

Research Article**EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNGSTERS IN MIZORAM*****Lalrochami Ralte, Rakil Ramhmachhuani, T.C., Lalbiakfeli, L.K., Lalramnghaka, T.B.C. and Sikulthanga, C.**

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Abstract

The present study focuses on examining the influence of social media on the mental health and daily routines of the youth in the Mizo community. While social media is a ubiquitous aspect of modern life, its pervasive presence often blinds us to the adverse consequences it can have on our well-being. Many individuals have firsthand experience with social media, yet we often overlook the harm it inflicts on our daily lives and mental health. A substantial segment of the millennial generation grapples with various challenges stemming from their social media usage, leading to a spectrum of detrimental outcomes affecting their emotional and overall mental well-being. Disturbingly, research indicates that young adults engaged in social media are three times more likely to endure depression. Recognizing the importance of education in addressing this issue, schools play a pivotal role in guiding the younger generation in making productive and mindful use of social media for the betterment of their lives. By shedding light on the impact of social media on the Mizo youth, this study aims to raise awareness and pave the way for strategies to mitigate the negative consequences while harnessing the positive aspects of digital connectivity.

Keywords: Social Media, Youth, Mental Health, Awareness, Impact.

INTRODUCTION

Social media serves as computer-mediated tools facilitating the exchange of information, ideas, professional interests, and diverse forms of expression within virtual communities and networks. Noteworthy platforms such as Facebook, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Reddit, Snapchat, Tumblr, Twitter, WeChat, WhatsApp, and YouTube stand out as prominent social networking websites and applications, as acknowledged by Oluwasegun and Michael Iratzs in 2017. In Mizoram, as in other parts of the world, social media has become an integral aspect of the lives of young people. While social media platforms offer numerous advantages, they wield a significant influence on the mental health of the younger generation. Understanding the impact of social media on the mental well-being of young individuals in Mizoram, where internet and smartphone usage are widespread, is paramount. Over the past decade, the use of social media has surged and continues to do so. In 2015, the Pew Research Center reported that 71% of 13- to 17-year-olds used Facebook, 52% used Instagram, and 41% used Snapchat. Notably, teenage girls exhibited a higher propensity to utilize image-centric social media platforms, with 61% of girls on Instagram than 44% of boys. This upsurge in social media activity, especially on Facebook and Instagram, may negatively impact adolescent girls' and young women's self-confidence and body satisfaction, as indicated by Lenhart in 2015. Current research links social media platforms to body dissatisfaction among adolescent girls, with studies by Tiggemann & Miller (2010) and Tiggemann & Slater (2013) supporting this connection. An in-depth study involving over 100 seventh graders revealed that adolescent girls who shared more photos online, including selfies, and employed photo-editing tools, exhibited increased dissatisfaction with their appearance and a higher prevalence of eating problems, as evidenced by McLean et al. in 2015. Furthermore, some research suggests that heightened social media use contributes to body dissatisfaction due to increased

appearance-related comments from friends, as per de Vries et al. in 2015. Social media also fosters the propagation of misleading content, communications, and imagery, often leading to conflicts and straining international relationships. Young individuals, due to their relative immaturity, become prime targets for cyberbullying. This has far-reaching consequences for the mental and physical health of the youth, potentially leading to depression and self-harm. The effects of social media on teenagers' lives are multifaceted and can significantly impact users. Furthermore, the improper use of new and trendy tools within social media can have adverse effects on young individuals, who are at a crucial stage of development. As traditional media transitions from one-way broadcast content to multimedia and multitasking, concerns such as body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem have gained prominence among the younger generation. Social networking platforms often propagate the notion of an idealized body, where attributes like height, weight, body size, and physical shape play intricate roles, often leading to feelings of inadequacy, especially among young women. However, it's important to note that not all researchers find a clear link between viewing image-based media and body dissatisfaction, as demonstrated by Holmstrom's 2004 meta-analysis. Surprisingly, Holmstrom's study found that women felt better about their bodies after viewing photographs of overweight individuals but saw no improvement in body image after seeing slim individuals. This finding casts doubt on the direct association between media and body image and underscores the need for further research. Social media has transformed how teenagers' access and share information. It enables communication with friends, participation in group discussions, staying informed about current events, and accessing online content. It alleviates feelings of loneliness, fosters interactions through comments and engagements with peers, and contributes to the development of social skills. However, excessive use, especially late at night, can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to potential adverse effects on well-being. In conclusion, social media profoundly influences the mindset of young individuals, with both positive and negative

outcomes. Understanding these effects is crucial in addressing the challenges and opportunities that social media presents to youth in Mizoram and beyond.

Who is the youth?

As for defining "youth," it represents a phase of transition from childhood dependence to adulthood independence. This category is more variable than other established age groupings and is often characterized by age, typically encompassing individuals between the ages of leaving compulsory education and entering the workforce. The National Youth Policy (NYP)-2014 defines "youth" as people aged 15 to 29. Currently, about 1.2 billion young people, accounting for approximately 16% of the global population, fall within the age range of 15 to 24. By 2030, it is anticipated that the number of young individuals will increase by 7% to over 1.3 billion. Youth and students employ social media for various purposes, including education, entertainment, and creative expression.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Verma, A. (2018) conducted a study on the Effects of Social Media on Youth: A Peer Review and concluded that It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about whether media use precedes and predicts mental health effects or vice versa. Future experimental and longitudinal studies are needed, particularly those that use objective measurements such as direct observation of teens' social networking sites. Furthermore, rather than previous notions of "screen time" as a primary contributor to mental health, future research must consider specific social media experiences and individual characteristics that may make certain adolescents particularly vulnerable to social media's positive or negative effects.

Raina, R., Nagar, K (2018) conducted a study on the Impact of Social Media on Teenagers and concluded that if social media consumption is restricted or redirected in a positive direction, only society will progress. It is critical to pull adolescents out of this because they are the country's future; if they go down the wrong path, our country's progress is jeopardized.

Ghodke, R.S., Kulkarni, S.M (2019) conducted a study on Social Media and Youth: Study on its Impact, Benefits, and Challenges and concluded that social media sites and applications have a substantial impact on the daily lives of young people and the government should impose such detailed laws and regulations on social media and its use. It is also proposed that authorities exercise control over dangerous and vulnerable content exchanged via social media sites and apps.

Sushma, R.S., et. al (2019) conducted a study on A Study On Impact Of Social Media on Youth and concluded that social media has an impact on our youth in both positive and negative ways. Youths must be clear about the objective of utilizing social media and how long they stay online in order to benefit their personal and social networking goals.

Puri, Y., Shukla, A (2021) conducted a study on How Social Media is Affecting the Youth and concluded that hatred between countries occurs as a result of social media. People agree that worthless information creates ambiguity and confusion in young people's thinking. Social media has become a necessity for today's kids in many ways. According

to the findings, some people believe that social media has a negative impact on their studies as they discovered in the poll that social media is robbing youth of their time, they are constantly occupied with social media.

Gupta, M., Kaur, A. (2022) conducted a study on the Impact of Social Media on Youth and concluded that teenagers must utilize social media effectively to promote social connectivity rather than wasting time on informal chats and posts on WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. To safeguard children's futures, teachers and parents should examine what they are genuinely accomplishing. In order to instill the practice of using social media for academic reasons, teachers must present new strategies that allow students to receive support from instructional platforms for their evaluations and tutorials.

Objective of the study

1. To study the role of social media among the youth of Mizoram state.
2. To study how social media has an influence on the mental health of the younger generation.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Method of study: The investigation is descriptive in nature. The research methodology selected focuses on papers from various periods in India.

Source of Data: The findings and analysis of the study are based on primary data. The study's primary source is original data. Secondary sources of information such as books, journals, articles, and websites, were used to gain a basic insight into the problem.

Role of social media among the mizoyouth

In a 2019 essay by Vanglaini titled "Mizo thalaiten Social Media an hman nasa," it was reported that all 500 respondents from five colleges in Aizawl predominantly used social media for information acquisition, including news and various other types of information. The most commonly used social media applications among these respondents were WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, Tumblr, and YouTube. This extensive use of social media had a significant impact on the information-consumption habits of young people in Mizoram.

According to the Mizoram Economic Survey of 2019-2020, the state boasted 11,35,632 mobile phone connections. Additionally, the Telecom Statistic India report of 2019 indicated that Mizoram had 237,195 rural internet connection customers and 239,212 urban internet connection subscribers. The widespread availability of telecommunications infrastructure has played a pivotal role in fostering the growth of social media in the region. Social media has undeniably become a potent force in our society, revolutionizing the way people interact and communicate online. It has facilitated person-to-person communication, allowing individuals to reconnect with old friends, partners, and lovers. Furthermore, it has encouraged the forging of new friendships and the exchange of various types of information, including videos, photos, and audio files. This transformation of society's way of life is not just entertaining but also highly effective, particularly in the realm of education.

Lalrampui's 2019 study on social media marketing in Aizawl revealed that a majority of respondents relied on social media as their primary source of information regarding goods and services. Social media marketing significantly influenced their purchasing behaviors, with many making impulsive purchases based on information they encountered on social media. This study emphasized the substantial role that social media plays in driving consumer engagement and purchase decisions. In essence, social media has become the modern equivalent of traditional word-of-mouth marketing. It has evolved into a vital tool for business owners to promote their brands and connect with potential customers, with many Mizo entrepreneurs using it to market products like handlooms, clothing, cosmetics, shoes, and services such as meal catering. Although limited research has been conducted on the specific use of social media for marketing in Mizoram, it is anticipated that further studies in this area will continue to emerge. Social media's influence on adolescent education is evident. Previously, students were heavily reliant on instructors for knowledge and education, but with the advent of new technology, they now have access to a wealth of external resources. They can receive top-quality guidance, tools, and coaching online, allowing them to develop their knowledge and skills more effectively. Students no longer have to rely solely on classroom instruction, as numerous online educational platforms such as Tata-edge and Byjus have been developed to enhance their understanding and learning experience. Social media also plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective information exchange among students.

To sum up, here are the key takeaways regarding the significance of social media for the youth:

1. **Education:** Social media platforms enable global information exchange and provide valuable educational resources. Students can access diverse perspectives and learning materials, making education more engaging and effective.
2. **Political Awareness:** Social media empowers individuals to enhance their understanding of political processes and engage with political issues. It promotes both internal and external political efficacy, allowing students to raise awareness and advocate for social causes.
3. **Social Connections:** Social media helps young people connect with peers and build meaningful relationships, fostering a sense of community and reducing isolation.
4. **Career Opportunities:** Social media is increasingly used by businesses for recruitment and networking. It enables young individuals to explore job opportunities and connect with potential employers, enhancing their career prospects.

In essence, social media has transformed the way young people access information, engage with society, and pursue their educational and career goals. Its influence extends across multiple facets of their lives, making it an integral part of the modern youth experience.

Influence of social media on the mental health of the youth

Social media has far-reaching effects on the mental health of teenagers, impacting them in various ways. Adolescents often engage in comparisons with their peers or others, which can lead to feelings of inferiority and, in some cases, depression. Cyber bullying, a significant issue in the adolescent world, has a profound negative impact on their well-being. Teens are at an

age when they are highly attuned to events and trends in the world, which can sometimes lead to their involvement in internet-related legal issues. They also have a tendency to share personal information on social networking platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and more, and may trust strangers too readily, putting themselves at risk. The pattern of teenagers checking their social media accounts early in the morning and late at night, staying online until late, can negatively affect their health, potentially leading to sleep problems and other issues. Excessive social media use has been associated with a range of mental health issues, including addiction, social anxiety, the fear of missing out (FOMO), self-harm, depression, and loneliness. The pressure to maintain a curated online image can be overwhelming for young people, leading to feelings of inadequacy and heightened anxiety and sadness. Tragically, there has been an increase in suicide rates among young individuals as they experience despair and suicidal thoughts, potentially linked to the negative effects of social media. Face-to-face interaction with peers can significantly reduce stress and improve mood. Physical contact and interpersonal communication offer a sense of belonging and care that can't be replicated by online interactions. Excessive use of social media has the potential to lead to anxiety and depression, escalating from mood swings to mood disorders and potentially even depression.

Cyberbullying is another harmful consequence of social media, accounting for a substantial portion of teenage bullying incidents. It has evolved from physical aggression to online harassment, causing damage to victims' self-esteem. Snide or offensive comments on social media posts constitute cyberbullying, and these remarks can be captured as screenshots and transformed into memes, further intensifying the harm. Social media has also become a fertile ground for spreading rumors and falsehoods, causing emotional harm. Once something is posted on social media, it becomes public and accessible to a wide audience, making it easy for bullies to target their victims with harsh comments. Teenagers who frequently use social media platforms tend to experience lower self-esteem and negative body image, which can contribute to feelings of sadness and anxiety. As social media use has increased, so has the amount of time young people spend engaging in risky behaviors. Staying up late to monitor social media, a practice known as "vamping," leads to sleep deprivation. Adolescence is a critical period for social development, but face-to-face interactions have declined due to the increased use of social media. This shift in socialization patterns can foster a pattern of stimulation akin to addictive behaviors. Schools play a crucial role in safeguarding children's online safety. A well-structured digital curriculum should address topics such as digital resilience and digital citizenship to help young people respond to negative online experiences and behave responsibly on the internet. Students should be educated about digital literacy to protect their online accounts through privacy settings, reporting abuse, and creating strong passwords. Critical thinking skills should also be developed to help young people critically assess online content and recognize the harmful implications of various content themes.

In summary, the impact of social media on the mental health of young people can be summarized as follows:

1. **Harassment:** Social media is a platform for sending disrespectful, unpleasant, and offensive messages, which

constitute harassment. Cyber bullies often make inappropriate comments on posts, images, and in chat rooms.

2. **Bullying through Rumors and Gossip:** Social media facilitates the rapid spread of rumors and gossip, which can quickly go viral and harm the self-esteem of victims.
3. **Changing Learning Habits:** Excessive use of social media is leading teenagers to rely on it for information, impacting their reading habits and research skills.
4. **Negative Health Habits:** Casual use of social networking sites can lead to physical and mental health issues, such as poor eating habits, inadequate sleep, and a sedentary lifestyle.
5. **Reduced Cognitive Function:** Excessive use of social media may impair cognitive function, leading to difficulties in maintaining attention and focus.

In conclusion, while social media offers numerous benefits and opportunities, it also poses significant challenges and risks to the mental health and well-being of young individuals, particularly teenagers. Schools and educators have an important role to play in fostering responsible online behavior and helping young people navigate the digital landscape.

Conclusion

The use of social media can have detrimental effects on the mental health of children and teenagers, potentially resulting in stress, despair, negative body image, and self-harm. Despite these risks, completely preventing kids and young people from using social media is not a practical solution. Instead, a proactive approach is needed to ensure their safety and well-being. This involves collaborative efforts from schools, parents, and the internet sector to protect children from potential harm and promote responsible use. To promote the constructive use of social media, educators should introduce innovative strategies that encourage students to leverage instructional platforms for academic purposes. By doing so, students can access valuable assistance for their assessments and tutorials, turning social media into a tool for learning and personal growth.

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