

**MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG UNIVERSITY OF
BENIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

BY

**ASIBOR JOYCE OSEWANE
EDU2102548**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY, EDO STATE**

NOVEMBER, 2025.

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE EDUCATION DEGREE B.Sc.(Ed.) IN HEALTH
EDUCATION.**

NOVEMBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by Joyce Osewane **ASIBOR** with matriculation number **EDU2102548** in the Department of Health Safety and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin in partial fulfillment of the award of Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Education.

.....
MR. V. I. EDOGIWERIE
(PROJECT SUPERVISOR)

.....
MRS. B. H. ENABULELE
(PROJECT COODINATOR)

.....
DATE:

.....
DATE:

.....
DR. (MRS).O.H OBASUYI
(HEAD OF DEPARTMENT)

.....
DATE:

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to almighty God who saw me through my undergraduate program in the University of Benin, by giving me the strength and grace to overcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am appreciative of the effort of my supervisor, Mr. Victor I. **EDOGIAWERIE**, a dedicated and highly respected lecturer who despite his busy schedule, provided a valuable guidance and support to ensure the research stays on the right track. My heartfelt gratitude goes to the head of department, Dr. (Mrs) **OBASUYI**. I also extend my gratitude to Ass prof. E.O. **IGUDIA** and all lecturers in the Department of Health, Safety, and Environmental Education, UNIBEN, whose mentorship and dedication have been instrumental in shaping his academic journey from the first year to final year.

I am also grateful to my parent, Mrs Asibor, for her unwavering love, prayer, and financial support throughout my stay in the University of Benin. A special appreciation goes to my late Dad, Mr Asibor, whose constant encouragement, and sacrifice were instrumental in my academic journey. I want to say a heartfelt thank you to my Aunt, Congress and Family for their unconditional love and support.

I sincerely appreciate my friends, in person of Juliet, for her constant support, encouragement and companionship throughout this journey. Her presence made even the toughest moments easier to navigate. I am also deeply grateful to all my course mates for their motivation, teamwork, and shared experience, which played a vital role in his academic journey. A special thank you goes to everyone who contributed in one way or another, including those whose names may not be mentioned.

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ABSTRACT

A descriptive survey of 230 University of Benin undergraduates explored social media's impact on mental health. Findings revealed a dual effect: while social media was a source of happiness for many, a majority also reported feeling depressed from its use. Students widely agreed that prolonged use negatively impacts sleep and concentration and that females are more vulnerable to cyberbullying. The study recommends university-led awareness programs and support systems to help students manage these negative effect

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background Of The Study

Mental health is a fundamental aspect of overall well-being, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social factors that influence how individuals think, feel, and behave. It affects how people handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions in daily life. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood through adulthood (World Health Organization 2022)

Mental health is influenced by various factors including biological aspects (such as genetics and brain chemistry), psychological experiences (like trauma and negative thinking patterns), and social/environmental conditions (such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of social support) (WHO, 2022;)(National Institute of Mental Health, 2022).

Mental health exists on a continuum that ranges from optimal well-being to severe mental illness. At one end, individuals experience positive mental health, where they can manage stress, work productively, and contribute to their community. In the middle, people may face mild to moderate mental health challenges like stress or anxiety that can affect daily functioning but are often manageable with support. At the other extreme are individuals with serious mental health disorders, such as depression or schizophrenia, which require

professional treatment. Understanding these levels helps in identifying when someone may need support or intervention (Keyes, 2002).

Social media has become an integral part of daily life, especially for young people. It offers platforms for communication, self-expression, and information sharing. However, its constant use has raised concerns about its impact on mental health. Research suggests that excessive use of social media can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. The pressure to present a perfect image and gain validation through likes and comments can negatively affect self-esteem and emotional well-being (Keles et al., 2020).

At the same time, social media can offer positive mental health benefits. It provides support networks, spreads awareness about mental health issues, and connects people with similar experiences. Online communities and mental health influencers can help reduce stigma and encourage individuals to seek help. For people who may feel isolated, especially during events like the COVID-19 pandemic, social media has served as a valuable tool for maintaining social connections (Naslund et al., 2016).

Ultimately, the effect of social media on mental health depends on how it is used. Passive scrolling and comparison with others are linked to negative outcomes, while active, purposeful engagement can foster support and connection. Encouraging balanced use,

promoting digital literacy, and supporting positive content can help individuals benefit from social media while protecting their mental well-being (Keles et al., 2020).

Social media has significantly transformed the way individuals communicate, share information, and engage with global communities. Platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok have become essential tools for both personal expression and business marketing. These platforms allow users to create and distribute content instantly, fostering real-time interaction and feedback across the world (Smith, 2023).

Social media can have both positive and negative effects on mental health. While it can provide social support, a sense of community, and access to helpful information, excessive use has been linked to issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Constant exposure to curated images and posts can lead to unrealistic comparisons and feelings of inadequacy, especially among adolescents and young adults. Moreover, cyberbullying and online harassment can significantly impact emotional well-being (Keles et al., 2020).

At the University of Pennsylvania, Hunt et al. (2018) carried out an experimental study to explore how social media use affects students' mental health. Undergraduate participants were divided into two groups: one was instructed to restrict their use of Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat to a maximum of 30 minutes daily for three weeks, while the other group continued with their normal patterns of use. Findings revealed that students

who reduced their time on these platforms experienced notably lower levels of depression and loneliness than those in the control group, suggesting that limiting social media use can have a beneficial effect on mental well-being.

Age and sex play a crucial role in shaping the impact of social media use on mental health, as younger individuals, especially adolescents, are more susceptible to the harmful effects of social comparison and cyberbullying. Women are more likely to face body image issues and emotional distress due to content focused on appearance, while men may engage with social media in distinct ways but still encounter risks like online harassment.

Statement Of Problem

The pervasive integration of social media into daily life has raised significant concerns regarding its impact on mental health, particularly among vulnerable populations like undergraduate students. This demographic, often navigating critical developmental stages, academic pressures, and newfound independence, is increasingly exposed to the complexities of online interactions. The constant connectivity, curated self-presentations, and potential for cyberbullying inherent in social media platforms can contribute to a range of psychological distresses, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem among University undergraduate students if not checked. Understanding the specific mechanisms through which social media influences the mental well-being of university

undergraduate students is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems.

The problem is further compounded by the unique stressors faced by undergraduate students, such as academic performance expectations, financial burdens, and social integration challenges. Social media can exacerbate these pressures by fostering social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), and a distorted perception of peers' lives, leading to feelings of inadequacy and isolation. The blurred lines between online and offline identities, coupled with the pressure to maintain an idealized digital persona, can also contribute to identity confusion and increased self-consciousness.

Moreover, the addictive nature of social media platforms, designed to maximize engagement through notifications and personalized content, can lead to excessive usage, displacing time that could be spent on more beneficial activities like studies, assignments, sleep, exercise, or in-person social interactions. This displacement can negatively impact academic performance and overall well-being, creating a vicious cycle where increased social media use is sought as a coping mechanism for stress, but ultimately contributes to further mental health decline.

The lack of digital literacy and critical evaluation skills among some undergraduate students can also make them more susceptible to misinformation and negative online content, further impacting their mental state.

University of Benin and other educational institutions have made tremendous effort to mitigate the negative effects of social Media use on the mental health of undergraduate students. This efforts includes sensitizations, awareness, and the restriction of phones during classes and exams. Some institutions in developed countries have filed lawsuits against social media companies, alleging that the platforms have made their job of educating students nearly impossible due to the addictive nature of the technology. Institutions are also exploring innovative ways, such as using social media itself, to connect with students and support their mental health, but this requires careful planning and resource allocation.

Despite all this efforts by the school management, the heavy use of social media among undergraduate students is still evidentially persisting in university of Benin, resulting to series of mental disorders including the violation of school rules and some level of exam malpractice.

Researches and interventions concerning the heavy use of social media among undergraduate students in the past have been conducted amongst undergraduate of other universities in Nigeria, while only a few studies have been conducted amongst undergraduate of university of Benin. This study will serve as a baseline for appropriate intervention, as well as facilitate policy formulation and enforcement on the appropriate use of social media platforms among undergraduate students in University of Benin, as it

aims at accessing the effects of social media use among undergraduate students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the level of mental health among university of Benin undergraduate?
2. What is the level of social media use among university of Benin undergraduate?
3. What is the influence of social media use on mental health among university of Benin undergraduate?
4. Is the relationship between mental health and social media use varied by age ?
5. Is the relationship between mental health and social media use varied by sex?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis are formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significance relationship between mental health and social media use among university of Benin undergraduate student
2. The relationship between mental health and social media use is not significantly difference by age among university of Benin undergraduate students
3. The relationship between mental health and social media use is not significantly difference by sex.

Purpose Of Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate mental health and social media use among university of Benin undergraduate students .

Specifically, the study will be looking at :

1. Levels of mental health among university of Benin undergraduate .
2. Levels of social media use among university of Benin undergraduate.
3. The relationship between mental health and social media use among university of Benin undergraduate.
4. Age difference in the relationship between mental health and social media use among university of Benin undergraduate.
5. Sex difference in the relationship between mental health and social media use among the university of Benin undergraduate.

Significance Of The Study

The study on mental health and social media use among undergraduates at the University of Benin holds significant value for a range of stakeholders, including students, Health educators, mental health professionals, Researchers and policy makers, as it provides insights into how digital engagement impacts student well-being and academic performance.

Health education stands to gain significantly from examining the connection between mental health and social media use among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. The study can offer valuable, evidence-based insights into how social media habits influence mental well-being, enabling the development of targeted strategies to address issues like anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. Additionally, the findings can help shape educational programs that promote digital literacy, responsible online behavior, and mental health awareness. By shedding light on these issues, the research can also support awareness campaigns that encourage help-seeking behaviors and foster a more supportive university environment. Moreover, it can inform policy recommendations aimed at improving student wellness through guidelines on social media use and enhanced access to counseling services. Lastly, the study can serve as a resource for training peer educators and campus counselors, equipping them with the knowledge needed to assist students in navigating the psychological challenges of the digital age.

Researchers stand to gain numerous benefits from exploring the topic of mental health and social media use among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. This area of study helps bridge existing gaps in knowledge by providing new insights into the digital behaviors of Nigerian university students, a group that has not been extensively studied. It also offers an opportunity to examine how local cultural, social, and economic

factors shape the impact of social media on mental health. The findings can serve as a valuable reference point for future research, enabling comparative or longitudinal studies across different institutions or demographics. Additionally, the results can support the development of informed policies and mental health initiatives within academic environments. Researchers can also contribute to academic discourse through publications and conference presentations, thereby advancing scholarship in fields like public health, psychology, and social science. Furthermore, this topic encourages interdisciplinary collaboration with professionals across various fields, fostering comprehensive approaches to addressing the mental health challenges associated with digital media.

Policymakers stand to gain valuable insights from studying the impact of social media on the mental health of University of Benin undergraduate students. The research offers concrete data that can support the development of informed, evidence-based policies targeting mental health issues influenced by digital media use. It can guide the enhancement of student support systems, such as expanding counseling services, promoting digital well-being, and encouraging peer-led initiatives. Additionally, the findings may drive reforms in education policy, including the integration of mental health awareness and responsible social media use into academic curricula. The study can also aid in strategic resource allocation, ensuring that adequate funding is directed toward

mental health and digital literacy initiatives. On a broader scale, the research can contribute to legislative discussions focused on regulating social media to better protect the mental health of young people. Finally, it provides a valuable tool for evaluating the success of existing programs and policies, offering a foundation for continuous improvements

Scope And Delimitations

This work is to assess mental health and social media use among university of Benin undergraduates and it is delimited to undergraduate students in university of Benin

Limitation Of Study

While the study of mental health and social media use among University of Benin undergraduate students provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. which may be affected by bias, such as underreporting of mental health symptoms or inaccurate recall of social media usage. The study may also face challenges in achieving a truly representative sample due to differences in access to digital platforms, willingness to participate, or varying academic and social pressures across faculties. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of most such studies limits the ability to establish causal relationships between social media use and mental health outcomes. Cultural stigma around mental health may also affect the openness and honesty of participants, potentially skewing results.

Definitions Of Terms

Mental Health:

A condition of overall well-being where a person is aware of their abilities, can handle everyday stress, perform effectively in their tasks, and make meaningful contributions to society. It encompasses emotional, psychological, and social aspects of life.

Social Media:

Online platforms and apps that enable individuals to produce, share, and engage with content or communicate with others. Common examples include WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, and Twitter (X).

Undergraduate Students:

Students currently pursuing their initial university degree, typically a bachelor's program, at institutions like the University of Benin, who have not yet finished their academic requirements.

Social Media Use:

The way individuals interact with social media platforms, including how often and how long they use them, as well as the types of activities they engage in—such as uploading posts, scrolling through content, messaging others, or viewing videos.

Depression:

A widespread mental health condition marked by ongoing feelings of sadness, a lack of interest or enjoyment in usual activities, and various emotional and physical symptoms that interfere with everyday life.

Anxiety:

A psychological condition marked by intense feelings of worry, fear, or unease that can significantly disrupt a person's daily routines and functioning.

Cyberbullying:

The act of using online platforms to intimidate, bully, or embarrass someone, which can lead to significant mental health issues for university students.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature shall be reviewed under the following subheadings

- Concept of mental health and social media use
- level of mental health
- level of social media use
- Relationship between mental health and social media use
- Age difference in the relationship between mental health and social media use
- Sex difference in the relationship between mental health and social media use
- Empirical
- Summary of the reviewed literature

Concept Of Mental Health

Mental health plays a vital role in a person's overall well-being, covering emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of life. It influences how people think, feel, and act, as well as how they handle stress, interact with others, and make decisions. Gaining a clear understanding of mental health is essential for supporting complete health and reducing the risk of mental illnesses.

Mental health is a broad and intricate concept that goes beyond simply not having a mental illness. It includesarrangement.HeHenceaits such as emotional regulation, the

ability to build and maintain meaningful relationships, working effectively, and adapting to life's changes and challenges. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2004).

Mental health covers several key areas:

Cognitive – How individuals think, learn, and solve problems.

Emotional – How people manage and express their emotions.

Behavioral – Observable actions that indicate psychological health.

Social – The capacity to build and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships.

Mental health also exists on a spectrum. On one end is optimal mental well-being, where individuals thrive and find satisfaction in life. On the other end are mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, or more severe disorders like schizophrenia. People can shift along this spectrum based on life circumstances, personal coping mechanisms, and available support (Keyes, 2002).

Furthermore, the meaning of mental health differs across cultural and societal settings. Cultural values, norms, and beliefs influence how mental health is understood and expressed. Therefore, mental health should be viewed not just as a medical or psychological issue but also as a cultural and social construct (Kirmayer, 2001).

Mental health is more than the lack of mental illness; it is a positive condition that enables individuals to function effectively, remain resilient, maintain well-being, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Components Of Mental Health

Mental health consists of several interrelated parts that collectively contribute to a person's overall well-being. Gaining a clear understanding of these components enables individuals, healthcare providers, and policymakers to better promote and maintain mental wellness.

There are three components included

Emotional Well-being

This component involves the capacity to manage, express, and regulate emotions in a balanced and constructive way. It includes being aware of and understanding feelings such as joy, fear, sadness, anger, and excitement. Individuals with high emotional well-being tend to be resilient, meaning they are better equipped to handle stress, bounce back from adversity, and maintain stability through life's challenges.

Key elements include:

Emotional regulation – Managing impulsive reactions and emotional responses. Stress coping – Handling everyday pressures without becoming overwhelmed. Positive self-regard – Having a healthy level of self-worth and confidence.

Psychological Well Being

Psychological well-being is linked to one's internal mental processes, including how a person views themselves, their life circumstances, and their ability to handle difficulties. It reflects a person's sense of identity, direction, and control over their life, as well as their ability to find meaning and purpose.

Key elements include:

Self-acceptance – Maintaining a favorable view of oneself

Independence – Thinking and acting on one's own

Life management – Effectively handling personal and environmental demands

Continual self-improvement – Striving for personal development

Life purpose – Setting goals and having a clear sense of direction

Social Well-being

Social well-being focuses on how individuals interact with others and engage within their communities. It refers to one's ability to build and sustain meaningful relationships, as well as contribute positively to the wider social environment.

Key elements include:

Strong communication abilities

Empathy and emotional support for others

Feeling connected and supported by a social network

Active involvement in group or community life.

Significance Of Mental Health

Mental health is a cornerstone of personal and communal well-being, significantly shaping how individuals think, feel, behave, manage stress, connect with others, and make life decisions. Its impact stretches across all areas of life—from academic and professional achievements to social interactions and physical wellness. The following points outline why mental health is of paramount importance:

Improve Overall Life satisfaction

Maintaining good mental health enhances a person's ability to find joy, purpose, and meaning in life. It allows individuals to navigate challenges with resilience, enjoy positive emotions, and remain optimistic during adversity. Mental well-being is closely associated with higher levels of contentment and emotional strength (Diener et al., 1999).

Enhances Daily Performance And Productivity

Mental well-being is vital for achieving success in academics, careers, and routine tasks. Individuals in good mental health are more likely, Stay focused and attentive, Tackle problems efficiently, Make thoughtful decisions, Demonstrate creativity.

In addition, strong mental health supports motivation and physical endurance, enabling people to perform better in both personal and work-related roles (WHO, 2013).

Strengthens Social Connections

The state of one's mental health influences their ability to form and maintain meaningful relationships. People with stable mental health are generally better at, Expressing themselves clearly, Understanding others' emotions, Building trust and working cooperatively. These qualities help develop healthy, supportive relationships that reinforce emotional security and coping skill(Umberson & Montez, 2010).

Prevents Mental Disorders And Lowers Medical Expenses

Focusing on mental health early on can reduce the risk of mental illness like depression, anxiety, and addiction. Programs that promote early intervention, stress management, and counseling can help decrease the long-term strain on health services and families. When left untreated, mental health issues often lead to serious physical illnesses, premature death, and higher healthcare costs (Patel et al., 2018).

Enhances Physical Health

Mental and physical health are deeply interconnected. Poor mental health can compromise the immune system, raise the risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, and foster harmful habits like overeating, inactivity, or smoking. Conversely, good mental health supports better sleep, physical resilience, and healthier lifestyle choices (Prince et al., 2007).

Drives Social and Economic Progress

A population with sound mental health contributes positively to society through increased productivity, responsible behavior, and civic engagement. It helps reduce problems like crime, homelessness, and substance misuse, while promoting social unity. Communities and governments that prioritize mental health often witness gains in educational outcomes, workforce performance, and national development (Lund et al., 2011).

Factors Influencing Mental Health

Mental health is shaped by a diverse array of factors that often overlap and interact in intricate ways. These influences can be biological, psychological, social, environmental, and cultural.

Biological Influences

Biological elements include genetic and physiological components that impact mental well-being. These factors include:

Genetics: A hereditary link to mental health disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia may increase susceptibility to similar conditions.

Brain Chemistry and Structure: Mental health can be affected by chemical imbalances in neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, potentially causing disorders such as anxiety or depression.

Hormonal Changes: Shifts in hormones—like elevated cortisol or thyroid dysfunction—can impact emotional balance. Hormonal changes after childbirth or during illness may trigger mental health challenges.

Chronic Health Conditions: Long-term illnesses, such as diabetes or neurological disorders, may influence mental health through physical strain, emotional stress, or medication side effects.

These issues often require medical treatment, therapy, or lifestyle changes to manage effectively. (Nestler et al., 2002)

Psychological Influences

Psychological aspects involve emotional development, cognitive patterns, and past life experiences.

Personality Characteristics: Traits like low self-confidence, pessimism, or high perfectionism can heighten the risk of emotional disorders.

Coping Mechanisms: Inadequate coping strategies, poor stress tolerance, or reliance on harmful habits like substance use may harm mental health.

Trauma and Abuse: Individuals who have suffered abuse or trauma, especially in early life, face an increased likelihood of developing PTSD, anxiety, or depression.

Distorted Thinking Patterns: Negative thinking habits—such as catastrophizing or black-and-white thinking—are common in anxiety and mood disorders.

Psychological therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) are often used to address these issues.(Beck, 2011)

Social Influences

Social surroundings significantly impact mental health.

Family Environment: Stable and nurturing family relationships help foster emotional health, while conflict within families can lead to psychological distress.

Friendships and Community Support: Strong social ties promote mental wellness. Social exclusion or peer bullying, on the other hand, may lead to loneliness and depression.

Education and Job Opportunities: Access to quality education and secure employment supports self-esteem and mental stability. Academic failure or unemployment can cause emotional strain.

Stigma and Discrimination: Being marginalized due to mental illness, race, gender identity, or disability can have damaging effects on mental well-being.

Building inclusive communities and support systems can help reduce these negative effects.(Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003)

Environmental Influences

These relate to the physical and external surroundings in which individuals live.

Housing and Living Conditions: Poor sanitation, overcrowding, or unsafe housing environments can trigger ongoing stress.

Violence and Conflict Exposure: Living in violent or abusive environments, or in conflict zones, can result in trauma and lasting psychological harm.

Climate and Natural Disasters: Events like floods or droughts can cause displacement and grief, often leading to conditions such as PTSD.

Urban Life: The fast-paced nature of urban living can increase stress levels, whereas access to green spaces and safe infrastructure promotes better mental health. Policies aimed at improving physical environments and public safety can significantly support mental health.(WHO, 2014)

Cultural And Societal Influences

Cultural background influences how people perceive, express, and respond to mental health issues.

Cultural Norms and Beliefs: In some cultures, mental illness is heavily stigmatized, discouraging individuals from seeking help or speaking openly.

Religion and Spirituality: While religious beliefs can offer emotional support and resilience, exclusionary practices within religious groups can also cause psychological distress.

Media Influence: Exposure to unrealistic or harmful portrayals in traditional and social media can negatively affect body image, self-worth, and emotional well-being.

Mental health services must be culturally sensitive and inclusive to address these barriers.(Kirmayer, 2001)

Mental health is shaped by a blend of biological, psychological, social, environmental, and cultural factors. These elements are interconnected and rarely function independently. To effectively support mental well-being, it is vital to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses all these domains together.

Mental Health And Society

Mental health extends beyond individual well being it is a key societal concern with wide ranging implications. The emotional and psychological health of a population directly influences a community's stability, efficiency, and unity. Societies that give importance to mental well-being often enjoy stronger economies, reduced crime, improved academic achievement, and healthier social bonds. In contrast, ignoring mental health contributes to various social problems that hinder family life, community development, and national progress.

Economic Consequences

Mental well-being has a direct effect on workforce productivity and economic success. Individuals facing mental health challenges often find it hard to maintain stable employment, which can lead to lower work output and increased absenteeism. This translates into substantial financial losses for both businesses and governments.

The World Health Organization (2016) reports that depression and anxiety alone cost the global economy over \$1 trillion annually due to lost productivity. Yet, mental health investment yields significant returns—every \$1 spent on treating common mental disorders brings a \$4 return in better health and productivity.

Effect On Education And Academic Success

Mental health plays a critical role in learning and academic achievement. Students dealing with issues such as depression, anxiety, or attention disorders often face challenges with focus, motivation, and behavior, leading to reduced performance, higher dropout rates, and limited career prospects. Incorporating mental health support in schools—through counseling services, peer mentoring, and emotional literacy programs—can enhance students’ emotional well-being and educational outcomes (Weare & Nind, 2011).

Social Relationships And Community Well-being

Strong mental health supports meaningful relationships, empathy, collaboration, and positive communication—all of which help build cohesive communities. In contrast,

untreated mental disorders may lead to family conflict, violence, substance misuse, and social withdrawal.

A mentally healthy society tends to demonstrate , lower levels of crime and interpersonal violence, increased civic involvement and volunteerism,decreases in homelessness and family disruptions.Failing to address mental health needs can result in stigma, exclusion, and the marginalization of vulnerable populations, including refugees, those with disabilities, and people living in poverty.

Stigma and Discrimination

Stigma remains one of the most significant barriers to mental health care. In many societies, mental illness is misrepresented and surrounded by negative stereotypes. Individuals living with these conditions are often unfairly perceived as dangerous, weak, or incapable. This leads toHesitation to seek professional help, Isolation and lack of social support, Inequity in employment, education, and healthcare ,Reduced confidence and worsening symptoms ,Combating stigma through public awareness, advocacy, and inclusive policies is essential for fostering an accepting and supportive society (Corrigan, 2004).

Government Responsibility And Policy Interventions

Governments play a vital role in promoting mental health at the population level. Through effective policies, legal frameworks, and financial commitment, public institutions can shape better mental health outcomes. National strategies should focus on Expanding access to mental health care, Integrating mental health into general healthcare systems, Training professionals in health and education sectors, Enforcing laws that prevent discrimination, Developing community-based treatment and support programs.

Concept Of Social Media Use

Social media encompasses a wide range of digital tools and platforms that enable individuals and organizations to communicate, collaborate, and exchange content such as information, ideas, and interests through online communities and networks. These platforms—often in the form of websites and mobile apps—encourage users to generate and interact with content. In contrast to traditional media formats like TV, radio, and print, which operate in a one-way manner, social media is dynamic and participatory. Users are active contributors rather than passive recipients, engaging in discussions, media sharing, and ongoing interaction. This shift marks a significant change in how people connect and communicate in the digital world (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The rise of social media has dramatically changed how people interact, build relationships, and access real-time information. Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and LinkedIn have become part of

daily life for billions of users globally. These platforms break down geographical barriers, allowing people to maintain social connections, share updates instantly, and stay informed. Social media has also become a primary source for news, entertainment, and learning, changing how people consume content. By fostering a culture of participation, these platforms empower users to contribute to trending discussions and shape digital narratives (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Apart from its role in communication, social media significantly influences identity formation, cultural values, and social behaviors. Individuals use these platforms to craft and maintain their digital identities by sharing curated content—photos, opinions, and personal experiences—that often receive public reactions in the form of likes, comments, and shares. This interactive process affects how users perceive themselves and others, influencing behavior and reinforcing social expectations. Popular trends in style, language, and lifestyle frequently gain momentum on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Additionally, social media gives voice to underrepresented communities, allowing them to organize, express themselves, and advocate for their rights within virtual spaces, thus supporting broader cultural diversity and representation (Papacharissi, 2011).

Form Of Social Media Use

Connecting And Networking Socially

A primary function of social media is maintaining relationships. Users interact with friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances through platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram. Common activities include, Sending direct messages or chatting, Sharing personal moments like photos or status updates, Liking, commenting on, or reacting to others content .These interactions strengthen social bonds, especially when face-to-face contact is limited (Ellison et al., 2007).

Accessing News And Information

Many people now turn to social media to stay informed. These platforms serve as hubs for up-to-date information, including, Breaking news and global events, Health advisories and public announcements, Political updates and educational materials. Sites like LinkedIn, Twitter (X), and Reddit are commonly used to follow experts, influencers, and organizations (Kümpel et al., 2015).

Entertainment And Relaxation

A significant number of users log on for leisure. Social media provides various forms of entertainment such as, Watching short videos, vlogs, or reels, Viewing humorous content and memes, Playing games linked to social media. While it serves as a fun escape from

daily stress, excessive use can lead to reduced productivity and over-dependence (Andreassen et al., 2012).

Crafting Identity And Self-Image

Social media offers a platform for users to express their personality and control how others see them. Activities in this category include, Posting achievements or selfies, Updating personal bios and statuses, Using visual filters and curated themes. This allows for creative expression but can also result in unrealistic self-comparisons and social pressure (Michikyan et al., 2014).

Digital Activism And Civic Engagement

Increasingly, people use social platforms to advocate for causes and participate in social justice efforts. Common practices include, Sharing awareness posts and event invitations, Using viral hashtags to support movements (#EndSARS, #BlackLivesMatter), Participating in online protests and campaigns. These activities promote collective voice and empower underrepresented groups (Tufekci, 2017).

Professional Networking And Business Promotion

Social media also plays a key role in career advancement and digital entrepreneurship. It's used for, Building professional relationships via LinkedIn, Marketing products or

services through Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok, Seeking employment opportunities and talent. This form supports branding and helps individuals and businesses enhance their online presence (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Passive Engagement (Observing Without Interaction)

Not all users are actively involved in posting or commenting. Passive users tend to ,Scroll through content without reacting, Watch videos or read posts silently, Monitor discussions or stories without contributing .Though subtle, this behavior still impacts emotional well-being and social comparison (Verduyn et al., 2017).

Purpose Of Social Media Use

The reasons people use social media often depend on personal preferences, the specific platform, and the social context, but common purposes include staying connected, communicating, sharing information, expressing oneself, seeking entertainment, and building professional relationships. Many individuals rely on social media to maintain contact with friends and family, connect with new people, voice opinions, and engage in digital communities. Additionally, these platforms provide users with quick access to news and global events, making them a vital tool for staying informed. For others, social

media offers a means of relaxation and enjoyment, often through engaging content such as memes, videos, and games.

Psychologically, social media also satisfies deeper emotional and social needs like the desire to belong, affirm one's identity, and manage self-presentation. Users often shape their online presence to project a certain image and seek validation through likes, comments, and followers. In the professional world, platforms such as LinkedIn are used to build networks, enhance career opportunities, and promote personal branding.

These various motivations for using social media are well explained by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which argues that people deliberately select media channels that best meet their specific social and psychological needs (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Implications Of Social Media Use

The integration of social media into the fabric of daily life has resulted in a complex and multifaceted set of consequences. These platforms have evolved far beyond simple tools for personal connection, becoming powerful forces that actively shape individual experiences and societal structures. The implications of their pervasive use are not confined to a single domain but are evident across psychological, cultural, educational, economic, and political spheres.

The following sections explore these key implications in greater detail.

Psychological And Emotional Impact

Social media use can have both positive and negative psychological effects. On the one hand, it can foster a sense of belonging and self-esteem through positive feedback, community support, and meaningful connections. On the other hand, excessive use, especially passive scrolling, has been linked to increased feelings of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and lower self-worth. Constant exposure to curated images and idealized lifestyles can trigger negative social comparisons and dissatisfaction with one's own life (Keles et al., 2020).

Social And Cultural Influence

Social media has a powerful impact on shaping cultural values, social behaviors, and public discourse. It gives a platform to a wide range of voices, helps drive social change, and plays a role in shaping trends in areas such as fashion, language, and societal views. At the same time, it can perpetuate harmful stereotypes, spread misinformation, and encourage negative group dynamics. Viral posts may promote destructive behaviors or attitudes, and the rise of "cancel culture" can discourage open discussion by silencing differing perspectives (Marwick & Boyd, 2014).

Educational And Informational Benefits

Social media has revolutionized the way individuals acquire knowledge and stay informed. It serves as a valuable tool for students, teachers, and lifelong learners to

collaborate, exchange ideas, and keep up with current affairs. A wide variety of educational materials—such as instructional videos, expert insights, and interactive learning sessions—are easily accessible on these platforms. Despite these benefits, social media also presents risks, as it can spread inaccurate information and low-quality content, potentially leading to confusion and the reinforcement of false ideas (Tandoc et al., 2018).

Economic And Business Impact

Social media provides businesses with an affordable way to market their products, connect with specific customer groups, and collect valuable feedback. It is especially beneficial for startups and small enterprises looking to build brand awareness without investing heavily in traditional advertising. However, the same platforms that support growth can also pose risks—negative publicity or viral backlash can quickly harm a company’s public image, and the ongoing demand to stay active online can place a burden on time and resources (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Political And Civic Engagement

Social media has emerged as a vital platform for raising political awareness, encouraging activism, and promoting civic involvement. Campaigns like the Arab Spring, #BlackLivesMatter, and #EndSARS have effectively used platforms such as Twitter and Instagram to rally public support and increase visibility for social and political causes. On

the downside, these platforms can also be exploited for political manipulation—through the spread of propaganda, misinformation, and the use of automated accounts (bots) to influence public opinion and interfere with electoral processes (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017).

Level Of Mental Health

Mental health is best understood not as a simple binary of "healthy" or "ill," but as a dynamic continuum. This spectrum ranges from states of optimal well-all-being to states of significant impairment and distress (Keyes, 2002). An individual's position on this continuum can fluctuate over time based on life circumstances, stressors, and internal resources. Recognizing where one falls on this spectrum is essential for promoting well-being and identifying the need for support. These states are often categorized as follows:

Flourishing (High Level of Well-Being)

Flourishing reflects the most positive state of mental health. People in this category often feel happy, optimistic, and emotionally balanced. They are deeply engaged in meaningful relationships and activities, and they consistently display resilience when facing challenges. These individuals are not only emotionally strong but also contribute to their communities and maintain a clear sense of purpose. Their overall mental and physical

health tends to be strong, making flourishing an ideal mental state.(Keyes, C. L. M. 2002).

Moderate Mental Health

At this level, individuals are generally functioning and coping with daily responsibilities but aren't experiencing a deep sense of joy or fulfillment. They may not struggle with mental illness, but they also don't feel particularly inspired or motivated. Emotions might feel neutral or subdued, and while their lives seem stable on the surface, they could benefit from increased mental and emotional support to reach a higher level of well-being. (WHO ,2004.)

Languishing (Low Mental Wellness)

Languishing is a condition where individuals feel emotionally drained, unmotivated, and disengaged. It's not a clinical disorder, but it's often described as the absence of good mental health. People in this state may feel empty or aimless, going through routines without purpose or energy. This level is concerning because it can lead to mental health issues over time if not addressed.(Keyes, 2002).

Mental Health Challenges (Mild To Moderate Disorders)

This category refers to individuals dealing with manageable mental health problems such as mild depression or anxiety. These conditions can interrupt daily tasks, lower motivation, and affect overall mood. However, they are often responsive to early intervention and professional care. If left unaddressed, these problems could become more severe, but with support, recovery is very possible.(American Psychiatric Association, 2013.)

Severe Mental Disorders

This level involves serious and long-lasting mental illnesses like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, which significantly impact a person's ability to function normally. These disorders can disrupt thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and usually require continuous medical care and psychological support. Despite the severity, individuals with proper treatment can still achieve stability and lead meaningful (WHO, 2018.)

Level Of Social Media Use

Non-user

Non-users refer to individuals who completely abstain from using social media platforms. This category often includes older adults who may lack digital proficiency, individuals who prioritize their privacy and security, or those who deliberately choose to avoid social media due to personal beliefs, ethical concerns, or to protect their mental well-being. While they are generally protected from common online dangers such as misinformation

and cyberbullying, they may also forgo the benefits that come with digital engagement, including social networking, instant communication, and access to up-to-date information in today's digitally connected society.(Van den Eijnden et al., 2016).

Observational Or Passive Users

These individuals engage with social media mainly as spectators rather than active participants. They browse through posts, view stories, watch videos, and keep track of news or friends' updates, but rarely create or share content themselves. Although this passive use can be a convenient way to stay informed and entertained, it has been associated with negative emotional outcomes. Regularly viewing others' carefully selected and polished online lives can lead to increased feelings of envy, isolation, and reduced self-worth.(Verduyn et al., 2015)

Certain users engage with social media in a purposeful manner, focusing on specific objectives like career networking, marketing products or services, advocacy, or learning opportunities. Their usage is typically organized and intentional, leading to more beneficial outcomes and reducing the likelihood of emotional strain compared to less structured use.(Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

Excessive Or Addictive User

Excessive or addictive users are those whose engagement with social media becomes compulsive, interfering with sleep, productivity, and personal relationships. They often

find it difficult to disconnect from these platforms, and prolonged overuse can contribute to mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, or depression. Addressing this pattern of use may require setting clear digital boundaries or, in more severe cases, seeking professional intervention.(Andreassen et al., 2012)

The Relationship Between Mental Health And Social Media Use

Positive Impact Of Social Media Use On Mental Health

Social media has become an important avenue for promoting emotional well-being by enabling people to connect and interact across different locations. It helps reduce feelings of loneliness by providing continuous opportunities to communicate with family, friends, and wider networks. Unlike traditional methods of interaction, social media allows for the quick exchange of thoughts, emotions, and experiences, which can strengthen bonds and create a sense of belonging even when physical contact is not possible.

Additionally, online communities, forums, and support groups serve as safe spaces for individuals dealing with similar difficulties such as depression, anxiety, chronic illness, or grief to share experiences. These interactions often provide comfort and reassurance, reminding individuals that they are not facing their struggles alone. Encouragement, empathy, and understanding from peers can ease emotional distress and counter the stigma attached to such challenges. Moreover, these supportive networks are vital in boosting resilience and improving overall mental health. Through social connections on

such platforms, individuals can better manage stress, adopt healthier coping mechanisms, and feel more motivated to seek professional help when needed. By combining emotional support with access to valuable information, social media plays a positive role in strengthening psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Social media serves as an important channel for sustaining relationships and forming new ones across distances. It helps to ease feelings of isolation and creates spaces where people facing similar struggles such as anxiety or long term health condition can connect and exchange experiences. Such supportive interactions encourage resilience, lessen stigma, and contribute positively to mental health and overall well-being. (Naslund et al ,2016)

Negative Effects Of Social Media On Mental Health

Social media is now deeply embedded in everyday life, offering avenues for communication and maintaining relationships. Yet, when used excessively or without balance, it has been linked to various negative effects on mental health. Research shows that disproportionate use of these platforms can heighten risks of anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem. A major contributor is the constant encounter with carefully curated content that presents unrealistic standards of beauty, achievement, and lifestyle. Such portrayals often trigger upward social comparisons, leaving individuals feeling inadequate and dissatisfied with their own circumstances. Moreover, the widespread issue of cyberbullying on social media adds another layer of psychological strain, especially

among young people, who are typically the most active online. Those targeted by online harassment often experience anxiety, sadness, and withdrawal from social interaction, which can intensify existing vulnerabilities. Additionally, passive use commonly referred to as endless scrolling is strongly tied to negative outcomes. Users who consume content without meaningful interaction tend to feel lonelier and less connected, as their engagement remains surface-level. Over time, these habits can weaken mental well-being and increase the likelihood of long-term psychological challenges.(Keles et al, 2020).

Social Comparison And Self-esteem

A major way social media affects mental health is through social comparison. Platforms are filled with curated posts showing accomplishments, appearances, and lifestyle highlights from friends, influencers, and celebrities. These portrayals often showcase only the most positive moments, setting unrealistic standards of success, attractiveness, or happiness. When people compare themselves to these idealized images, they may experience lower self-esteem and develop a negative self-concept. At the same time, social media can also serve as a source of affirmation. Likes, comments, and encouraging interactions can boost self-confidence and foster a sense of acceptance and belonging. Yet, this type of reassurance may create reliance on external approval, as individuals begin to tie their self-worth to the amount of attention they receive online. Over time,

such dependence can trigger emotional instability, particularly when engagement declines, leading to heightened feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

Thus, social media exerts a dual influence offering both positive and negative effects on self-image and overall mental well-being.(Vogel, E. A., Rose, J. P., Roberts, L. R., & Eckles, K. 2014).

Addiction And Problematic Use

Social media serves as an important resource for strengthening emotional support and enhancing social connections. It enables individuals to stay in touch with family, friends, and communities despite geographical distances, thereby reducing loneliness and social isolation. The opportunity for instant and continuous communication helps reinforce interpersonal relationships and provides a sense of belonging, which is especially valuable in today's fast moving and often fragmented world. In addition to personal interactions, social media platforms host online groups, forums, and digital communities that offer more structured forms of support. These spaces allow people dealing with similar challenges such as depression, anxiety, chronic illness, or grief to share their experiences, receive encouragement, and learn from others' coping strategies. Realizing that others face similar struggles can be comforting and therapeutic, making individuals feel less isolated in their difficulties. Moreover, these virtual support networks play a key role in reducing stigma surrounding mental health concerns while also helping

individuals develop resilience. By promoting coping skills, encouraging help seeking behavior, and fostering hope, social media contributes to improved emotional health and psychological well-being.(Naslund et al ,2016).

Social media as a tool for mental health awareness and advocacy

Although social media carries certain risks, it has become an influential platform for promoting mental health awareness. Sites like Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have created opportunities for campaigns such as #BellLetsTalk, #EndTheStigma, and #MentalHealthAwareness to thrive. These movements have effectively united people worldwide, encouraged the sharing of personal experiences, and challenged the silence surrounding mental illness. By opening up conversations, they reduce stigma and help normalize discussions about psychological well-being, an area long marked by stereotypes and prejudice. In addition to grassroots initiatives, social media also serves as a tool for mental health experts, advocacy organizations, and service providers to share reliable information with large audiences. Practical resources including helplines, self-care strategies, and guidance materials can be distributed instantly, making them accessible to millions of users. This easy availability not only increases awareness but also supports individuals in finding professional care and community assistance they may otherwise lack. Furthermore, because content on social platforms can go viral, awareness messages spread quickly across cultural and social boundaries. This has turned local

advocacy efforts into global movements, fostering empathy, reducing stigma, and encouraging early help-seeking. Consequently, social media plays an essential role in advancing mental health education and strengthening public understanding of psychological well-being.(Clement et al., 2018).

Age Difference In The Relationship Between Mental Health And Social Media Use Adolescent And Young Adult

depressive symptoms, lowered self-esteem, and a greater risk of cyberbullying (Keles et al., 2020). Regular exposure to highly curated images and idealized lifestyles presented by peers and influencers can intensify social comparison, leaving adolescents with feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the desire for online approval through likes, comments, and followers can heighten dependence on external validation, which negatively impacts self-worth. Exposure to harmful or inappropriate material may also worsen emotional struggles and increase vulnerability to risky behaviors. Nevertheless, social media is not entirely detrimental for young users. These platforms also provide meaningful benefits by enabling peer support, reducing loneliness, and offering opportunities for self-expression and identity exploration. Many adolescents report that social media enhances their sense of connection, understanding, and empowerment, particularly when they participate in communities that provide encouragement and shared experiences. Thus, social media has a dual impact in

adolescence, presenting both psychological risks and valuable opportunities for personal growth and resilience.

2 . Adult

For adults, social media serves as a vital tool for maintaining connections, expanding networks, and accessing up-to-date information. Unlike adolescents, adults are generally less influenced by the pursuit of online validation through likes and comments; however, they still encounter certain psychological challenges associated with digital use. Continuous notifications, excessive information flow, and the inability to disconnect from online spaces can lead to stress and anxiety. Many adults also experience the fear of missing out, as viewing the achievements and social activities of others may trigger feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction, and even a sense of falling behind socially or professionally. Moreover, exposure to misinformation and harmful content can heighten stress levels, foster distrust, and negatively affect decision-making, particularly in areas such as politics and health. At the same time, social media offers notable advantages for this age group. It can alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness, particularly among individuals balancing busy lifestyles or living far from family and friends. Adults often use these platforms to sustain social bonds, reconnect with old friends, and build a sense of community in both personal and professional contexts. Additionally, social media creates avenues for professional development and learning opportunities through

networking platforms like LinkedIn, as well as through hobby- or interest-based groups. These positive aspects suggest that, although adults face certain risks in online engagement, social media remains an important resource for connection, support, and personal growth when used responsibly.(Verduyn et al.,2017).

3. Older Adults

Older adults typically use social media less often than younger generations, yet the outcomes of their engagement are often quite positive. A major benefit is the ability to keep in touch with family and friends, which is particularly important when physical distance or mobility challenges limit in-person interaction. Social media platforms offer an accessible way for older adults to stay socially connected, helping to ease loneliness and feelings of isolation that are common in later life. Additionally, using these digital tools can stimulate cognitive functioning, as learning new technologies and engaging with varied content supports mental activity and adaptability. Nevertheless, several challenges restrict older adults' consistent use of social media. Issues such as limited digital skills, rapid technological changes, and concerns about privacy or online safety often discourage participation. Compared to younger users, older adults are less driven by peer influence, competition, or the need for online approval, which protects them from certain negative effects of social comparison. However, they remain more vulnerable to risks like online scams, fraud, or misinformation, which can impact trust and security.

In summary, although older adults interact with social media less frequently, these platforms provide valuable opportunities for sustaining relationships, improving psychological well-being, and supporting cognitive engagement, provided that barriers to access and safety concerns are effectively addressed.(Heo et al.,2015).

Sex Difference In The Relationship Between Mental Health And Social Media Use

Social media plays a central role in today's world, affecting mental health both positively and negatively. Yet, its influence is not the same for men and women. Differences in how each sex engages with these platforms contribute to unique effects on their psychological well-being.

Patterns Of Social Media Use

Women: Women tend to engage with social media primarily for interaction, maintaining relationships, expressing emotions, and seeking support. They often share updates, personal stories, and actively respond to friends' posts.

Men: Men generally use social media more for accessing information, entertainment, professional networking, and showcasing achievements. They are less likely to reveal personal feelings online but are active in debates, discussions, and gaming communities.(Twenge & Campbell 2018)

Coping And Support-Seeking

Women: Women are more inclined to share their mental health concerns openly on social media and often turn to friends, peers, or professionals for guidance and support.(Rideout, V., & Fox, S. 2018)

Men: Men are more likely to keep their difficulties to themselves and refrain from expressing emotional challenges online, which reflects and reinforces conventional masculine norms.

(Kagan, M., et al., 2025).

Mental Health Outcomes

Women: Women's focus on connection and self expression through social media often provides them with emotional support and a sense of inclusion. At the same time, it can heighten their susceptibility to problems such as comparison with others, body image dissatisfaction, online harassment, and anxiety.(Fardouly, J., & Vartanian, L. R. 2016).

Men: Men are generally less influenced by appearance related comparisons, but they may face stress and feelings of isolation due to passive browsing, heavy gaming, or exposure to hostile online environments. Additionally, men are less inclined to seek psychological help through social media, which may cause their struggles to be underreported.(Kuss & Griffiths 2012)

Risks And Opportunities

Women: Women face higher chances of experiencing depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem through social media use, yet they also benefit from wider access to emotional support and online empowerment networks.(Woods, & Scott, H. 2016).

Men: Men are more at risk of isolation, hostile interactions in digital spaces, and hesitation to seek help, but they also gain valuable opportunities for networking and developing new skills.

(Seabrook, E. M., et al., 2016).

Empirical

Several research works have explored the relationship between social media use and mental health, highlighting both positive and negative consequences. These studies also point out gender-based differences in how individuals engage with social platforms and how this affects their psychological well-being.

Woods and Scott (2016) found that heavy social media use among adolescents was linked with poor sleep patterns, higher anxiety, depressive moods, and reduced self-esteem. Although social networking can encourage interaction, their study shows that overreliance may harm mental well-being, especially in young people who are still developing coping strategies.

Twenge and Martin (2020) examined large datasets and discovered that the psychological effects of social media are influenced by gender. Their research revealed that young women are more vulnerable to negative outcomes such as body dissatisfaction and harmful social comparisons, while young men are less impacted in these areas. This indicates that the risks associated with social media are not evenly distributed across sexes.

On the other hand, Naslund, Aschbrenner, Barre, and Bartels (2016) demonstrated that online platforms can be beneficial, providing safe avenues for individuals with mental health challenges to connect, share experiences, and receive encouragement. This finding highlights the potential of social media as a supportive tool for mental health care.

In a similar direction, Manago, Graham, Greenfield, and Salimkhan (2008) showed that networking platforms can help young adults strengthen friendships, build social capital, and explore personal identity. Their study suggests that when used constructively, social media enhances confidence and interpersonal ties.

Gender-specific differences remain a major theme in this body of research. Fardouly and Vartanian (2016) reported that women are more likely to experience anxiety and dissatisfaction with their appearance due to comparison with online images, while men often face risks linked to passive browsing, online hostility, and gaming (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012). Furthermore, Mackenzie, Gekoski, and Knox (2006) found that men are

less inclined to seek professional help or openly discuss mental health struggles, reflecting traditional masculine norms that discourage help-seeking.

Overall, the reviewed studies emphasize that social media can both promote and threaten mental health, depending on how it is used. Women benefit from connection and support but face challenges from comparison and anxiety. Men, in contrast, gain from networking and information but are more at risk of isolation, aggression in online spaces, and reluctance to seek psychological assistance. This underscores the need to study social media and mental health within particular social and cultural settings, since outcomes differ by gender and patterns of use.

Summary Of Reviewed Literature

In the literature review it was discovered that connection between mental health and social media use is quite complicated, producing both positive and negative effects depending on how people interact with these platforms. On the positive side, social media is a powerful means of maintaining relationships and building networks. It enables users to stay connected with family and friends, join communities with shared interests, and receive social and emotional support. These online interactions often help reduce feelings of isolation and create a sense of belonging. For many, especially those who may feel disconnected in their offline lives, digital spaces offer companionship, encouragement, and opportunities for personal expression and creativity.

In addition to strengthening relationships, social media provides easy access to knowledge and resources that can improve well-being. Many platforms share educational content, self-help tools, and support groups focused on mental health awareness. Through these outlets, people can learn coping skills, engage with diverse perspectives, and connect with others facing similar challenges. Such interactions can build resilience and encourage healthier ways of managing stress. When used thoughtfully, these platforms can serve as valuable complements to traditional support systems.

Despite these advantages, unhealthy or excessive use of social media has been linked to negative psychological outcomes. Constant comparison with others' idealized lives can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and dissatisfaction. Exposure to cyberbullying, harmful content, or unrealistic standards of beauty and success further intensifies stress and emotional distress, particularly among young people. Overuse is also associated with poor sleep, addiction-like behaviors, and increased risks of anxiety and depression. These harmful effects vary across individuals depending on their age, gender, personality traits, type of content consumed, and the amount of time spent online. social media is best understood as a double-edged tool when it comes to mental health. It has the potential to enhance connection, provide emotional support, and deliver helpful information, but it can also contribute to stress, anxiety, and poor well-being if misused. Its overall impact largely depends on individual habits, motives, and patterns of use.

Practicing moderation, setting boundaries, and focusing on positive interactions are key to making social media a resource that supports rather than harms mental health.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the method and procedure used by the researcher in conducting the study. It is presented under the following sub headings;

- Design of the study
- Population of the study
- Sample and sampling technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity of Instrument
- Reliability of Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design Of The Study

Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. According to Babble, E.(2010), Descriptive survey research involves gathering data by presenting a series of predetermined questions in a structured questionnaire to a selected group of individuals, with the goal of extending the results to represent the wider population.

Population Of The Study

The population for this study includes all universities of Benin undergraduate full time students of the 15 faculties of the 2024/2025 academy sessions. The target population will be the 43,679 students, both male and female, from the 15 faculties at the University of Benin that make up the study area (Source: Academic planning unit, student affairs division, university of Benin, Ugbowo Campus, November 2025).The distribution of the population is presented in the table 1 below.

Table 1 :The distribution of the population

S/N	Faculty	Population of the students
1.	Agriculture	1,685
2.	Arts	6,262
3.	Basic medical science	3,437
4.	Dentistry	111
5.	Education	7,416
6.	Engineering	5,481
7.	Environmental science	1,015
8.	Law	1,078
9.	Life science	5,132
10	Medicine	685
11	Management science	3,506
12	Physical science	3,283
13	Pharmacy	1,107
14	Social science	3,411
15	Veterinary medicine	70
	Total	43,679

Source : Academic planning unit student affairs division, University of Benin Ugbowo campus, November 2025

Sample And Sampling Techniques

The sample size for this study will be 230 undergraduate students of the university of Benin. The systematic sampling technique will be used to select 5 faculties from the 15 faculties that make up the study area in university of Benin. This shall be done by picking the first and every third faculty in the arrangement. Hence faculties with serial numbers 1,4,7,10 and 13 will be selected and 5% of the total students in each faculty, which is 230 respondents under the 5 picked faculties will be selected and used for the study using simple random sampling technique.

Table 2 : faculties and student selected for sample

Faculty	Number of students	Number of sampled student (5%)
Agriculture	1,685	84
Dentistry	111	6
Environmental science	1,015	51
Medicine	685	34
Pharmacy	1,107	55
Total	4,603	230

Research Instrument

The instrument for the study is a self structured questionnaire by the researcher, to access information on the impact of social media use on mental health of undergraduate students in university of Benin, with sections A , B, C, and D. Sections A consist of demographic informations which includes Age, gender, faculty, Department and level of study, sections B discuss the level of mental health among University of Benin undergraduate, sections c address level of social media use among university of Benin undergraduate , sections D seeks the influence of social media use on mental health based on gender and Age .The questionnaire is constructed based on detailed

Validity Of The Instrument

The researcher's supervisor and two experts in the department of health safety and environmental education validated the instrument, and their feedback and recommendations were integrated into the final draft.

Reliability Of The Instrument

The reliability of the instrument on mental health and social media use among university of Benin undergraduates was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha technique. Following the administration of the instrument to a pilot sample of 20 participants, the collected data were analyzed to determine internal consistency.

Method Of Data Collection

The data collection process involved the researcher distributing questionnaires to a selected sample of 230 undergraduate students from the University of Benin. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were given clear instructions on how to answer each item, and any questions or clarifications they needed were addressed immediately. The questionnaires were or were retrieved immediately after completion.

Method Of Data Analysis

The data collected, will be analyzed using frequency count and percentages which will be displayed in charts to summarize the finding

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter deals with the presentation of the research results and the analysis of the findings. A total of 230 questionnaire were administered, completed, and returned, achieving a 100% response rate. The data was analyzed using frequency count and simple percentages as the primary statistical tools.

Interpretation Of Data

Table 1. The distribution of the demographic data of the respondents based on age

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
16 - 20 years	123	53.5%
21 - 25 years	97	42.2%
26 - 30 years	9	3.9%
30+ years	1	0.4%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above indicates the age distribution of respondents. The data reveals that 53.5% of the participants are within the age range of 16 - 20 years, 42.2% fall between 21 - 25 years, 3.9% are 26 - 30 years, and 0.4% are above 30 years . This research shows

that the majority of the respondents were within the age group of 16 - 25 years which represent 53.5% of the respondents.

Table 2. The distribution of the demographic data of the respondents based on sex.

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	128	55.7%
FEMALE	102	44.3%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above shows that 128 respondents representing 55.7% were male, while 102 respondents representing 44.3% were females. This indicates that the respondents of this research were majorly males.

Table 3. The distribution of the demographic data of the respondents based on faculty

FACULTY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Agriculture	84	36.5%
Dentistry	6	2.6%
Environmental science	51	22.2%
Medicine	34	14.8%
Pharmacy	55	23.9%
TOTAL	230	100%

Table 4. The distribution of the demographic data of the respondents based on level

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
100	31	13.5%
200	44	19.1%
300	61	26.5%
400	66	28.7%
500	28	12.2%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above shows that majority of the respondents are in 400 level (28.7%), followed by 300 level (26.5%) and 200 level (19.1%), while 200 level and 500 levels are the smallest.

TABLE 5: Data analysis on the level of mental health among university of Benin undergraduate students

S/N	ITEMS	A	SA	D	SD	TOTAL
6	I feel happy with my life as a result of my interactions on social media platforms.	98	50	54	28	230 (100%)
7	I feel hopeful about the future based on the social media post that I come across .	62	90	59	19	230 (100%)
8	I feel calm and relax when using social media .	68	58	73	31	230 (100%)
9	I feel depressed with social media for a day.	63	67	60	40	230 (100%)
10	I make decisions without feeling over whelmed because of social media help.	74	66	55	35	230 (100%)

In the table above, in item 6, 98 students agreed that they feel happy with their life as a result of their interactions on social media platforms, 50 students strongly agreed, 54 students disagreed, and 28 students strongly disagreed.

Item 7 indicates that 62 students agreed that they feel hopeful about the future based on social media posts they come across, 90 strongly agreed, 59 disagreed, and 19 strongly disagreed.

Result from item 8 indicates that 68 students agreed that they feel calm and relaxed when using social media, 58 strongly agreed, 73 disagreed, and 31 strongly disagree, pointing to a nearly even split but with a slight tilt towards disagreement.

Result from item 9 shows that 63 students agreed with the statement "I feel depressed with social media for a day," 67 strongly agreed, 60 disagreed, and 40 strongly disagreed.

Item 10 shows that 74 students agreed they make decisions without feeling overwhelmed because of social media help, 66 strongly agree, 55 disagreed, and 35 strongly disagreed.

Table 6: Data analysis on social media platforms regularly used by students

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
INTAGRAM	70	30.4%
FACEBOOK	47	20.4%
WHATSAPP	44	19.1%
TWITTER	45	19.6%
OTHERS...(tiktok, reddit, e.t.c.)	24	10.4%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above shows that the majority of the respondents use Instagram (30.4%), followed by Facebook (20.4%), Twitter (19.6%), and WhatsApp (19.1%). The 'Others'

category, which includes apps like TikTok and Reddit, was used by 10.4% of the respondents.

Table 7: Data analysis on hours spent on social media per day by students

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1 – 2 hrs	77	33.5%
3 – 4 hrs	65	28.3%
5 – 6 hrs	55	23.9%
7 – 8 hrs	25	10.9%
9 hrs above	8	3.5%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above shows that the majority of the respondents (33.5%) spend 1 - 2 hrs per day on social media, followed by 3 - 4 hrs (28.3%), and 5 - 6 hrs (23.9%). A smaller portion of respondents spend 7 - 8 hrs (10.9%), while only 3.5% spend 9 hrs and above.

Table 8: At what time of the day do you typically use social media

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Early morning (before 8)	47	20.4%
Morning (8am - 12pm)	56	24.4%
Afternoon (12pm -4pm)	58	25.2%
Evening (4pm -8pm)	46	20%
Late night (after 8pm)	23	10%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above shows that the most common time students use social media is in the Afternoon (12pm - 4pm) (25.2%), followed closely by Morning (8am - 12pm) (24.4%). Usage in the Early morning (before 8) (20.4%) and Evening (4pm - 8pm) (20%) is nearly identical, while Late night (after 8pm) (10%) is the least common time.

Table 9: How often do you check your social media platforms

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1 – 2 hrs	55	23.9%
3 – 4 hrs	62	27%
5 – 6 hrs	59	25.7%
7 – 8 hrs	38	16.5%
9 hrs above	16	7%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above shows that the majority of students (27%) check their social media platforms every 3 - 4 hrs, followed closely by 5 - 6 hrs (25.7%), and 1 - 2 hrs (23.9%). Fewer students check every 7 - 8 hrs (16.5%) or 9 hrs above (7%).

Table 10: I spend a significant amount of time on social media each day.

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY FREQUENT	42	18.3%
FREQUENT	59	25.7%
OCCASIONALLY	73	34.3%
RARELY	40	17.4%
NEVER	10	4.3%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above shows that the majority of students (34.3%) Occasionally spend a significant amount of time on social media each day, followed by Frequent (25.7%) and Very Frequent (18.3%). A smaller portion Rarely (17.4%) spend a significant amount of time, while 4.3% Never do.

Table 11: What are your aims of using social media.

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
For Social Interaction And Communication	50	21.7%
For Academic Or Educational Purpose	47	20.4%
For Business, Marketing Or networking	64	27.8%
For Entertainment Or Leisure	45	19.6%
For Self Expression	23	10%
TOTAL	230	100%

The table above shows that the majority of students (27.8%) use social media For Business, Marketing Or networking, followed by For Social Interaction And Communication (21.7%), For Academic Or Educational Purpose (20.4%), and For Entertainment Or Leisure (19.6%). The least common aim is For Self Expression (10%).

TABLE 12: Data analysis on the influence of social media use on mental health based on gender and Age

S/N	ITEMS	A	SA	D	SD	TOTAL
17	Social media influences the dressing styles of males and females differently.	108	64	42	16	230 (100%)
18	Females are more likely to experience cyberbullying than males, in social media platforms.	75	93	45	17	230 (100%)
19	Do social media use improve mental well-being for both genders.	77	64	65	24	230 (100%)
20	Does social media use affects people’s mental health differently across age groups.	69	84	46	31	230 (100%)
21	Prolonged use of social media negatively impacts sleep and concentration in all age groups.	77	82	39	32	230 (100%)

In item 17, 108 respondents agree that social media influences the dressing styles of males and females differently, 64 strongly agree, 42 disagree, and 16 strongly disagree. Item 18 indicates that 75 respondents agree that females are more likely to experience cyberbullying than males on social media platforms, 93 strongly agree, 45 disagree, and 17 strongly disagree. Result from item 19 indicates that 77 of the population agree that

social media use improves mental well-being for both genders, 64 strongly agree, 65 disagree, and 24 strongly disagree. Result from item 20 shows that 69 of the population agree that social media use affects people's mental health differently across age groups, 84 strongly agree, 46 disagree, and 31 strongly disagree. Item 21 shows that 77 respondents agree that prolonged use of social media negatively impacts sleep and concentration in all age groups, 82 strongly agree, 39 disagree, and 32 strongly disagree.

Discussion Of Findings

The findings in research question 1 indicate that social media has a complex and dual impact on the mental health of undergraduate students. Majority of the respondents (98%) have a high level of mental health based on their interaction on social media platforms . Majority of respondents report positive feelings, with 64.3% agreeing they feel happy with their life as of their interactions on social media and 66.1% feeling hopeful based on posts they come across. However, the findings also reveal a significant negative component, as a majority (56.5%) of the same respondents agreed with the statement "I feel depressed with social media for a day," indicating that social media is a source of both positive and negative emotional states.

The findings in research question 2 show that students engage in a moderate and purposeful level of social media use. The majority of respondents (33.5%) spend 1-2 hours per day on social media, with Instagram being the most popular platform (30.4%).

The data also indicates that students are not constantly checking their devices, with the most common frequency being every 3-4 hours (27%). It was also discovered that the primary aim for using social media was "For Business, Marketing Or networking" (27.8%), followed by "For Social Interaction" (21.7%), which suggests that social media is viewed as a productive tool as much as it is for leisure.

The findings for research questions 3, 4, and 5 show a strong consensus that social media's influence varies significantly based on gender and age. A large majority (73.0%) agree that females are more likely to experience cyberbullying, and 74.8% agree that social media influences the dressing styles of males and females differently. Regarding age, 66.5% of respondents agree that social media affects people's mental health differently across age groups. Furthermore, a strong consensus (69.1%) was found that prolonged use of social media negatively impacts sleep and concentration in all age groups, pointing to a widely recognized negative consequence of excessive use.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate mental health and social media use among University of Benin undergraduates. Further, five (5) research questions were raised and analyzed to guide this study.

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population comprised (43,679) undergraduate students across all 15 faculties at the University of Benin. A systematic and simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 230 students from five faculties. A self-structured questionnaire with four sections was used as the research instrument to collect data from the sample population. The validity of the instrument was confirmed by the supervisor and two other experts from the department of Health, safety and environment. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha technique. The questionnaire was administered directly to the respondents and retrieved immediately after completion. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, I the researcher concludes that social media has a dual impact on students' mental health, acting as a source of both positive feelings like happiness and negative feelings like depression. Social media has a profound dual impact on students' mental health, acting simultaneously as a source of both positive and negative emotional states. It is not a simple-to-use tool but an emotionally volatile environment. The data, which shows a majority of students feeling both "happy" (64.3%) and "hopeful" (66.1%) from their interactions while an almost equal majority (56.5%) also report feeling "depressed" from it, challenges a simplistic, one-sided narrative. This finding suggests that students are actively navigating a complex digital world where the benefits of social connection and hope exist alongside the significant burdens of social comparison, conflict, and negative content.

Secondly, there is a strong and clear perception among the student body that the risks of social media are not distributed equally. The finding that 73.0% of all respondents agree that females are more likely to experience cyberbullying is a critical conclusion. This points to a perceived "gendered digital divide" in terms of safety and psychological risk. This perception alone, regardless of the objective rate of instances, can shape online engagement. It suggests that female students may face a greater mental health burden,

anxiety, or need for self-censorship as a "cost" of participation, which aligns with existing literature on the gender-specific risks of online harassment.

Furthermore, the impact of social media is not limited to the psychological realm. The widespread agreement (69.1%) that prolonged use negatively affects sleep and concentration transforms the issue from a purely emotional one to a tangible academic one. Poor sleep and an inability to concentrate are direct inhibitors of academic performance. This indicates that students are highly aware that their digital habits may be actively compromising their primary goal of academic success, highlighting a significant disconnect between their online behavior and its known real-world consequences.

Finally, this study re-contextualizes the nature of student social media use. The finding that the primary motivation is "For Business, Marketing Or networking" (27.8%) surpassing "Social Interaction" (21.7%) and "Entertainment" (19.6%) is a powerful insight. It defies the common stereotype of students passively and aimlessly scrolling for leisure. Instead, it suggests that for many University of Benin students, social media is viewed as a necessary tool for economic survival, career advancement, and "hustle culture." This re-frames their engagement as a form of "digital work." This conclusion is crucial because it implies that simple recommendations to "use it less" are insufficient, as this may be perceived by students as asking them to neglect a vital platform for their future success.

Recommendation

Based on my conclusion, the following recommendations are suggested:

- The university administration and health services should develop awareness programs to help students manage the negative impacts of social media, particularly its effect on sleep and feelings of depression.
- Specific support systems and resources should be highlighted or created to address cyberbullying, acknowledging the perceived higher vulnerability of female students.
- The university could leverage the students' primary aim for using social media by integrating more professional networking and business-oriented opportunities through its official social media channels
- Creating and funding student-led "digital wellbeing" or "mental health online" groups, providing a more approachable and less stigmatized environment for discussion.
- The university's Student Affairs division could sponsor larger, campus-wide events like a "Unplug and Connect" week. This initiative would focus on promoting in-person campus activities (e.g., sports, club fairs, live events) as attractive alternatives to screen time. By providing a positive substitute, the university can help

students reduce their total hours spent online, which may lessen feelings of depression and improve sleep.

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APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT,

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

QUESTIONNAIRE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG UNIVERSITY OF BENIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.

Dear Respondents.

I Asibor Joyce Osewane a student of the above department is **conducting research on mental health and social media use among university of Benin undergraduate.**

Instruction: The questionnaire is designed to obtain your views on the topic mentioned above. You are kindly requested to complete it. All information collected will be used solely for research purposes and treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Please indicate your opinion by ticking (✓) the option that best represents your response.

Section A: Demographic Information

1.Age: _____

2 .Gender: Male Female

3.Faculty _____

4.Department _____

5.Level of Study: 100 200 300 400 500

Sections B

Level of mental health among university of Benin undergraduate students

S/N	ITEMS	A	SA	D	SD
6	I feel happy with my life as of my results interactions on social media platforms.				
7	I feel hopeful about the future base on the social media post that I come across .				
8	I feel calm and relax when using social media .				
9	I feel depressed without social media for a day.				
10	I make decisions without feeling over whelmed because of social media help.				

Sections c: level of social media use among university of Benin undergraduate students

11. what social media platforms do you use regularly a)Instagram b)Facebook c)Whatsapp d) Twitter e) other

12 . On average how many hours per day do you spend on social media

a) 1 - 2 b) 3 - 4 c) 5 - 6 d) 7 - 8 e) 9 - above

13. At what time of the day do you typically use social media. a) Early morning before (8am)

b) Morning (8am -12pm)

C) Afternoon (12pm-4pm)

d) Evening (4pm- 8pm)

e) Late night (after 8pm)

14. How often do you check your social media platforms

a) 1 - 2 hrs

b) 3 - 4 hrs

c) 5 - 6 hrs

d) 7 - 8 hrs

e) 9 - above

15. I spend a significant amount of time on social media each day.

a) Very frequent

b) Frequent

c) Occasionally

d) Rarely

e) Never

16. What are you aim of using social media.

a) for social interaction and communication

b) for academic or education purposes

C) for business, marketing, or networking

d) for entertainment or leisure

e) for self-expression

Section D: influence of social media use on mental health based on gender and Age

S/N	ITEMS	A	SA	D	SD
17	Social media influences the dressing styles of males and females differently.				
18	Females are more likely to experience cyberbullying than males, in social media platforms.				
19	Do social media use improve mental well-being for both genders.				
20	Does social media use affects people's mental health differently across age groups.				
21	Prolonged use of social media negatively impacts sleep and concentration in all age groups.				