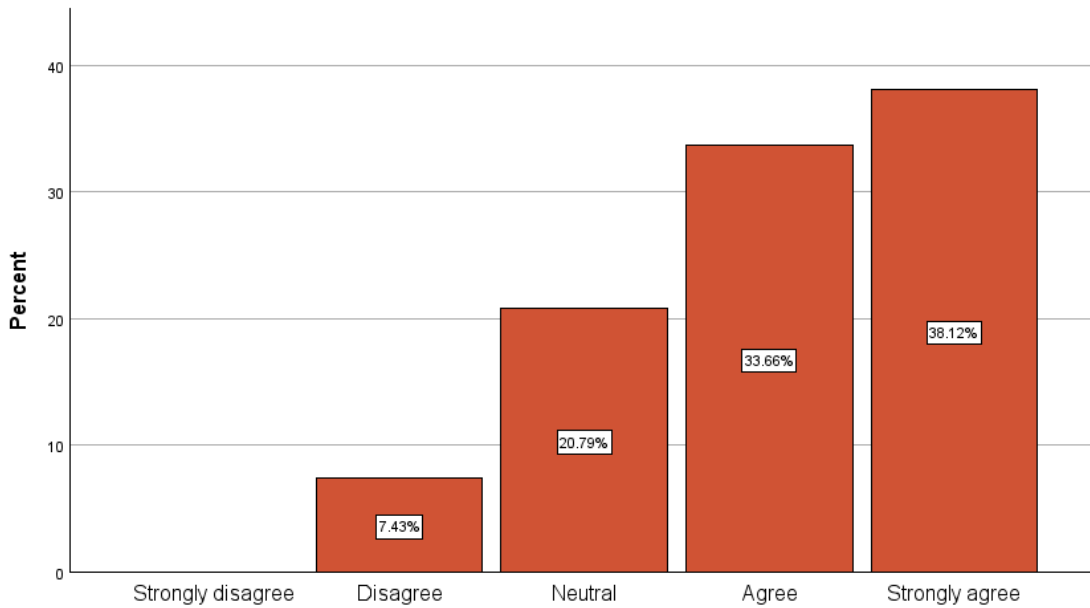
LEGEND: Figure 3 bar chart shows the percentage analysis on Have you ever experienced cyberbullying on social media.

FIGURE 4



LEGEND: Figure 4 bar chart shows the percentage analysis on Rate the extent to which you compare yourself to others based on their social media posts on a scale from 1 to 10 with reference to gender group.

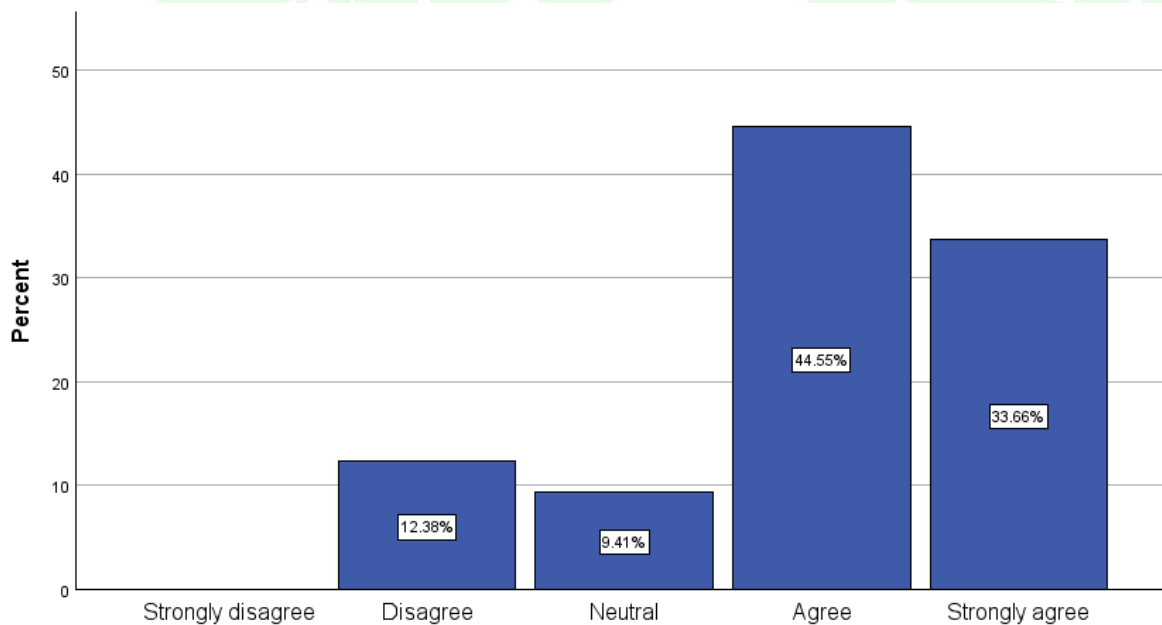
FIGURE 5



Children face several significant problems on social media platforms such as: [Digital addiction]

LEGEND: Figure 5 bar chart shows the percentage of children facing significant problems on social media platforms, such as digital addiction.

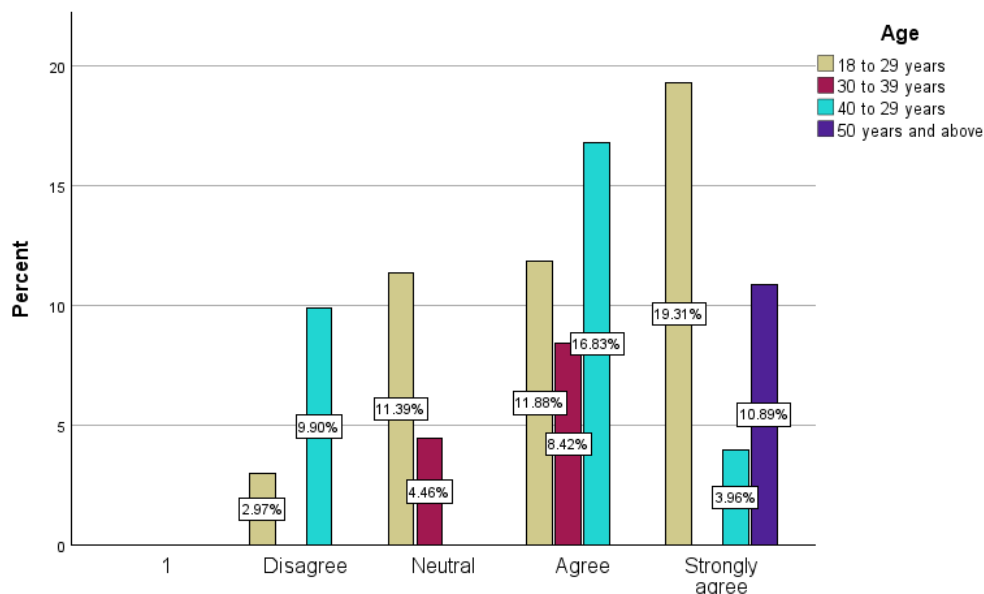
FIGURE 6



Children face several significant problems on social media platforms such as: [Exposure to inappropriate content]

LEGEND: Figure 6 bar chart shows the percentage of children who face severe significant problems on social media platforms such as exposure to inappropriate content.

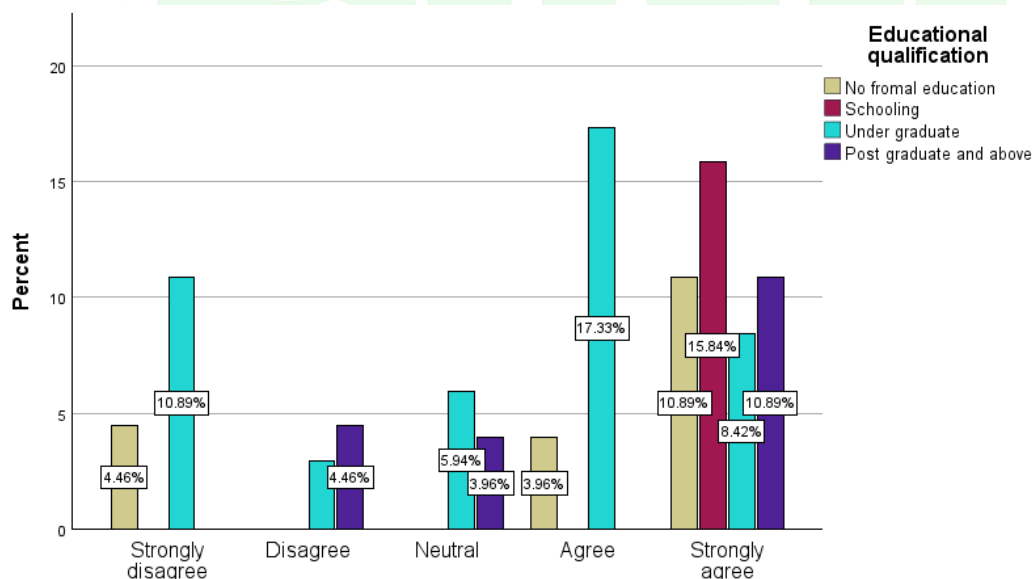
FIGURE 7



Children face several significant problems on social media platfor...

LEGEND: Figure 7 bar chart shows the percentage analysis on Children facing several significant problems on social media platforms such as (influence of advertising) with reference to Age group.

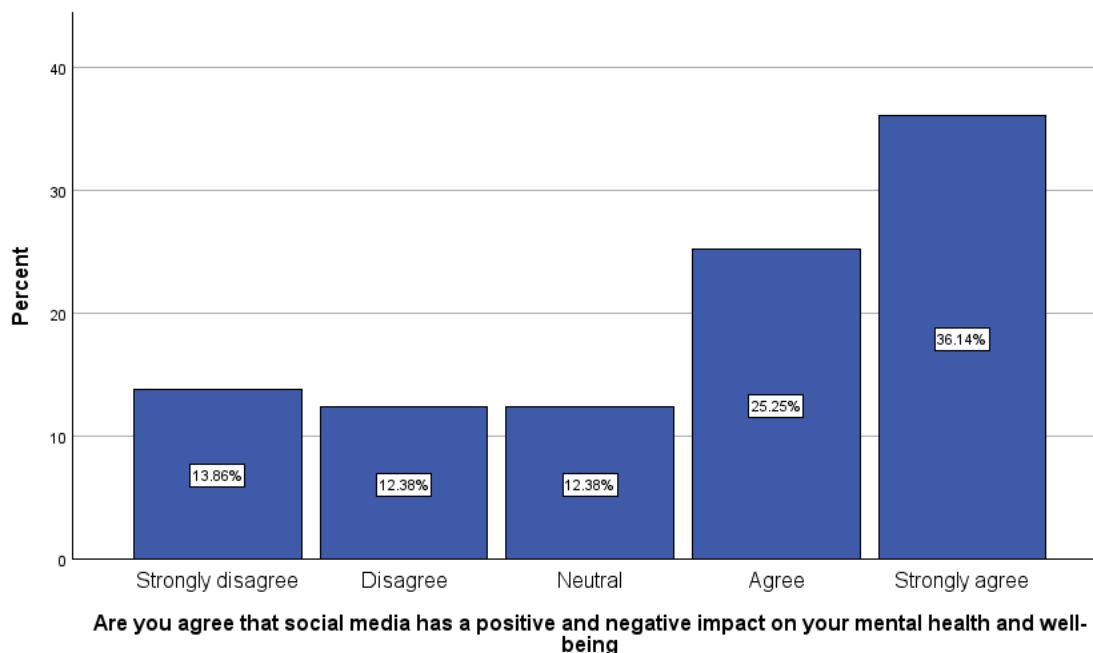
FIGURE 8



Children face several significant problems on social media platforms such as: [Unrealistic expectations]

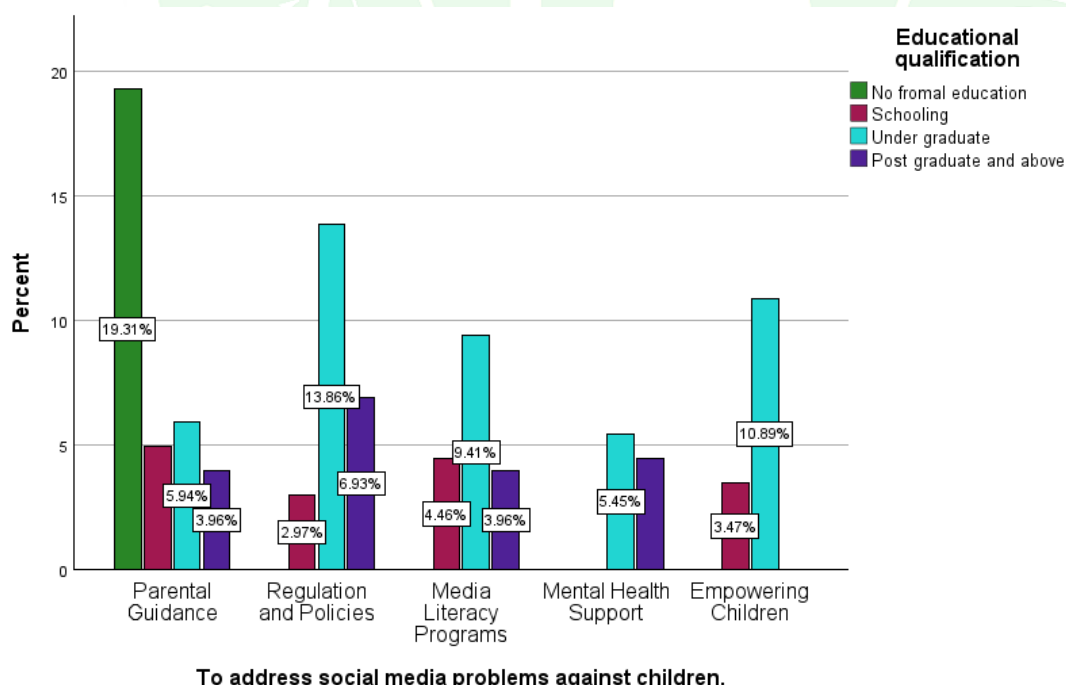
LEGEND: Figure 8 bar chart shows the percentage analysis on Children facing several significant problems on social media platforms such as (Unrealistic expectations) with reference to educational qualification.

FIGURE 9



LEGEND: Figure 9 bar chart shows the percentage of people who are aware that social media has both positive and negative impacts on their mental health and well-being.

FIGURE 10



LEGEND: Figure 10 The graph depicts the perceived level of educational qualification needed to address social media problems against children.

RESULTS:

From **figure 1:** 67.18% of respondents prefer daily, 8.48% of respondents prefer weekly, 3.86% of

respondents prefer monthly, 6.95% of respondents prefer rarely and 5.44% of respondents prefer never. From **figure 2:** 10.45% of respondents prefer Facebook, 52.78% of

respondents prefer WhatsApp, 19.80% of respondents prefer Instagram, 6.44% of respondents prefer YouTube, 14.68% of respondents prefer Snapchat. From this **figure 3**: shows that 60% of people have ever experienced cyberbullying on social media, whereas 40% of people have not. From **figure 4**: 6.44% of male respondents prefer 1 on rating scale, 14.85% of male respondents prefer 10 on rating scale, 13.37% of female respondents prefer 9 on rating scale on the above graph. From this **figure 5**: 38.12% of respondents strongly agree that they face significant problems on social media, while 7.43% disagree. From **figure 6**: 44.55% of respondents strongly agree or agree that they face severe significant problems on social media platforms, while only 9.41% strongly disagree. From **figure 7**: 19.31% of respondents in the age group of 18 to 29 years strongly agreed with the statement, 18.83% of respondents in the age group 40 to 49 years agreed with the statement and very few disagreed with the statement. From **figure 8**: the majority of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that children are facing several significant problems on social media platforms with primary aspects of Unrealistic expectations. From **figure 9**: The 60% respondents agreed that social media has both positive and negative impacts, 25.25% respondents agreed that social media only has positive impacts, 14.76% of respondents disagreed with the statement altogether, with only 3.61% strongly disagreeing. From **figure 10**: Highest perceived qualification: Postgraduate and above (19.31%) Second-highest perceived qualification: Undergraduate (13.86%) Lowest perceived qualifications: No formal education (3.96%) and schooling (5.94%)

DISCUSSION:

It is clear from **figure 1** The majority of respondents indicated daily use, as shown in the graph. It assumes that in the digital era, nearly everyone has a social media account and uses it regularly. This applies to all age groups, from small children to elderly adults, who interact with social media platforms daily.

It is clear from **figure 2** The majority of respondents prefer WhatsApp, with most teenagers choosing Instagram, while the majority of females prefer Snapchat. Mid-aged respondents favor YouTube and Facebook. This survey indicates that respondents have chosen different social media platforms based on their preferences and convenience. Among all age groups, WhatsApp is highly preferred because it is easy to access and allows for uninterrupted communication. It is clear from **figure 3** most of them were affected by cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a serious issue that can have lasting effects on victims. It can lead to depression, anxiety, and even suicide. It is important to be aware of the signs of cyberbullying and to take steps to prevent it. And in my research survey most of the females were the victims of cyberbullying. It is clear from **figure 4** that the majority of respondents prefer 9,10 on rating scale. It seems that many agree with the statement that children often compare themselves with others on social media. In the current era of technology, almost everyone has a social media account. However, people often do not show their true selves on these platforms, instead presenting an idealised version of themselves. As a result, many children believe that others are living better lives, leading them to compare themselves unfavourably. It is clear from **figure 5** the majority of respondents agree that children are facing significant problems on social media platforms, such as digital addiction because Digital addiction is a common concern. Digital addiction can lead to a number of problems, including social isolation, attention problems, and sleep disturbances. By approaching this problem We can also set limits on their screen time and help them find other activities to enjoy. It is clear from **figure 6** that a significant number of children may be experiencing problems on social media. Exposure to inappropriate content is one potential problem that can be harmful to children. Social media platforms can contain content that is violent, sexually suggestive, or otherwise upsetting to children. It is important

for parents and guardians to be aware of the potential risks of social media and to take steps to protect children. It is clear from **figure 7** that the majority of respondents agreed that children have been influenced by advertisements in social media because Eye-Catching Graphics: Advertisements on social media often feature bright colours, engaging videos, and appealing graphics designed to capture the attention of young users quickly. So, it will lead to Increased Desire for Products: Constant exposure to advertisements can lead children to develop a strong desire for material possessions, often driven by the latest trends or what their peers are showcasing online. It is clear from **figure 8** Unrealistic expectations are a significant problem to children because Children may compare themselves to the seemingly perfect lives and appearances they see online, leading to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. This is particularly prevalent with the constant exposure to photoshopped images and curated content. It is clear from **figure 9** This suggests that a majority of people are aware of the complex relationship between social media use and mental health. Social media can provide social connection, support, and information, but it can also lead to envy, isolation, and anxiety. It is important to be mindful of how social media use affects your mental health and to take steps to mitigate any negative impacts. This could involve setting limits on screen time, curating your feed to follow positive and inspiring accounts, and taking breaks from social media altogether. It is clear **Figure 10** that the majority of respondents prefer parental guidance, regulation and policies because Parental Guidance: Educate parents on the risks of social media and provide them with tools and strategies to monitor and guide their children's online activities and Enforce laws against cyberbullying and online harassment to protect children from abusive behaviour online.

LIMITATION:

One of the major limitations is the use of convenience sampling methods that give

biased output which cannot be avoided. And there was a very short span of time to conduct and complete the research. Another limitation is we can't be able to assume the thoughts of the entire population in a country, state or city with limited sample size.

SUGGESTIONS:

I suggest that a significant number of children may be experiencing problems on social media. Exposure to inappropriate content is one potential problem that can be harmful to children. It is important for parents and guardians to be aware of the potential risks of social media and to take steps to protect children: Talking to children about the potential risks of social media, Monitoring their social media use, Encouraging them to report any inappropriate content they see.

CONCLUSION:

Children and adolescents who spend many hours a day on social media are at a higher risk for a range of issues, including behavioural problems, cyberbullying, and online grooming. They are also more likely to experience sleep difficulties and eye problems such as myopia, eye fatigue, dryness, blurry vision, irritation, burning sensations, and dry eye disease. Additionally, excessive social media use can lead to issues like sexting, exposure to pornography, unwanted sexual content, and early sexual activity. Social media users face more online risks compared to their peers, with those who are more digitally competent being at even greater risk. Families should be educating on the dangers and concerns of having children and adolescence online. I suggest that Be careful about what we share online. Once something is online, it can be difficult to remove it. I found that many children were affected by low self-esteem, behavioural changes, and increased fear and anxiety in social situations due to the impact of social media platforms. Public and medical awareness must rise over this topic and new prevention measures must be found, starting

with health practitioners, caregivers, and websites/application developers.

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