

Youth and social media

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Abstract

Over the last 20 years, rapid progress has been made in order to make the world more globalized via the extensive use of social media. This is evident in sectors ranging from education to sports, healthcare to fashion, and cybershopping to improved communication to mention a few. The extensive use of social media among the youth especially has been on the rise due to the fact that social media has become an integral part of everyday life for humans. The youth has been associated with social media and it has opened numerous ways of profitability for them. This paper provides an overview of the influence of social media on youths and also suggests that in the future, more research should be carried out in order to explore the positive and negative influence on youth globally in a more practical manner.

Keywords: *Social media, Youth, Influence, Networking sites, Internet*

Statement of the Problem

The advent of technology brought about social media which is a valuable tool but in a way is being misused by youths nowadays. Social media has become one of the easiest and fastest ways that can be used to explore and comprehend more about the world

however the study focuses on the effect of social media on youths majorly. Youths access social media through their phones and the internet and this has brought about tremendous changes in their lifestyles. This paper investigates the influence social media has on youths' lifestyles/behavior and also provides the result of those findings extensively.

Introduction

Technology is evolving every day due to the increase in knowledge impacted by the rise in the digital revolution and new media, especially social media. Since the conception of social media in the world, there have been quite commendable innovations from the creation of the telegraph in 1792 to radio in 1891, LinkedIn came in in the year 2002, Facebook kicked off in 2004, YouTube became evident in 2005, WhatsApp came to limelight in 2009 as well as the trending Thread app which kicked off July 2023. These inventions have brought about rapid change in the world today as social media has affected man significantly and become a key component of man's day-to-day life.

Social media is a computer-based application that enables the exchange of ideas, views, and knowledge. Social networking is Internet-based by nature, allowing users to share content quickly using electronic means. Personal details, notes, photographs, and images are also included in the material. Users interact with social media via web-based software or applications on a computer, tablet, or smartphone (Maya, 2021)

The use of social media is diverse ranging from keeping in touch with family and friends, catching up with current events, knowledge sharing, creating employment opportunities, and helping business-oriented men and women gain a wider customer base aside from this positive side of social media, it has been observed that there are also negative sides to the use of social media which includes cyberbullying attacks, spreading false information, increase in mental health disorder, a distraction from studies as youths spend more time surfing the internet than reading and from findings, it has been proven that young people are more likely to become addictive to social media this tends to reduce their interpersonal skills.

Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia Britannica Company defines youth as the time of life when someone is young. Youth is the time when a young person has not yet become an adult. Youth is very important for the future of any nation and country's progress and development. Nowadays social media is essential for youth in the field of education to learn new trends in education, improve writing and communicating skills, cultural promoting, religious, and political information gathering

and sharing links, better living style, growth and development of society (Merriam Encyclopedia, 2001).

The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, and these categories of people are said to be the most active users of social media to date. The Nigerian National Youth Policy of 2009 defined a Youth as a person between the ages of 15 - 35. This was an obvious adoption of the definition by the African Youth Charter. However, the 2019 Nigerian National Youth Policy redefined a youth as any person between the ages of 15 and 29. Considering the Nigerian youths as the population of this research, youths in the context of this work refer to all Nigerians, both male, and female, who fall within the age bracket of 15 - 35.

As of January 2023, there were 122.5 million internet users and Nigeria's internet penetration rate stood at 55.4 percent of the total population at the start of 2023(Statista, 2023). Kepois analysis indicates that internet users in Nigeria increased by 2.9 million which is +2.4 percent between 2022 and 2023 and by the Nigerian population breakdown, 16.1 percent is between the ages of 0 and 4,

21.9 percent is between the ages of 5 and 12, 11.6 percent is between the ages of 13 and 17, 13.1 percent is between the ages of 18 and 24, 13.6 percent is between the ages of 25 and 34, placing ages 35 and 44 at 10.0 percent, then we have 6.7 percent between the ages of 45 and 54, 4.1 percent between the ages of 55 and 64 while 65 and above are just 3.0 percent and from what we have, youths between the ages of 13 to 45 share a larger percentage of the breakdown estimated at 65 percent of the nation's population.

As of May 2023, there were 41.6 million Facebook users in Nigeria, accounting for 18.5 percent of the population in the country, and as of May 2023, there were over 12.2 million Instagram users in Nigeria. This figure accounted for 5.4 percent of the country's entire population. About 37 percent of users were aged between 25 and 34 years, and 32.8 percent were aged from 18 to 24 years. Only 3.1 percent of the users belonged to the 55 to 64 age group. Overall, around 44 percent of users in the country were women. (Statista, 2023)

Between the ages of 18 and 29, almost 90% of people used a form of social media. As of January 2021, Nigeria had approximately 33 million active social media users. In 2022,

WhatsApp was the most popular platform used in the country, with over 90 million users. Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram followed as the most used media platforms in Nigeria. (Statista, 2022) while the trending Threads social network has 118 million users to date (Wikipedia, 2023). This implies that social media users increase day by day and also serves as a motivator for social networking site founders because according to the law of supply and demand when there is a higher demand for a commodity, there is a rise in the supply of such commodity.

The use of social media platforms is a major factor that is beginning to limit the mind's capacity to think properly. Students, especially youths nowadays are prone to losing focus when studying and choose to spend their time on social media instead. All of this amounts to a waste of time with little and sometimes no return on investment. Students are usually unable to submit their work within the slated deadline because they are more interested in surfing social networking platforms. The rate at which students depend on social media platforms to get information and knowledge rather than seeking it in books, journals, and other

resourceful materials is on the high side, as a result, students' reading habits are worsening, as well as their learning and research abilities. Also, the adoption of social networking sites with a casual attitude has proven mental and bodily consequences. Students do not eat on time and do not get enough sleep because they spend the most time on their phones or laptops, which can be harmful to their sight. Students become sluggish and unmotivated to study or even go out and meet new people as a result of such behaviors.

Literature Review

(Gulam,2014) in his paper titled “The Impact of Social Media on Youth: A Case Study of Bahawalpur City” highlighted that the excessive users in the educational computer labs use social media forms for comments, chatting, image and video sharing, and texting, etc. which implies that they ignore their primary focus which is their study and to use the social media for research on related activities but instead, they use the facility of the internet in connecting with their friends on the social media networking forums with their average utilized time between 30 to 60 minutes. But the actual results crossed this maximum time period 13 percent responded that they use

it more than 2 hours in a single day. Their important features while using social media are SMS, video clips sharing links, and comments. The informative links and the Islamic links are widely shared by the sample population of this survey for fellow users. The users mostly face problems such as unwanted messages, unwanted friends request and controversial political links and unethical pictures and links, irrelevant religious and anti-religious messages, and useless information. Despite their agreement with the argument that social media is affecting the life of youths, the sampled youth population is continuously using social media forms in all Pakistan including in rural areas where the internet facility is available. It has greatly affected the physical and sports activities which is being replaced by social media.

Lusk (2010) pointed out that social media could be used for academic purposes by students. Students can learn and enhance their communication skills. Social media has new web tools which can be used by students to advance their learning skills. Kalpidou (2011) stated that there is a relationship between social media and grades and

according to Jacobsen (2011), social media had a negative effect on grades and further told that two-thirds of the students who used social media while doing homework had a bad impact on their grades. Ohio State University described in its study that those students who spent most of their time on social media had low grades and those who did not spend their time on social media had high grades.

In his study, Sushma (2019) in his study examined a total of 50 youths and the results revealed that 20% of the respondents said that they have benefits/ positive impact of learning from social media, and another 20% of the respondents got benefits of staying connected with friends through social media, 28% of the respondents get benefits like entertainment and fun, 18% of the respondents got benefits like in quest of job opportunities. Results also depict that social media cause health problems and affect our cultures. While using social media, users have to remember cultural values and social norms.

In a research study carried out in a federal institution in Nigeria, it was revealed that most youths use or access social media platforms, Facebook especially, more than once hourly, thereby being exposed to inappropriate content

on social media sites. Findings further revealed that social media sites have greatly affected the youths' way of life and also, youth face-to-face interaction with one another has decreased due to social media.

Social media has both positive and negative impacts on Nigerian youth but so far, the negative impact it has on youths globally is extensive. In his study, Habibu stated that the negative effects of social media are quite extensive. Some of its negative effects include: Time wastage, health effects, religious effects, it causes serious accidents on our major roads, wrong way of earning cash (419), waste of resources (surplus), decrease in productivity, reduced learning and research capabilities of students, reduce useful commands over language, writing skill effect, it leads to examination malpractice, fraudulent activity, influential effect, misunderstanding between two or more mutual friends, inefficiency effect amongst others. On the basis of time wastage, students, while searching and studying online, get attracted to using social media sites and sometimes they forget why they are using the internet so much, and sometimes the students are not able to deliver

their assignments in the specified timeframe, about 95% of students/youths rely on the information posted by their friends or other social media users which are accessible easily on these social media sites and this may equally reduce their learning, research, capabilities, and efforts toward their studies.

At present social media is a piece of life for the vast majority of Indian youth (Nelson 2021). The use of the Internet is intensely moved to Social Media Sites. Social media is leaving an adverse consequence rather than being positive. The more significant part of the adolescent invests a parcel of energy on the web to visit and check their single or different accounts. Measurements show that dependence on web-based media brought about expanded medical conditions and changes in conduct.

The discussion on **mental health in India** is not addressed seriously and faces stigma and neglect. While challenges faced by the youth are manifold, there is an underlying practice of brushing issues under the carpet, and an inability to voice opinions and seek support, leading to grave personal issues. According to UNICEF, 1 in 7 Indians aged 15 to 24 years feel depressed. **Depression** is linked to a lack of self-esteem, poor concentration, and other

maladaptive symptoms, and can lead to difficulties in communication, failure to work or study productively, amplified risk of substance uses and abuse, as well as suicidal thoughts. One of the key risk factors for these prevalent rates of depression is social media. As social beings, **humans inherently have a need for belonging and social acceptance**, and social media often becomes a tool for validation. The number of likes one's posts or images garners becomes a quantitative measure for many, in relation to their looks, and intelligence, and even extends to their worth as a person. Individuals strive to maintain an 'internet persona' which paints a rosy picture of one's life, using filters to hide parts considered 'not good enough'. **Body dysmorphia** is common among young people and has increased over the past few years. The challenge worsens with the use of algorithms on these platforms forcing people to only watch similar content (Sukriti & Shireen 2021)

Theoretical Review

The Uses and Gratification Theory will serve as a guide for this review.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The second theoretical framework of this study is "Uses and Gratifications Theory" or "need seeking" which is a social communication theory. This theory takes a functionalist approach to communications and media, asserting that the primary goal of media is to satisfy the audience's needs and motives. As a result, the more of these demands met, the greater the enjoyment. Uses and Gratifications theory is founded on two basic questions: What draws people to particular forms of media and what kind of satisfaction do people derive from media (Mehrad, 2016).

This theory begins with an examination of the audience's motives and then moves on to the message and social system. In other words, this theory is concerned with how users seek media and their level of satisfaction with the media's type, content, and method of use. By addressing the two questions raised in "Use and Gratification," the positive and negative consequences of specific media use will be determined.

Uses and Gratifications Theory is established in traditional mass communication study on how a certain media is sought and selected in order to meet their demands. Such study has transformed the course of research from old

ways evaluating "What media does to individuals?" to newer approached analyzing "what individuals do to media?" (Gerlich, 2015). The works of Blumber and Kats are recognized as a development in mass communication research and they can be named as the founders of the UGT. Based on their idea, people seek communication to satisfy their needs, which in turn come from social and psychological states and conditions. In other words, their requirements affect their communicative behavior. Uses and Gratifications theory has completed four developmental phases to be scientifically acknowledged by communication experts (Mehrad, 2016). The first developmental stage dates back to the 1940s and featured descriptive research with conceptual and methodological limitations. In this age, most studies were related to identifying the audience of the radio and comparing it with hard copy media. In the 1950s, the trend towards UGT diminished and few studies were done on this subject (Gerlich 2015).

In fact, in the 1940s and 1950s, the attention of mass communication scholars was mostly on approaches about the influence of media on the audience rather than the usage and

contentment with the media since mass media attempted to affect the direction of people's activities. Another reason for lack of interest in research about this theory was the lack of clear and comprehensive rules about the theoretical hypotheses of this approach (Mehrad, 2016). Uses and Gratification researchers started from the audience's perspective, but since they could not broaden the theoretical framework and psychological principles of this theory to be further investigated, they were unable to create a thorough methodology (Gerlich 2015).

The second phase in the development of this theory was called the practical application of sociological and psychological elements that could establish the varied pattern of media use. At the conclusion of the second developing phase of UGT, more systematic methods for assessing motivation typologies were merged with methods expressing pleasure research materials from media to pave the way for the third developmental phase. In other words, typological efforts were made to operationalize essential variables in a methodical manner. This stage is defined as an attempt to use gratification data to define other components of mass communication that may be tied to the audiences' motifs and expectations. Because

defining is a necessary condition for theorizing in social sciences, the third developmental phase is critical in the uses and gratification method (Mehrad, 2016).

The third developmental stage marks the maturation of thought concerning the gratification process. Numerous hypotheses for this approach were developed, some were amended or merged. Individuals are confronted with their social and psychological requirements, which shape their expectations of mass media or other sources and ultimately result in distinct patterns of media usage or inclination, with the final result being the satisfaction of demands or other desired results.

For the most part, no deliberation is required. This stage was all about developing and testing a theory. Palmgreen and Rayburn stressed the need of distinguishing between "gratification sought" and "gratification attained" in research and theory. Even if people chose a particular medium with the belief that it will be useful, they may not use or like it for a variety of reasons. This conclusion that if people find something fascinating or are willing to pay for it, it will succeed is a fallacy.

Considering the growth of this theory, one can infer that it is one of the most influential theories of communication since it can be used to evaluate a variety of psychological themes and requirements, as well as communicational channels, in a multicultural setting. Additionally, the development of this theory resulted in the introduction of a new paradigm and research approach for communication. At the moment, this paradigm is critical for individuals working in media, given the proliferation of television, radio, video, satellite, and teletext channels, as well as the severe competition between various media (Mehrad 2016).

Uses and Gratification Theory in the 21st Century

Traditionally, Uses and Gratification Theory has been used to evaluate how and why individuals utilize mass communication channels such as radio, television, and newspapers. This is despite the fact that some experts in mass communication assert that this theory is not as robust as other social science hypotheses. In a paper titled "uses and gratification theory in the twenty-first century," stating that every theorization in communication science is contingent on the

uses and gratification theory. Additionally, with the development of communication technologies, this hypothesis has grown in importance. Because these technologies present users with a variety of media, it is critical to investigate their demands, interests, and levels of satisfaction. Previous research on cell phones and the Internet conducted within the context of the uses and gratification theory supports these findings (Gerlich, 2015).

The aforementioned features should be incorporated in contemporary uses and gratification models since each one results in a variety of communication behavior that should be evaluated and assessed. Given the importance of the uses and gratification theory and its growing popularity in the twenty-first century, it is critical for researchers in this field to employ a holistic methodology and to assess the qualitative and interpersonal aspects of this approach more than ever before in order to more accurately assess communicative behavior in the twenty-first century (Gerlich, 2015).

Aim/objective of the study

The aim/objective of this paper is to investigate the influence of social media on youths based on the review of available literature.

Methodology

This paper is based on the review of available literature on the positive and negative impacts of social media on youth, focusing majorly on its negative impact, and secondary data were collected from studies conducted in Nigeria and India.

Results and Discussion of Findings

From the findings of the reviewed literatures, positive use of social media can help youths build their academic career, and skills, improve their living style, get familiar with and adopt new trends, fashion, and so on.

From the study it has been seen that teenagers and youths in Nigeria secondary schools are aware of the existence of the social media; they have access to social media through personal laptops, mobile phones, while some make use of café to connect to the internet. The study reveals the various social media platforms that teenagers usually make use of such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. It however indicates that Facebook is their most preferred social media channel.

It was also drawn from the study that teenagers and youths in Nigerian secondary schools are aware of the existence of social media; they have access to social media through personal laptops, and mobile phones, while some make use of café to connect to the internet. The study reveals the various social media platforms that teenagers usually make use of such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. It however indicates that Facebook is their most preferred social media channel. The study also reveals that the respondents admitted that social media have a negative impact on their lives. Sukriti, in their study of the negative effects of social media on Indian youth also found a similar result.

Recommendations

The study therefore recommends that:

Software should be put in place to serve as “watchdogs” in the server to hunt youths who are using inappropriate sites or these inappropriate sites may be permanently restricted/blocked for youths.

Parents and schools should also keep a close check than before on what their children/students are doing on the Internet

and also ensure that they explain the harmful effects of over-utilization of social media on academic performance to them. The harmful effects of over-utilization of social media on academic performance should be explained to them

The education curriculum also should be revised so that it can include social media studies in its disciplines so as to alert students that they need to be careful in their social media usage in order to ensure that youths' (students) exposure to social media is basically for academic purposes.

Institutions should ensure that in their extra-curricular activities, awareness is put in place regarding the positive use of social networking sites.

The key to a healthy life (style) is having a healthy mind therefore youths should desist from the excessive use of social media by creating a balance in their social life and curricular activities in their daily life schedule

A general re-orientation and change in the way people use social media, especially towards a more positive and developmental use requires that policies that set expectations for appropriate social behavior should be put in

place. For instance, in 2021, Twitter was banned in Nigeria for false and deceitful posts from a user. Therefore, social media operators should set policies in place that do not expose them to legal problems or public embarrassment.

Conclusion

Social media is essential in today's world, both for the youth and society at large.

With the emergence and advancement in Information and communication technology, social media has dominated a larger percentage of our social and curricular lives even with its positive and negative impacts. And also, access to these devices is becoming easily available and cheap to use by everyone, especially the youth. This study therefore concludes that with the increasing advancement in information and communication technology (ICT) and social media dominating most aspects of our social lives including education and commerce, the role and impact of these technologies have come to stay. The youths and teenagers shall continue to acquire and use these facilities with the attendant consequences. Access to these devices is becoming increasingly available, cheap, and simple to use. Hence, as revealed in the

study, youths and teenagers are gaining more and more access to use them. However, it's up to each person to decide how much social media should affect their lives. If the likes of **Bill Gates and Steve Jobs** can place a restriction on their youth's access to technology, we all have a part to play by making the most of social media if we want to get the most out of it.

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