

Social Media Use And Mental Health Of Children

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Abstract-

We live in digital age, which significantly affects the social and educational process of school going children. Childhood years are the most impressionable years. It's a very vulnerable population to have something where there is no stopgap. The study was conducted on middle childhood children in the age group of 7 to 9 years of Yamuna Nagar District of Haryana . The sample was randomly selected according to convenience. The sample size was 50 children along with their one parent. A self-prepared questionnaire covering wide range of topics like the time duration spend on social media sites per day, its affect on behaviour, academic achievements, emotional aspects and many other related issues. The respondents were interviewed on the self-prepared questionnaire. Data was quantified using frequencies and percentages. Social media has both positive and negative impact on children. Studies link social media use to poor sleep, memory issues, academic struggles, anxiety and fear of missing something. Social media has significant impact on children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, with both negative and positive aspects. Negative effects include sleep problems, attention issues, increased aggression, depression, and exposure to cyber bullying or inappropriate contents. Positive influences can involve educational opportunities, increased social connection for isolated children and exposure to diverse cultures. E- learning enriches children knowledge bank. Parents strongly wants that Government should come up with a stringent law to ban social media sites for children. Social media when used appropriately can help children develop self-control and discipline through restricted screen time.

Keywords- Social Media, Mental Health.

INTRODUCTION-

Childhood years are the most impressionable years. Social media has become deeply embedded in our daily lives, particularly among young children. School children often tend to be attracted to social media platforms. Social media has become a prominent fixture in the lives of many individuals facing the challenges of mental health. Social media refers to broadly to web and mobile platforms that allows individuals to connect with others within a virtual network such as facebook, snapchat, Instagram, where they can share or create digital contents. Using it activates the brain's reward center by releasing dopamine. Mental Health is more than just the absence of mental illness; it is a positive sense of well-being, or the capacity to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.

According to WHO (2015) mental health is a 'state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Our physical and mental health are intricately linked, and that the state of both greatly influence our quality of life. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood and old age. Studies show that one in four people are affected by any number of mental disorders.

When ther's filter applied to the digital world, it can be hard for teens to tell what's real and what isn't , which at a comes at a difficult time for them physically and emotionally. Sperling(2025) acknowledges social

platforms have positive aspects such as their ability to allow people to stay in touch with family and friends around the world. Author further revealed that social media can fuel anxiety, disrupt sleep, and leave us feeling alone in a crowd. Social media offers immediate gratification. A university of Texas review of research on parents' use of mobile devices while interacting with their children found while interacting with their children found that mobile use contributed to distracted parenting, an increase bids for attention when the parents were distracted ,and conflicts with other caregivers. Safety issues are associated with mental health. Positive mental health will reduce crimes in the society.

TYPES OF MENTAL ILLNESES---

- ▶ Anxiety and panic attacks –Anxiety is a normal emotion that we all experience but becomes a mental health problem when someone finds they are feeling this way all or most of the time.
- ▶ Bipolar disorder is a diagnosis given to someone who experience extreme of low (depressed) and high (manic)moods.
- ▶ Depression is a diagnosis given to someone who is experiencing a low mood and who finds it hard or impossible to have fun or enjoy their lives.
- ▶ Eating Disorders is a diagnosis given to someone who has unhealthy thoughts, feelings and behavior about food and their body shape. Bulimia and anoxia nervosa are common eating disorder.
- ▶ Obsessive compulsive disorder is a mental health diagnosis given to someone who experiences obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors.
- ▶ Post Traumatic stress disorders is a diagnosis given to people who develop a certain set of symptoms following a traumatic event.
- ▶ Psychosis –A person experiencing psychosis perceives the world in a different way to those around them, including hallucinations, delusions or both.
- ▶ Schizophrenia is a diagnosis given to people who experience symptoms of psychosis, alongside what are called negative symptoms.
- ▶ Self-harm- is when someone purposely hurts themselves, usually in order to cope with intense emotional distress.
- ▶ Suicidal feelings- Suicide is when someone intentionally takes their own life. Its a very complex issue.
- ▶ Personality disorders.

METHODOLOGY-

The study was conducted on middle childhood children in the age group of 7 to 9 years of Yamuna Nagar District of Haryana . The sample was randomly selected according to convenience. The sample size was 50 children along with their one parent. Researcher prepared a questionnaire on wide range of topics like the time duration spend on social media sites per day, its affect on behaviour, academic achievements, emotional aspects and many other related issues. The respondents were interviewed on the self-prepared questionnaire. Data was quantified using frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS-

Nearly 80% parents told that their wards spend 5 hours each day on social media sites like snap chat, Instagram, whats'app or on surfing various websites. large number approx. 65% YOUNG CHILDREN had own cell phone, rest were sharing it with mother or grandparent. Parents told that children make excuses to use the mobile phone on one pretext or the other like for academic purpose or playing games. At times they even emotionally blackmail their grandparents. Maximum parents reported that usage of mobile phones is affecting their language

skills, detaching them from reality, ignoring instructions given to them and delaying accomplishment of other chores.

All the respondents felt that social media most positive impact is that it enriches the knowledge of their wards. As it brings virtual world in their room.

A huge number, 90% parents felt that exposure to social medias is affecting mental health of young children. Children are becoming less tolerant and more aggressive. They share less with parents or siblings. Nearly 78% parents wants that children should visit social media sites under supervision of their parents. However, children want privacy and search gaming sites or other websites away from the watchful eyes of adults. Maximum parents are scared of any kind of bullying their child might face on social media.

Long exposure on social media sites is affecting cognitive skills, physical health, sleeping pattern, vision, eating pattern, withdrawal from friends and activities and time allotted to academics. Almost all the respondents were of the view that parenting is not proving effective in controlling exposure to social media sites. Now they want government of the state to frame strict laws to ban children to access social media sites.

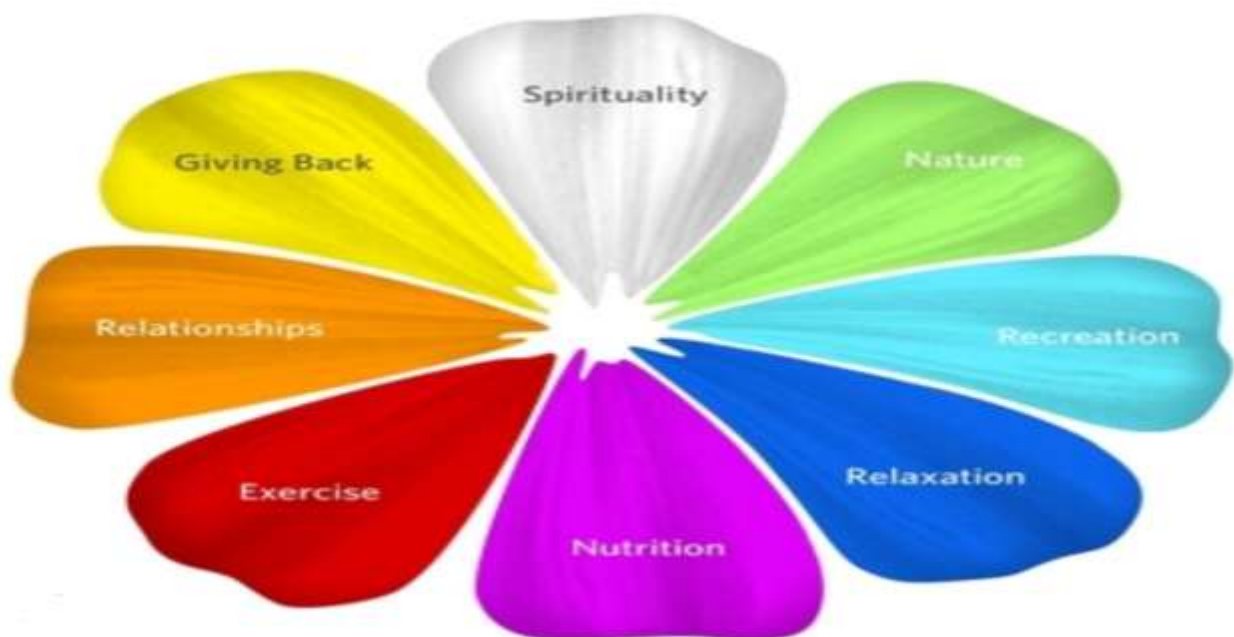
Among young children poor mental health leads to change in school performance, poor grades strong efforts, defiance of authority, truancy, persistent nightmares, intense fears, frequent temper tantrums, hyperactivity and changes in eating and sleeping habits.

Social media exposure is not always bad for young children as it gives them access to vast information pool, however how they use the gadgets will be detrimental.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH -

There are changes one can make safely in day to day life to boost the mental health in this digital age.

Research shows there are some of the effective lifestyle changes that can be implemented.



Here are some tips to help find the right balance:

- Be good role models for your wards. The way parents are using social media is the model for their kids.
- Restrict screen timings , create balance between online and offline activities.
- Talk with your child about difference between reality and virtual world.

- Involve children in sports activities to boost their confidence and avoid criticism.
- Take care of physical health of children –include balanced nutritious meals, plenty of water, exercise.
- Surround them with good people and create stimulating environment. Designate specific hours for social media usage.
- Help children to Learn how to deal with stress. Try one minute stress strategies like playing with pets , take a nature walk , smile, and see the humour in life . Meditation , prayer and relaxation exercises improve state of mind and outlook on life.
- Set realistic goals.
- Help children develop hobbies ,so that they learn to utilise their leisure time.
- Seek help of counsellors,if needs arise.

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