To Study the Role of Social Networking Sites in Socio-Cultural Collapse and Teen Depression

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century is witnessing the rise of a virtual era where everything is accessible at the fingertips of teenagers. This virtual world has been woven through social networking sites (SNS), which serve as platforms for global connectivity. These platforms allow users to establish their virtual identity by creating unique profiles and nurturing them over time across various networks. In addition to building a digital presence, SNS platforms enable users to join communities and interest-based groups, create their own groups, and invite others to participate. Numerous pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and similar platforms attract millions of followers who share common interests. Within these groups and pages, members actively exchange information, share experiences, and disseminate knowledge. With the advent of social media and widespread internet access, traditional face-to-face communication with friends, family, and within social gatherings has significantly diminished. Teens are increasingly engaged in online interactions rather than offline or in-person communication. The growing influence of social networking sites on individual wellbeing has prompted researchers to investigate their broader impact.

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between the use of social networking sites and the rise of socio-cultural decline and depression among teenagers. To achieve this, the researcher adopted a qualitative methodology, conducting in-depth interviews with six teenagers, three psychologists, and five parents. The findings suggest that while teens exhibit signs of addiction to SNS, the link between these platforms and depressive symptoms is complex and influenced by multiple psychological, social, behavioral, and individual factors. The influence of SNS on teens' real-life social engagement and cultural values appears to be deteriorating. Moreover, the impact of SNS on overall wellbeing is nuanced—it can be both positive and negative, depending on usage patterns.

Keywords– Social Networking Sites, Socio-Cultural Collapse, Depression, Teen, Digital Revolution, Virtual World

INTRODUCTION

The advent of digitalization has revolutionized human interaction, with social networking sites (SNS) becoming deeply embedded in everyday life. For many, especially adolescents, these platforms have become more than communication tools—they function as constant virtual companions, or "digital shadows," that follow users throughout their day. Whether for seeking entertainment, sharing personal experiences, or finding solutions to problems, SNS offer instant gratification with just a click. Despite this convenience, the authenticity and long-term feasibility of such virtual interactions are increasingly being scrutinized.

Social networking platforms have enabled the creation of vast virtual communities. However, while they provide a sense of connectivity, they often lack the depth and emotional resonance of face-to-face relationships. A paradoxical society is emerging—one that is highly social in the digital sphere yet plagued by feelings of isolation and emotional disconnect in the real world. This shift is particularly concerning among teens, whose psychological and social development is closely tied to meaningful interpersonal interactions.

Though SNS have played a positive role in spreading awareness about critical issues and supporting

philanthropic causes, they have also served as platforms for more troubling trends. These include the amplification of unrealistic comparisons, cyberbullying, the spread of misinformation, and increased exposure to negative content. Such influences can contribute to a wide range of psychological issues, including depression, anxiety, feelings of inferiority, and even cultural alienation. As noted by Homewood Health (Health Santé), increased time spent on social media correlates with a heightened risk of mental health challenges, particularly among adolescents.

This research focuses on examining the role of social networking sites as a potential catalyst for socio-cultural collapse and mental health deterioration among teenagers. By engaging deeply in the virtual world, many teens become increasingly isolated from their real-world environments and relationships. This study aims to investigate the relationship between SNS use and the onset of depressive symptoms, while also exploring how cultural values are impacted by excessive digital engagement. Finally, the research proposes strategies for mitigating the adverse effects of SNS and promoting healthier, more balanced usage among teens.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the usage pattern of Social Networking Sites (SNS) among teenagers.

- To explore weather social presence and interaction on SNS prevents teens from isolation.

- To identify if SNS provide proper solutions for teens to overcome anxiety and depression.

- To identify motivational forces that inspire teens to spend more time on SNS and less involved in real world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strickland, Amelia C., (2014), Exploring the effects of social media use on the mental health of young adults, Thesis, University of Central Florida.

This study explores the relationship between social media use and mental health in the young adult population. To accomplish this goal, the researcher review and synthesizes the existing literature pertaining to characteristics of social media, general young adult mental health, and the current social- and individual- level theories that may help explain the relationship between social media use by young adults and their mental health. Theories that are been included and discussed in this study are; the impact of sedentary behaviors on mental health, displaced behavior, sleep interruption due to blue light exposure, social media's effects on romantic relationships and social media's effects on platonic relationships. The findings of this research identifies that potential harmful effects surrounding social media use have profound consequences for young adults. The review of theories offer explanatory value in relationship between social and mental health and it also illuminates the complexity of this relationship.

Sandys, Susan Grant, (2017), Connectivity at a cost; Adolescent's use of social media and its effects on their mental health, Massey University.

This study was conducted on young adults of New Zealand to identify the effect of social media usage on mental health of adolescent. The study has been conducted in three parts; a long-form journalism feature, review of literature and online survey on new Zealand adolescent to know their experience with social media. The two major findings of this study are that New Zealand adolescent enjoy life-transforming connectivity as a result of their use of social media, but it comes with inherent emotional pressure, and that cyberspace has many mental health risks for children, and is thus an environment from which they require some protection. In conclusion, there is support for education system improvement and a call for stronger guidance in the public domain on what is right age to join social media.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on descriptive research design and data is collected with the help of in-depth interview

method. For interview structured and open-ended questions as a tool has been used. Through purposive sampling technique sample of study has been selected. The sample comprises of 3 groups i.e. 6 teenagers, 3 Psychologists and 5 parents. Separate questions were structured for all 3 groups and interview has been conducted with all of them separately. Further, the primary data collected through the responses of respondents and secondary data of previous researches has been analyzed to reach the conclusion.

Group 1 - Teenagers Profile

Respondent No.	Respondent Name	Age	Education
R1	Prakhar Dubey	18	BBA – E-commerce Student of MCNUJC
R2	Priyanka Vyas	17	BBA – E-commerce Student of MCNUJC
R3	Kriti Pandey	19	BBA – E-commerce Student of MCNUJC
R4	Hiresh Jain	18	BBA – E-commerce Student of MCNUJC
R5	Gopika Maheshwari	18	BBA – E-commerce Student of MCNUJC
R6	Piyush Tiwari	19	BBA – E-commerce Student of MCNUJC

Group 2 - Parents Profile

Respondent No.	Name	Occupation
P1	Dr. Avinash Vajpyee	HOD in Management Department of MCNUJC
P2	Manjoo Nigam	Housewife
P3	Anil Malviya	Back Office Executive
P4	Priyanka Sharma	Housewife
P5	Anju Vishwakarma	Housewife

Group 3 - Psychologists Profile

Respondent No.	Name	Area of Specialization
Psy. 1	Dr. Shelly Mishr	Ph.D. in Psychology
Psy. 2	Dr. Nasreen Ansari	Ph.D. in Psychology (Organizational Behaviour)
Psy. 3	Dr. Rakhi Tiwari	M.A. in Psychology

Analysis and Findings

Patterns of SNS Usage

Teenagers

- All six teenagers actively use SNS, especially Instagram, due to its ease of use and rich media content.

- Duration of use ranges from 1 to 5 hours daily, with one teen reporting near-constant usage.

- Content consumed includes motivational videos, travel, cooking, music, comedy, and fight videos.

Psychologists

- They emphasized that SNS is not inherently harmful but becomes problematic when overused or misused.

Insight: SNS has become deeply embedded in teens' daily routines, with content tailored to personal interests, making disengagement challenging.

Social Interaction and Real-life Communication

Teenagers

- Most teens reported limited interaction on SNS, mainly short conversations with close friends.

- In offline settings, teens admitted to preferring SNS use over real-life engagement.

Parents

- All parents observed a decrease in their children's real-world interactions, especially during family events or social gatherings.

- Some blamed not only SNS but nuclear family structures and working parents for social detachment.

Psychologists

- Noted a growing preference for virtual interaction over real-world socialization.

- Mentioned peer pressure and lack of time with parents as contributing factors.

Insight: SNS has reshaped how teens engage socially—there is growing virtual socialization but weakening real-life bonds, contributing to socio-cultural isolation.

SNS Addiction and Behavioral Impact

Teenagers

- Mixed responses: 2 teens admitted current addiction, 2 had past addiction, and others denied it.

- Reported behaviors include frequent checking of notifications, and compulsive mobile usage.

Parents

- 2 of 5 parents admitted their children were addicted; others denied addiction but acknowledged irritability, decreased attention span, and withdrawal from activities.

Psychologists

- All agreed that SNS addiction is real and growing.

- Identified issues like FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and attention deficiency.

- Cited digital availability, lack of parental control, and digital illiteracy as root causes.

Insight: While teens underreport their addiction, both parents and psychologists observe signs of behavioral

dependence and psychological distraction.

Impact on Academics and Extracurricular Activities

Teenagers

- 4 of 6 admitted SNS negatively affected their studies and extracurricular activities.

Parents

- Expressed concern over the same, stating children prefer phones over physical games or learning activities.

Psychologists

- Warned that SNS use is diverting focus from academic and creative growth, especially when unsupervised.

Insight: SNS use is directly linked with academic distraction and decline in holistic development.

Emotional Dependency and Validation through SNS

Teenagers

- Half the respondents admitted they expect likes or comments on their posts, though they deny feeling sad if expectations aren't met.

- Some expressed overthinking when their posts didn't receive engagement.

Psychologists

- Highlighted SNS as a space where social comparison is inevitable and can impact self-esteem and emotional health.

Insight: While teens do not openly express emotional harm, validation-seeking behavior is evident, indicating a subtle but growing emotional dependency on digital feedback.

Psychological Impact – Anxiety, Depression, and Coping
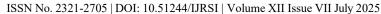
Teenagers

- 2 of 6 teens experienced anxiety or irritability due to SNS usage, though none reported clinical depression.

- Common coping mechanisms include exercise, talking to friends, or turning off the phone.

Parents

- Denied observing clinical symptoms in their children but noticed increased irritability and lower patience.

- Acknowledged wider societal rise in emotional issues like suicides and emotional isolation.

Psychologists

- Warned about serious psychological consequences such as anxiety, insomnia, and loss of real-world empathy.

- Urged timely interventions from parents, schools, and mental health professionals.

Insight: Though teens may underreport emotional distress, psychologists identify emerging mental health issues triggered or worsened by SNS overuse.

Problem Solving and Self-help via SNS

Teenagers

- 5 of 6 use SNS to find solutions to personal issues, citing motivational content or advice forums like Quora.

- One teen said it increased fear by showcasing extreme or negative outcomes.

Psychologists

- Emphasized the need for gatekeeping and critical evaluation of online content, since teens may misinterpret or over-rely on unverified information.

Insight: Teens turn to SNS for guidance, which shows trust in the medium but also signals a gap in real-life support systems.

Parental Awareness and Guidance

Parents

- Universally agreed that time limits and guidance are essential, but also admitted it is challenging to enforce without offending their children.

- Emphasized quality time, creative engagement, and value-based education as alternatives.

Psychologists

- Urged parents to take the lead in digital literacy, model responsible behavior, and initiate meaningful conversations.

- Advised developing healthy routines, encouraging hobbies, and involving children in real-life activities.

Insight: Parental involvement is vital but often inconsistent; many parents lack the tools or time to manage SNS exposure effectively.
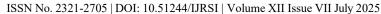
Recommendations for Prevention and Recovery

Psychologists' Recommendations for Teens

- Practice self-monitoring and time management

- Replace SNS with creative hobbies, group activities, and real-world social interaction

- Develop a disciplined and purpose-driven lifestyle

Psychologists' Recommendations for Parents

- Be proactive in gatekeeping and digital supervision

- Spend quality emotional time with children

- Educate children on both pros and cons of SNS

- If necessary, seek professional help and therapy

Insight: Prevention of SNS-related harm requires a dual approach—internal self-regulation by teens and external support and modeling by parents and institutions.

Ethical Considerations

This research strictly adhered to ethical standards to ensure the rights and well-being of all participants, particularly as the study involved teenagers and addressed sensitive topics such as depression and socio-cultural disconnection. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. In the case of minors, parental or guardian consent was secured alongside the assent of the teen participants. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process by assigning pseudonyms and removing any identifiable information from the transcripts and final report. The interviews were conducted in a respectful and non-intrusive manner to minimize psychological discomfort. Participants were not pressured to answer any questions they found distressing and were given the option to pause or terminate the interview if needed. The researcher also provided information about psychological support services in case any participant experienced emotional discomfort. All data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. This ethical approach ensured a safe, respectful, and responsible environment for all contributors to the research.

CONCLUSION

Every tool or technology presents both advantages and disadvantages, and its overall impact depends largely on the way it is used and the extent of its consumption. Social Networking Sites (SNS), while offering significant benefits such as global connectivity, information dissemination, and self-expression, can pose serious risks when excessively or inappropriately used. With the proliferation of smartphones, low-cost internet access, and rapid digitalization in recent years, the use of SNS among teenagers has surged dramatically. This overconsumption has raised critical concerns, particularly regarding its adverse effects on adolescents' mental health, behavioral patterns, and cultural integration.

The present study explored the perspectives of three stakeholder groups—teenagers, parents, and psychologists—on the role of SNS in contributing to teen depression and socio-cultural detachment. Teen participants largely acknowledged their addiction to SNS, reporting its negative impact on academics and extracurricular engagement. However, they did not explicitly associate their SNS use with symptoms of depression or anxiety. Parents, in contrast, expressed considerable concern, citing behavioral changes and difficulty in guiding their children due to increased emotional reactivity and resistance. They also highlighted broader societal shifts, such as the rise of nuclear families and dual working parents, as contributing factors. Psychologists introduced critical frameworks such as screen dependency theory and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), emphasizing the importance of usage patterns and self-regulation. They underscored the significance of parental involvement and emotional bonding as preventive strategies.

In conclusion, the study affirms that excessive use of SNS is an escalating issue with far-reaching implications. It not only influences teens' psychological well-being but also contributes to a gradual erosion of real-world social and cultural engagement. The findings emphasize the need for collaborative efforts—through parental guidance, psychological interventions, digital literacy initiatives, and awareness campaigns—to promote balanced and healthy SNS usage among adolescents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the growing impact of social networking sites on teenagers, practical steps must be taken by schools, teens, and parents. Schools should integrate digital literacy into the curriculum, organize counseling workshops on screen addiction and mental health, and encourage participation in extracurricular activities to reduce digital dependency. Setting clear policies on phone use during school hours can also help limit distractions. For teenagers, it is essential to set time limits for SNS use, take regular digital detoxes, and engage in offline hobbies or social activities. Being mindful of the psychological effects of FOMO (fear of missing out) and avoiding unhealthy comparisons online can promote better self-esteem. Parents play a crucial role by modeling balanced

digital behavior, setting tech-free zones or hours at home, and maintaining open, non-judgmental communication with their children. Encouraging real-world interactions and shared family time helps reduce the emotional reliance on virtual platforms. Together, these strategies foster healthier digital habits and support the mental and emotional well-being of adolescents in a tech-driven world.

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