

The Impact of Social Media on Interpersonal Relationships

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Abstract: This study explores the dual nature of social media's influence, highlighting its transformative effects on both personal and professional interactions. The impact of social media on interpersonal relationships and communication is multifaceted, shaping how individuals interact in both positive and negative ways. On one hand, social media platforms allow users to maintain relationships across distances and geographical boundaries in real-time. These platforms support long-distance connections and faster global networking, often enhancing emotional well-being through online communities and support groups that provide information and access to valuable resources. The nature of online communication often leads to superficial interactions, where the number of connections overshadows the quality of relationships. The absence of nonverbal cues in digital communication can cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Additionally, privacy concerns are common, with personal information potentially exposed to unintended audiences or misuse. Excessive use of social media can also contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, often intensified by social comparison and cyber bullying. This study emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to social media use, recognizing both its benefits and challenges. As social media continues to evolve, understanding its impact on interpersonal relationships and communication is essential for maximizing its advantages while minimizing its drawbacks. This awareness can help individuals navigate the digital world, foster meaningful connections, and maintain a healthy balance between online and offline interactions.

Keywords: Social media, Interpersonal Relationship, Digital Communication, Cultural dynamics, Emotional Well-Being, Uses and Gratification.

I. Introduction

Social media is now an important part of modern life. It has changed the way people talk, share ideas, and connect with each other. It started in the early 2000s with websites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. This can be good or bad. Talking online is fast and easy. But sometimes, people stop talking face-to-face. This can hurt close relationships. Good relationships need trust, time, and real talking. Social media can help, but it can also cause problems like fighting, jealousy, or feeling alone. This paper will talk about how social media affects our relationships with others — both in good and bad ways. Since then, it has grown quickly to include apps like Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik-Tok. These platforms let people create and share content with others all around the world, allowing quick and easy communication. Now, people can stay in touch with friends, family, and colleagues in new and simple ways. It gives everyone a chance to express themselves, share personal stories, opinions, and creative work with a large audience. Social media also affects public discussions, helps create trends, and supports social and political movements. But, even though social media has many good sides, it also brings challenges. It can affect personal relationships and how people communicate with each other. There are concerns about privacy, fake news, and the quality of conversations. As social media continues to grow, it is important to understand both its good and bad effects, so we can use it in a better and safer way.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing prevalence of social media in daily life has led to concerns about its impact on interpersonal relationships, including decreased face-to-face communication, altered relationship dynamics, and potential negative effects on mental health and emotional well-being. This study aims to investigate the relationship between social media usage and interpersonal relationships, exploring the potential benefits and drawbacks of social media on relationship quality, communication, and emotional intimacy.

II. Literature Review

Social Media and Communication

Social media can also affect communication patterns in relationships. A study by Baym et al. (2004) found that people tend to use social media to maintain relationships, but this can lead to a lack of depth and intimacy in communication. Another study by Fox and Tokunaga (2015) found that social media use was associated with increased feelings of jealousy and insecurity in romantic relationships.

Social Media and Mental Health

Finally, social media use has been linked to negative effects on mental health, including increased symptoms of depression and anxiety. A study by Primack et al. (2017) found that young adults who spent more time on social media were at increased risk for depression. Another study by Kross et al. (2013) found that Facebook use was associated with decreased happiness and life satisfaction.

Social Media and Emotional Intimacy

Research also suggests that social media can impact emotional intimacy in relationships. A study by Best et al. (2014) found that people who spent more time on social media reported lower levels of emotional intimacy in their relationships. Another study by Burke et al. (2010) found that social media use was associated with decreased feelings of closeness and connection in relationships.

Social Media and Conflict

A study by Muise et al. (2013) found that social media use was associated with increased conflict and jealousy in romantic relationships. Another study by Marshall et al. (2012) found that social media use was linked to increased surveillance and monitoring of partners, which can lead to feelings of resentment and mistrust.

Social Media and Relationship Satisfaction

Studies have shown that excessive social media use can lead to decreased relationship satisfaction. A study by Kolek and Saunders (2008) found that frequent Facebook use was associated with relationship problems and decreased relationship satisfaction. Similarly, a study by Mesch and Talmud (2010) found that social media use was linked to decreased face-to-face communication and increased conflict in romantic relationships.

III. Theoretical Framework**3.1. Social Penetration Theory**

This theory says that relationships grow stronger when people share more personal information with each other over time. On social media, people often share personal things quickly. While this can help build connections fast, it might also lead to shallow or less meaningful relationships because there's less face-to-face interaction.

3.2. Media Richness Theory

This theory explains that some ways of communication (like face-to-face talks) are better at showing emotions and feelings than others (like texts or social media messages). Social media can make it harder to understand tone or body language, which may lead to misunderstandings in relationships.

3.3. Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory says that people use media (like social media) to satisfy different needs - such as staying in touch, passing time, or feeling connected. While social media helps people stay in contact, it can also make them spend less time building real-life, deeper relationships.

3.4. Social Comparison Theory

This theory explains that people compare themselves to others. On social media, people often see the best parts of others' lives, which can make them feel unhappy or insecure. This can affect how they feel in their friendships or romantic relationships.

IV. Methodology**Research Methodology****4.1. Research Design**

1. Survey Research: Online surveys can be used to collect data from a large sample of participants. This can include questions about social media use, relationship satisfaction, communication patterns, and emotional intimacy.
2. Experimental Design: Experiments can be conducted to test the causal relationship between social media use and interpersonal relationships. For example, participants can be randomly assigned to either a social media use group or a control group, and their relationship satisfaction and communication patterns can be measured.
3. Qualitative Research: In-depth interviews or focus groups can be used to gather more nuanced and qualitative data about the impact of social media on interpersonal relationships.

4.2. Sampling

1. Target Population: The target population can be defined as individuals who are in romantic relationships or have close friends and family members.
2. Sample Size: A sample size of at least 100 participants is recommended to ensure reliable and generalizable results.
3. Sampling Method: Participants can be recruited through social media platforms, online forums, or community centres.

4.3. Data Collection

1. Survey Instruments: Standardized survey instruments can be used to measure relationship satisfaction, communication patterns,

and emotional intimacy. Examples include the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) and the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ).

2. **Social Media Use Measures:** Participants' social media use can be measured through self-report measures or by tracking their social media activity using software or apps.
3. **Interviews or Focus Groups:** In-depth interviews or focus groups can be conducted to gather more qualitative data about the impact of social media on interpersonal relationships.

4.4. Data Analysis

1. **Quantitative Analysis:** Statistical analysis can be used to analyse the relationship between social media use and interpersonal relationships. Examples include correlation analysis, regression analysis, and ANOVA.
2. **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis or content analysis can be used to analyse the qualitative data gathered through interviews or focus groups. Variables: 1. Independent Variable: Social media use (frequency, duration, type of platforms) 2. Dependent Variables: Relationship satisfaction, communication patterns, emotional intimacy
3. **Control Variables:** Demographic variables (age, gender, and relationship status), personality traits (attachment style, extraversion).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the influence of social media on interpersonal relationships, exploring both its positive and negative effects. The findings suggest that while social media has enhanced connectivity and made communication more accessible, it has also contributed to challenges such as decreased face-to-face interactions, miscommunication, and the deterioration of emotional intimacy in some relationships.

Social media platforms facilitate instant connection across geographical boundaries, helping people maintain long-distance relationships and reconnect with old acquaintances. However, excessive use, reliance on digital communication, and online behaviour such as comparison and validation-seeking have been linked to trust issues, reduced quality of communication, and emotional detachment.

Social media has profoundly impacted interpersonal relationships, offering both benefits and drawbacks. While it enables connectivity and community building, excessive social media use can lead to decreased face-to-face communication, altered relationship dynamics, and negative effects on mental health.

1. **Balance social media use with face-to-face interaction:** Individuals should prioritize face-to-face communication and engage in activities that promote social skills and emotional intimacy.
2. **Set boundaries:** Establish guidelines for social media use, such as limiting screen time or avoiding social media during meals or conversations.
3. **Practice self-awareness:** Recognize the potential impact of social media on relationships and take steps to maintain healthy relationships.
4. **Foster empathy and understanding:** Encourage open discussions about social media use and its effects on relationships.
5. **Promote digital literacy:** Educate individuals about responsible social media use, online etiquette, and digital citizenship.
6. **Encourage offline activities:** Engage in activities that promote social connections, such as hobbies, sports, or volunteering.
7. **Monitor and regulate social media use:** Parents, educators, and policymakers should monitor and regulate social media use to protect vulnerable populations and promote healthy relationships.

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