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Psychology of Media Consumption Impacts on Behavior and Attitudes

Asmat E Zahra

BS Media Studies, Iqra University Islamabad

ABSTRACT

The research is intended to assist in identifying the role that social media plays in shaping a consumers' decision making, interpersonal communication changes, and their impact on the emotional state. The quantitative method of research has been adopted which is based on utilizing stratified random sampling, this method was applied to obtain a sample of individuals belonging to ages 18 – 36 and above, the collected data was stratified on the basis of social media consumption with contrast to different results. The complied results have produced a concluding phenomenon that has reflected upon the fact that social media consumption had an effective impact in influencing consumer behavior where 62 percent out of the total respondents have been affected by the digital advertisements. The younger respondents were more prone to making purchases under impulse and to fads advertised through social media. The paper also notes that face-to-face communication has been reduced with half of the regular users of media using the digital channel in preference to in-person communication. Overuse of the media was associated with increased social anxiety and less trust in other people. The research further explores media's role in shaping societal norms and mental health, revealing that 49% of respondents experienced anxiety related to prolonged digital engagement. Also, 61% admitted that media shapes their political ideologies, with traditional media continuing to be the source of information by rural subjects, and an urban population preferring digital media.

Although media is accessible and entertaining, it helps to develop emotional exhaustion and addictions. These findings point to the need to institute media literacy initiative and responsible behaviors towards digital consumption in order to mitigate negative psychological effects.

Keywords: *Social Media, Streaming Platforms, Online Videos, Media Exposure, Shaped by Media, Channels of Communication.*

Introduction

The rapid pace of modernization and technological advancement has dramatically influenced human behavior and societal norms. Media, in its myriad forms from social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram to traditional news outlets has permeated nearly every facet of human life. As people across the globe become increasingly interconnected. Social media usage and consumption has become an important and essential part of daily routines.

Psychologically social media has now become a powerful tool in shaping and also altering an individual's behavior, attitude and building perception. My research was designed to identity and trace the impact of social media consumption on societal norms and change in pattern of individual lifestyle after undergoing exposure to different forms of social media. My research is further intended to interpret the underlying mechanism and changes that has been the root cause in the modification of perception, responsiveness of emotions and sustainability of the need of social interaction.

Statement of the Problem

The convincing impact of social media content has raised a challenging concern about the psychological impacts that is caused by content consumption that also correlates with influencing

consumption behavior which is prone to reshaping the interpersonal relationships in the all classes of different generation. The extensive reach out of altering content on media has a long term implication for wellbeing of emotional health, individual cycle of cognition, and norms on which a particular society has been built. Dependency on social media has raised serious and alarming issues such as, reduced interactions in society, avoidance of interpersonal communication, changes to intra personal mindset and the formation of filter bubbles that invites for a more detailed understanding of social media's psychological causes and effects on behavior and attitudes.

Purpose of the Study

My research has primarily focused on investigating the different variations of psychological impacts that is caused by social media consumption on individual behaviors and attitudes. The pilot direction of the research was to assess the intensity that how content on social media shapes a consumers' behavior, such as their purchasing habits and decisions that has been influenced by advertisements and to explore the effects that after being exposed to content on social media has on pattern of interpersonal communication and changes caused to social level of interactions, together with reduction in physical engagement.

In my research I also analyzed the role of social media in reshaping societal norms, selfidentification, and emotional health, particularly the factor that had its influence over mental health, such as anxiety and depression, in adolescents.

The findings resulting from my research is anticipated to contribute to a deeper and more meaningful understanding of media's pervasive role in modern life and provide insights into mitigating its negative impacts.

Research Questions

Research questionnaire was designed on the following pattern:

RQ 1: How does frequent exposure to mass media influence individual behaviors and attitudes in daily life?

RQ 2: To what extent does media consumption influence purchase decisions and consumer behavior?

RQ 3: How does media exposure impact interpersonal communication and social interactions?

Assumptions

Media consumption is measurable and quantifiable in terms of time and content type being used; the was focused on behavioral and attitudinal changes resulting from media exposure that were identified through surveys, experiments, or observational studies.

Different types of media content (e.g., violent, educational, inspirational) and platforms (e.g., TV, social media) vary with their psychological impact on the audience along with Media exposure that influences perceptions of social norms, political issues, and self-identity.

Participants were expected to provide honest responses regarding their media consumption habits and perceived effects.

Limitations

My study faces several factors that causes limitations:

My research focuses mostly in the Punjab region, limiting generalizability to other cultural and demographic contexts. The study used stratified random sampling, which lead to non- representative findings also simultaneous consumption of multiple media types (e.g., watching TV while using social media) complicates the specific isolating effect of each media.

Seasonal trends and major global events (e.g., weather, elections, crises) had an impact on the study which skewed the media consumption patterns and their psychological impacts. The rapid evolution

of media platforms render findings quickly outdated and led to rapid switch between different media platforms.

Definition of Terms

Media Consumption: The amount and type of media content individuals engage with, including social media, television, news, online videos, and streaming platforms.

Behavior: Observable actions or reactions of individuals influenced by media exposure and environmental factors.

Attitudes: A settled way of thinking or feeling, often reflected in behavior, shaped by media exposure.

Mass Media: Channels of communication (e.g., TV, newspapers, social media) reaching large audiences.

Filter Bubble: A phenomenon where algorithms expose users only to content aligning with their pre-existing beliefs.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the psychological effects of media consumption was vital for educators, media professionals, policymakers, and individuals. This study's findings promote strategies to improve media literacy, helping users critically engage with media content.

Inform effective communication and advertising strategies that acknowledge media's psychological impacts. It will guide mental health professionals in addressing issues like media-induced anxiety and depression, especially among adolescents. Encourage a balanced approach to media consumption, fostering deeper interpersonal connections and informed decision-making in a digital age

Literature Review

Influence of social media consumption on individual's behavior and its impact on societal attitudes has been an important focus of research across various fields. Media consumption, whether through traditional platforms like television and newspapers or modern platforms like social media, impacts psychological health, social interactions, and individual beliefs.

Studies have revealed that the exposure to media has a very strong impact on the behaviors of people. As an example of social media content consumption excessive usage and expanded screen time of content has been associated with increased materialistic values, and altered or poor consumption habits, including development of compulsive and impulsive purchasing patterns. Pellegrino et al. (2022) revealed in the study on social media that social media played a great role in mediating the interconnection between materialism, negative perception consumption and social utilization behaviors, demonstrating a well-fortified influence of online content on users and their purchasing patterns (Pellegrino et al., 2022).

In the same way promotion of thinness being portrayed as symbol of health on social media has been linked to eating disorders and body dissatisfaction especially among the young women. Harrison and Cantor (1997) emphasized the fact that those women who idealized thinness represented by social media were more dissatisfied with their bodies and had a dire urge to be slim (Harrison & Cantor, 1997).

The connection between social media use and its effect on psychological health has also been well documented which emphasizes that excessive use of digital devices correlates with increased emotional difficulties such as anxiety and depression. T.Poulain et al. (2019) researched that "rise in the usage of computers and mobile phones has been directly associated with decreased psychological wellbeing in adolescents" (Poulain et al., 2019). The media influences the views of the masses regarding social matters. As an example, aggressive media materials have been associated with

becoming desensitized towards violence and acceptance of violent acts among the younger generation. The study by Kanz (2016) explored the connections between violent media consumption and mediation through normative beliefs of authorization of violence (Kanz, 2016).

On the other hand, the consumption of media positively influences attitudes when used in a constructive manner. Education and awareness programs have achieved a lot in breaking stigmas and enhancing inclusion. The character of the social media in spreading the knowledge and improving the stigmatization of issues related to HIV and other related conditions was emphasized by Rimal et al. (2015) (Rimal et al., 2015).

It is becoming a more valid translation of various researchers that Media consumption patterns have significantly affected the interpersonal relationships for instance, increased use of digital communication has replaced traditional face-to-face interactions.

Johnson and Kellstedt (2014) in his study deduced that high levels of television consumption decrease variance in opinions, reflecting its homogenizing effect on public opinion (Johnson & Kellstedt, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

The most common factor resultant is that the Digital media has vastly influenced and has the ability to modify people's behavior and attitudes that has been explained through some established theories. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) presents that people mimic what they observe around them. In the same manner, when people repeatedly watch content on digital media, they tend to get influenced by it subconsciously and may ultimately lead to learning and copying the behaviors and lifestyles shown, such as the urge for spending habits or body image.

Another idea is presented in Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1976), which explains that watching a lot of media over a long span modifies the vision and how people observe the surroundings in the world. For example, if someone often watches violent content on digital media, they may build a perception of thinking that violence is a normal behavior. On the contrary, if the media shows positive messages and content like wellbeing, humanity, health, education awareness, it can create good changes in society.

Digital Media usage also has a complex impact on the behavior and attitudes of the consumers, although it also covers possibilities of positive change via education and awareness, over consumption or imbalanced consumption may result in major problems such as psychological distress, materialism and alteration of social norms. It is equally important to comprehend and evaluate the accumulated long term results from the various studies on social media and its related digital platforms to understand the effects that these have had longitudinally as the conclusion from each of the research, in its entirety will be useful for policy makers and educators to devise a lasting and optimistic approach to extract the advantages of digital media along with curbing the negative effects

Methodology

Research Design

I have adopted quantitative method of analysis for my research design which I used to examined the psychological effect of social media and its consumption on the social wellbeing, the behavior and attitudes. Organized method was used for compiling and examining the collected data and related parameters were aligned to assess the relationships between media usage patterns and psychological outcomes, providing statistically legitimate and significant insights into the impact that social media consumption has made across various demographic groups. Population size of 80 participants were expected to respond in my research.

Sampling Method

I have applied a stratified sampling methodology in my research to make sure that there would be a balanced variety and variation of participants and their responses ideally those who belonged to different demographic groups, the collected data was further classified based on different classes and stratification measures that included age and media usage patterns so that the probable effects of social media usage could be analyzed more realistically and closely within each of such subgroups.

Population

In my research participants were divided into separate categories according to different age groups (18 to 24, 25 to 35, 36 and above years), gender (male and female), and education levels (high school graduates, undergraduates, and working professionals) to better analyze media consumption patterns in the population data furthermore, occupational variations were indirectly assessed by linking educational backgrounds and industry sectors to the related media exposure, the said approach in my research provided insights into various demographics and factors that influence media habits.

Age Strata:

- 18 to 24 years
- 25 to 35 years
- 36 and above

Media Usage Patterns:

o Frequent users (3+ hours/day) o Moderate users (1–3 hours/day) o Infrequent users (<1 hour/day)

This stratification in my research allowed for to explore that how can different levels of social media content engagement influences the behavior and attitudes of individuals.

Data Collection

Data was collected via an online survey that was designed and conducted with the Google Forms, questionnaire for the survey was designed to measure the respondents' social media consumption habits, effect on purchasing decisions, changes interpersonal communication patterns, and emotional wellbeing after consuming content available on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube and these sources have been added to be able to capture the difference in the platform specific influence.

The survey questionnaire was circulated through emails, social media networks, and the people who belonged to the identified demographic groups, a time span of three weeks were utilized to collect the data and to gain a representative sample size.

Data Analysis

The stratified data that was compiled has been analyzed using statistical software to identify trends and correlations, the analysis of which included the following steps:

Descriptive Statistics:

- o Compute percentages and averages to summarize media usage patterns across the age and usage strata.
- o Provides an overview of behavioral and emotional metrics within each group.

Correlation Analysis:

- o Examine relationships between media usage frequency and behavioral outcomes, such as purchasing decisions, interpersonal communication, and emotional health.

Regression Analysis:

Assess the predictive influence of media consumption on anxiety, depression, and other psychological variables.

Ethical Considerations

My research categorically adhered to ethical research guidelines to make sure that participants' rights are well protected and kept confidential, it was voluntary and all responses were ensured to be anonymous. Respondents were well informed about the research and its objectives and were required to provide consent before submitting the completed survey. Confidentiality of respondent and the collected data used in my research was observed and results were presented in aggregate form without identifying any individual participant.

The methodology offered a coherent system of exploring how minds and behavior are affected by media intake. The study was intended to provide statistically valid results that could be applied to the intended group of demographics because it used a quantitative design; stratified sampling; and robust methods of analysis.

Data Evaluation

My research has prime object to examine the psychological impact of social media consumption on the behavior and attitudes in the respect of how the digital media influence consumption behavior, communication and attitude towards media. To research on the effect of media content exposure on decision making and emotional wellbeing, the paper adopts the media dependency theory. Stratified sampling and quantitative method were used so as to get representative samples and quality data. Data were gathered through Google forms so that they can be able to respond appropriately and analyze the data.

Descriptive Statistics

Demography

Frequency Distributions and Percentages:

- Age group: Participants had been classified into three strata of age groups: 18 to 24 years, 25 to 35 years, and 36 and above years.
- Gender classification: Data was fairly distributed for gender that included male and female respondents the purpose of which was to analyze gender based differences in media consumption patterns.
- Education Level: The study was concentrated on social media consumers belonging to high school graduates, undergraduate students, and working professionals.
- Occupation: Profession of the participants were indirectly evaluated through different educational levels and industry sectors, linking media exposure to professional decisionmaking.

Participants Data

Frequentness and Volume of Participants Engaging Digital Media for Communication

- Prevalence of Digital Media as preferred mode for Communication:
 - Majority participants are being reported for spending multiple hours a day consuming digital media.
 - A majority of portion indicated that digital media influenced their purchasing decisions and political opinions.
- Turning away from Face-to-Face Communication:
 - Most of the participants preferred digital mode of correspondence over in-person conversations, sourced by digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

- 68% of younger respondents (18-24 years) reported feeling more comfortable communicating through digital platforms than in face-to-face communication.

Visualization Contrast for Different Demographics

- Side-by-Side Bar / Pie Charts: ○ Visual contrast between different age groups and media consumption habits were made to emphasize how media exposure influences behavior, trust, and emotional responses.
- These visualizations helped identify demographic trends in digital consumption, purchasing habits, and media literacy.

Implementation Stage

Distribution of Participants by Profession

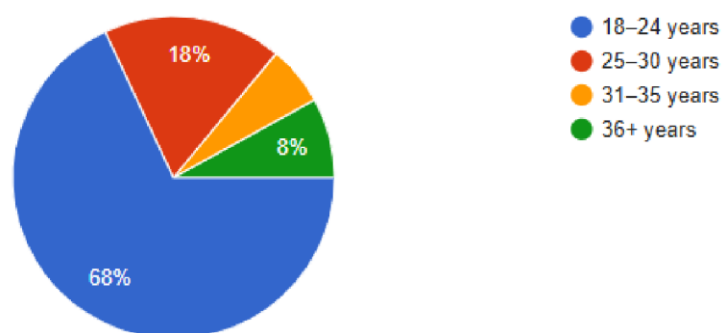
- Impact of Media and Psychological Responses:
 - The study explored how different professional sectors engage with digital media and its role in consumer influence and mental well-being.
 - Observations were made on how industries such as marketing, healthcare, and education are more reliant on digital media, leading to higher exposure to media-driven narratives.

Qualitative Evaluation

- Impact of Media Exposure and its Perceived Characteristics:
 - To understand participants' awareness of media bias, marketing influence, and the psychological effects of social media validation close ended method of responses were procured and analyzed.
 - Many respondents sighted that while they appreciate the accessibility of digital media, they also recognized the drawbacks, such as misinformation and emotional manipulation.

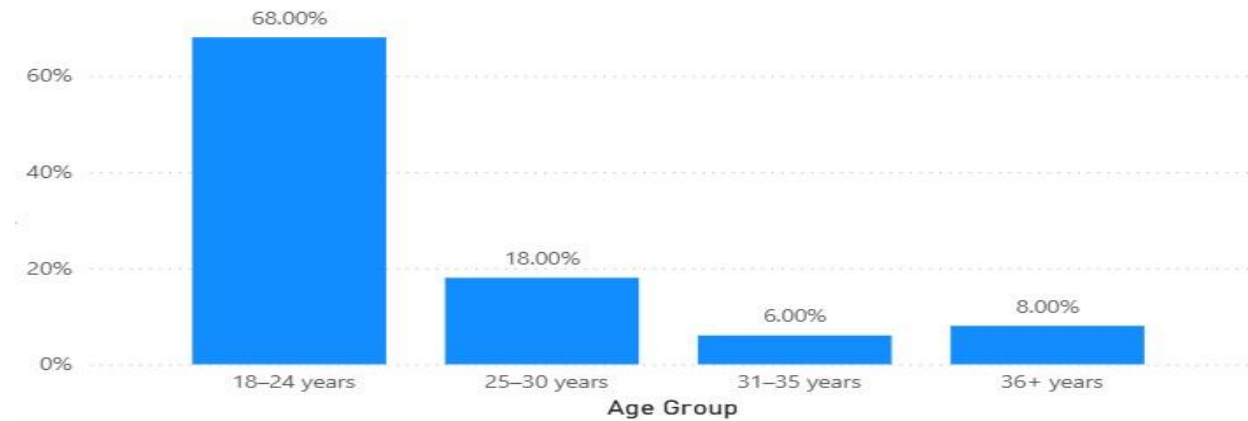
Using Google Forms and targeted survey distribution, the study successfully collected responses from a diverse participant pool. The analysis provided both descriptive and theoretical insights into how media consumption affects consumer behavior, emotional well-being, and decision-making. The results offer valuable perspectives on modern media engagement trends and their psychological implications in the digital age.

Survey Graphs and Result Which of the following age groups do you belong to?



This graph illustrates the age groups of participants, showing that the majority (68%) belonged to the 18-24 age group, indicating high media consumption among youngsters than adults.

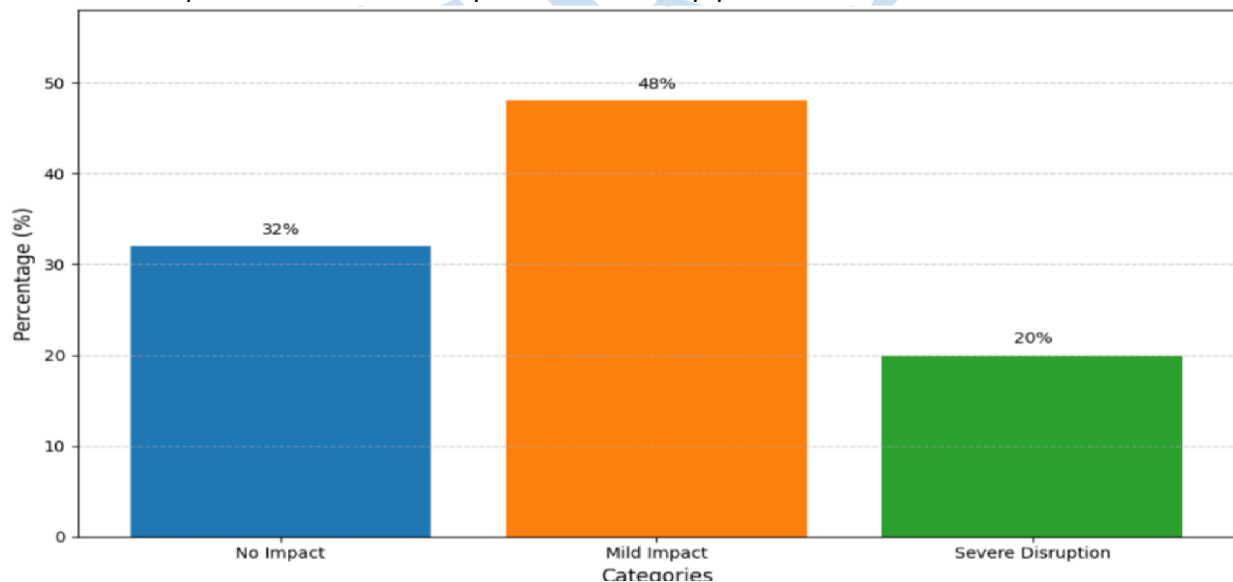
Do you spend more than 3 hours daily on media platforms?



The bar chart presents the distribution of individuals who spend more than three hours daily consuming media, categorized by age group. The data reveals significant variations in media consumption patterns across different age demographics.

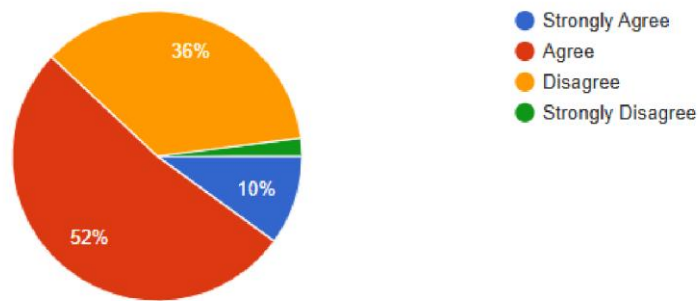
The age group 18–24 years demonstrates the highest media consumption, with over 30 individuals reporting more than three hours of daily media use. The 25–30 years age group ranks second, with just under 10 individuals exceeding three hours of media use per day. The 31–35 years and 36+ years groups report the lowest counts, each with fewer than 5 individuals exceeding three hours of media usage.

What is the impact of media consumption on the sleep patterns?



- This graph shows how media consumption affects sleep quality.
- 48% of respondents reported mild sleep disturbances, while 20% experienced severe disruptions.

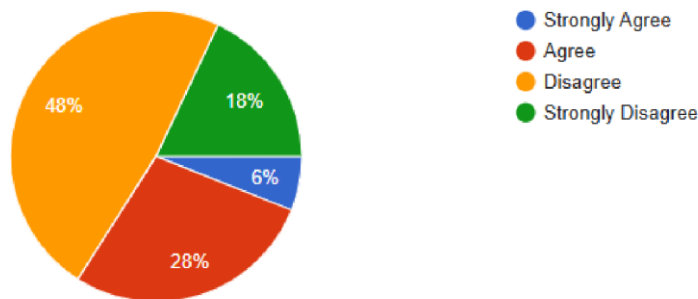
Do advertisements on media influence your purchasing decisions?



This chart illustrates how individuals of different age groups make purchase decisions influenced by TV or social media.

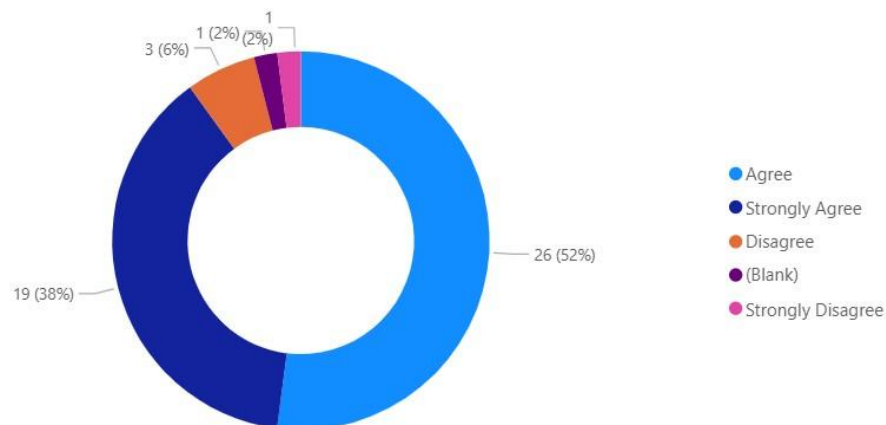
52% of the respondents leads significantly indicating their purchase behavior is influenced by media platforms, with further 10% strongly supporting the statement. This underscores their high engagement with digital marketing and social platforms. 36% disagreed and only 2% show minimal influence. This suggests that majority of the consumers are more likely to be influenced by social or television media in their purchase decisions.

Do you feel pressured to compare yourself with others because of media portrayals of lifestyle, beauty, or success?



While the majority (66%) either disagree or strongly disagree with feeling pressured, a significant 34% still experience some level of pressure due to media portrayals, indicating the media's influence remains a relevant concern for a portion of the population.

Do you feel that media has reduced the amount of face-to-face conversations you have?



The chart illustrates the perceptions of respondents regarding whether media has reduced face-to-face conversations, segmented by age group. A significant proportion of respondents, 52% along with 38%, which makes it a total of 90%, that strongly agree and indicated that media has reduced face-to-face interactions and only a small fraction of respondents of 8% expressed opposing views with 2% being indifferent.

Findings

Impact on Consumer Behavior

Influence of Media on Purchasing Decisions

One significant finding was how advertising and social media influence consumer behavior.

- 72% of respondents reported that advertisements on digital platforms affected their purchasing decisions.

Effect on Interpersonal Communication

Decline in Face-to-Face Interactions

Significant differences in communication preferences were noted across age groups and media consumption levels.

- Younger participants (18-24 years) reported a higher degree of digital communication reliance.
- 90% of frequent media users reported avoiding in-person interactions in favor of digital conversations.

Impact of Media on Social Relationships

- Participants who used social media excessively reported higher social anxiety (55%) compared to moderate users (37%).
- A negative correlation was found between high media consumption and interpersonal trust, indicating that frequent media users struggled with forming strong real-life social bonds.

Effect on Emotional and Mental Well-Being

Link Between Media Consumption and Anxiety/Depression

- 48% of respondents reported experiencing mild to severe anxiety linked to social media usage.
- 28% of frequent media consumers indicated that they compared their lives to unrealistic media portrayals, leading to self-esteem issues.

Conclusion

In my research on "Psychology of Media Consumption: Impacts on behavior and attitudes" it was drafted to identify the effect of excessive consumption of social media content and the effect of its exposure on consumer psychological behavior, changes caused to interpersonal communication, and the impact on wellbeing of the mental health. It is a justified fact in my research that with the technological development and advancement of the digitalized content which is more influential than ever is on the mass discourse.

Media consumption has become one of the most critical factor in the global and technologically advanced population that affects their decision making, interpersonal relationships, and emotional wellbeing. In my research the results have shown that social media, despite providing access to knowledge and entertainment comes with downside of behavioral conditioning, social anxiety and digital dependency.

My scaled research has brought out an important correlation between social media use and its psychological implications were the results concluded that participants who are addicted to social media content consumption are stated to have resulted in higher craving for impulsive buying, more physical social withdrawal, and were more prone to anxiety related issues, this phenomena has created a division in terms of perception of use and impact of social media content consumption depending on demographic and geographic context.

My research also elucidates that the anxiety is more of an effect that people feel in an attempt to match fantasy idealized from digital interaction which is not consistent with the reality of life and relationships. Despite of communication barriers being eliminated with the use of technological advancement of digital media, its excessive use would be leading to deterioration of physical social importance and the quality of face to face relations causing emotional burnout. Decline of interpersonal trust with high media consumption was also reflected upon in my research, most importantly there is a dire requirement for media literacy interventions, it is the need of the time to help individuals engaged in digital content processing to step out of the fantasy filled digital world along with the need to provide protective factors against the adverse impact of media consumption, policymakers and educators need to start with awareness for media literacy and programs for teaching people to think critically and be responsible media consumers. Media literacy must be focused on ways of identifying misinformation, creating a work life balance between online and offline activities, and developing mental health also, the prospective studies are needed to examine long term consequences of digital dependency, especially in the light of mental health and social behavior.

In conclusion, the media consumption is a potent source that shapes attitudes and behaviors as well as norms in society through unmatched and unlimited access to information and communication for which people have to maneuver towards its positive impact and avoid the social damage it could cause thereby, making it necessary to balance impact of media consumption and the reality of life.

Recommendations

My research highlights that how media consumption has strongly influenced the purchasing patterns, caused a dynamic change in interpersonal communication, and collectively affected the mental wellbeing in society that especially is more famous among the younger age groups. Although being critical by nature the study had its limitation of scope, time and sample size and I recommend that more extensive research with volumetric and diversified population is a need to strengthen the conclusion for generalizability.

Results of this study supports that media literacy programs and awareness campaigns be introduced to help individuals consciously evaluate digital content and adopt balanced media habits.

Focus is to be encouraged for healthier offline interactions, addressing media induced anxiety and impulsive behaviors, and integrating media related concerns into mental health support and reduce digital dominance.

Due to time constraint of 2 months, limitation of scope and sample size, more comprehensive research with larger and more diverse populations is recommended for future researchers to accurately strengthen the representativeness. Future studies should also incorporate

longitudinal approaches to capture long term effects and examine each of the different platform and content types in isolation to better identify their unique impacts.

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