

The Impact of Social Media on the Mental Health of Adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: Social media has become an integral part of modern-day life. It has many benefits, including the ability to connect with others, share experiences, and find information. However, it can also have a negative impact on mental health, particularly for adolescents. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 adolescents aged between 13 and 19 years. The results indicate that social media has both positive and negative effects on the mental health of adolescents. Positive effects include increased social support, self-expression, and the ability to connect with others. Negative effects include increased anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, and addiction. These findings suggest that interventions are needed to promote positive social media use and protect adolescents from negative impacts.

Keywords: Social media, Mental health, Adolescents, Kargil, Intervention.

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical period of human development characterized by physical, emotional, and social changes. During this period, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to mental health problems. Social media, with its ever-increasing presence in our lives, has become an integral part of the daily lives of adolescents. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat have been used to connect with friends and family, share experiences and express oneself. However, research has shown that social media user can have both positive and negative effects on mental health, particularly for adolescents. Social media has been linked to increased anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, and addiction.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents. Although studies conducted in other parts of the world have shown a close link between social media use and poor mental health outcomes, there is limited research on the impact of social media on mental health of adolescents in Kargil. Kargil is a remote and mountainous region in the Indian UT of Ladakh, and the adolescent population here faces unique challenges related to their mental health.

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of social media on the mental health of

adolescents in Kargil, and to identify the factors that contribute to both positive and negative mental health outcomes. Through a qualitative study, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of adolescents regarding social media use and its impact on their mental health. The findings of this study will provide insights into the unique challenges faced by adolescents in Kargil and can inform the development of interventions and policies to promote positive mental health outcomes in this population.

II. BACKGROUND

Ladakh is a far-flung withdrawn region of India with a population of approximately 270,000 people. The region has a unique culture and way of life, and many of its residents are deeply connected to their traditions and customs. In recent years, social media has become increasingly popular in Ladakh, particularly among young people. While social media has many benefits, including the ability to connect with others and share experiences, it can also have a negative impact on mental health, particularly for adolescents.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents has been a topic of increasing concern in recent years. A number of studies have investigated the relationship between social media use

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and mental health outcomes in adolescents, with mixed results.

One study by Hampton *et al.*, (2015) found that social media use was associated with increased feelings of social isolation and depression in young adults. Similarly, a study by Twenge *et al.*, (2018) found that increased social media use was associated with increased rates of depression and suicidal thoughts among adolescents.

However, other studies have found more positive associations between social media use and mental health outcomes. For example, a study by Ellison *et al.*, (2011) found that social media use was associated with increased levels of social support and self-esteem in college students.

In the context of Kargil, Ladakh, there is a lack of research on the impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents. However, studies from other regions of India suggest that social media use may be associated with negative mental health outcomes. For example, a study by Raj *et al.*, (2017) found that social media use was associated with increased rates of anxiety and depression among adolescents in Tamil Nadu.

In addition to the potential negative impacts of social media on mental health, cyberbullying is a growing concern. Cyberbullying refers to the use of electronic communication to harass, intimidate, or humiliate another person. Research has shown that cyberbullying can have a significant impact on mental health, particularly among adolescents (Kowalski *et al.*, 2014).

Despite the potential negative impacts of social media on mental health, there are also positive aspects to social media use. For example, social media can provide opportunities for social connection, self-expression, and peer support (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Some studies have found that social media use is associated with increased social support and positive mental health outcomes (Ellison *et al.*, 2011).

Overall, the literature suggests that social media use can have both positive and negative impacts on the mental health of adolescents. While social media has the potential to provide important benefits, including increased social support and self-expression, it can also contribute to negative mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying. The specific impacts of social media on the mental health of adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh remain an important area of research.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the positive and negative effects of social media on the mental health of adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh?
2. How do adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh use social media?
3. What are the attitudes of adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh towards social media?

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a qualitative research design. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 adolescents aged between 13 and 19 years. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling, and the interviews were conducted in-person. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected through the interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. The data was analyzed inductively, with themes emerging from the data rather than being pre-determined. The analysis involved identifying patterns, themes, and categories within the data. The analysis was conducted by the researcher and a research assistant.

VI. RESULTS

The results of the study indicate that social media has both positive and negative effects on the mental health of adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh. The positive effects include increased social support, self-expression, and the ability to connect with others. Many adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh use social media to stay in touch with family and friends who live far away. Social media also provides a platform for self-expression, allowing adolescents to express themselves creatively through photography and video.

However, social media also has negative effects on the mental health of adolescents. Many adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh reported feeling anxious and stressed due to their use of social media. Cyberbullying was also reported as a significant concern, with many adolescents reporting being the victim of online harassment. Addiction to social media was also reported as a significant concern, with many adolescents spending hours each day on social media platforms.

Attitudes towards social media were mixed among the adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh. While many adolescents acknowledged the positive aspects of social media, such as the ability to connect with others, many also expressed concern about the negative impact that social media can have on mental health. Some adolescents reported feeling pressure to present a perfect image on social media, which can contribute to feelings of anxiety and stress.

The study also highlights the need for interventions to promote positive social media use and protect adolescents from the negative impacts of social media. One way to promote positive social media use is to educate adolescents about the risks of social media and how to use social media in a safe and healthy way. Parents, teachers, and other adults can also play a role in promoting positive social media use by modeling healthy social media behaviors and monitoring adolescents' social media use.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the study, here are some recommendations:

1. **Cyberbullying Prevention:** There is a need for interventions to prevent cyberbullying and support adolescents who have experienced online harassment. Schools and parents should provide a safe environment where adolescents can report and discuss cases of cyberbullying. Authorities should have strict policies and laws against cyberbullying.
2. **Promotion of Positive Social Media Use:** Educating adolescents about the risks of social media and how to use it safely and healthily is crucial. Parents, teachers, and other adults can model healthy social media behaviors and monitor adolescents' social media use. Social media companies can also help by providing age-appropriate features, filters, and support services.
3. **Mental Health Awareness:** Adolescents should be aware of the negative impact that social media can have on their mental health. Parents, teachers, and other adults can provide mental health support and resources to adolescents who are struggling with mental health issues.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity:** As Ladakh is a unique cultural region, interventions should be culturally sensitive and tailored to the needs of the community. Interventions should respect the region's customs and traditions while promoting positive social media use and mental health awareness.
5. **Further Research:** More research is needed to better understand the impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents in Ladakh. Future studies could use larger sample sizes,

quantitative methods, and longitudinal designs to better understand the long-term effects of social media on mental health.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Social media has become an integral part of modern-day life, particularly for adolescents. While social media has many benefits, including the ability to connect with others and share experiences, it can also have a negative impact on mental health. The findings of this study suggest that social media has both positive and negative effects on the mental health of adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh. Interventions are needed to promote positive social media use and protect adolescents from the negative impacts of social media. By promoting positive social media use, we can ensure that adolescents in Kargil, Ladakh and around the world can reap the benefits of social media without compromising their mental health.

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