

Research Article

Association Between Problematic Social Networking Site Use and Social Well-Being Among Young Adults; A Meta Analytic Review

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Abstract: The swift proliferation of social networking sites (SNS) has elicited apprehensions over their possible impacts on users' social well-being, especially among young adults. Although social networking services provide avenues for contact, networking, and enjoyment, excessive or problematic usage has been associated with adverse psychological and social consequences, such as social isolation, anxiety, and diminished life satisfaction. This work carefully analyses and synthesizes empirical literature, utilizing numerous databases to discern patterns and effect sizes in the association between PSNSU and markers of social well-being, including social connectedness, loneliness, and subjective well-being. The review examines moderating variables like gender, cultural disparities, and platform-specific usage patterns to offer a thorough knowledge of the impact of SNS addiction on the social and emotional well-being of young people. Moreover, gender variations suggest that females may endure heightened emotional suffering associated with excessive social networking service usage, whilst males may exhibit increased alienation from offline social contacts. This study enhances the existing literature on digital addiction and mental health by offering quantitative data about the harmful effects of excessive social networking service usage. The results have ramifications for mental health practitioners, educators, and legislators in formulating programs to cultivate better digital behaviours and encourage balanced social media usage. Overall, female respondents exhibit higher mean ranks in psychological, behavioral, and platform-related factors, indicating that they might be more vulnerable to problematic SNS use. In contrast, males tend to be more affected by social and relational factors, though the difference is not as strong.

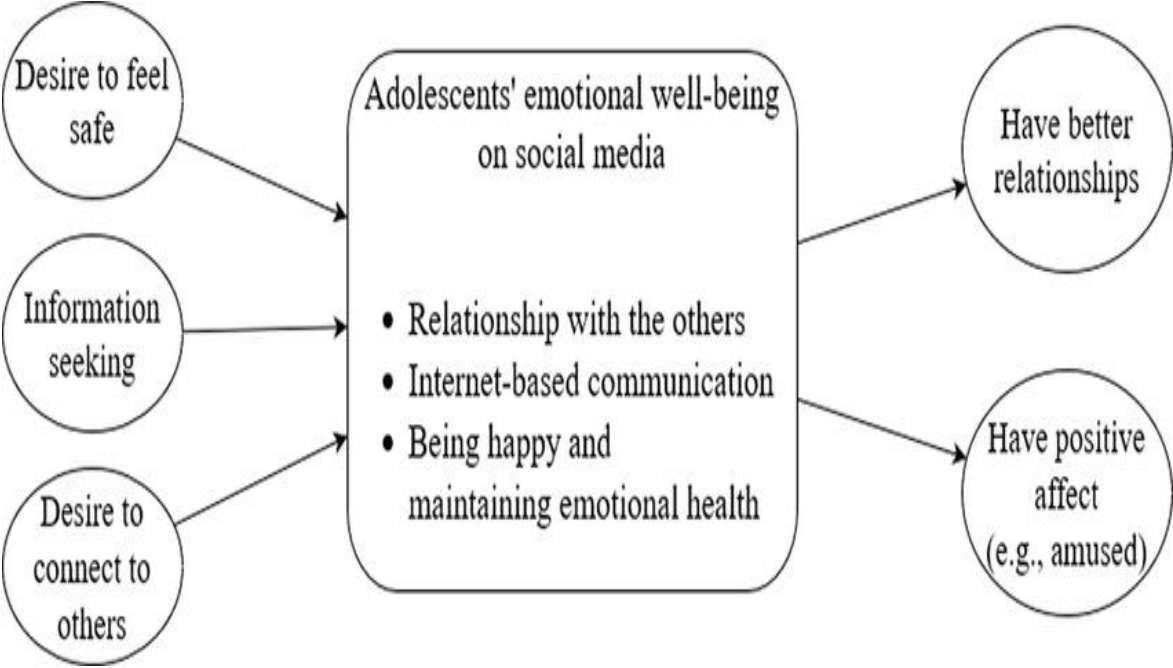
Keywords: Mental health, young adults, meta-analysis, Psychological Factors, Behavioral & Usage Patterns, Social & Relational Factors, Platform & Content-Related Factors and moderating Factors.

INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites have become essential to contemporary life, especially for young adults who utilise these platforms for communication, socialization, and self-expression. Although social networking sites provide several advantages, such as enhancing relationships, offering amusement, and enabling information dissemination, apprehensions about their overuse and its effects on well-being have garnered considerable attention in recent years. An increasing volume of research indicates that problematic social networking site use (PSNSU)—defined by excessive involvement, obsessive behaviours, and social media addiction—may adversely impact users' mental and social well-being. Problematic social networking service usage is characterized by excessive,

uncontrolled, and obsessive dependence on social media platforms, resulting in psychological suffering and diminished everyday functioning. It resembles behavioral addictions, including gambling and gaming disorders, and is linked to symptoms such as obsession with social networking sites, withdrawal feelings when offline, lack of control over usage, and disregard for real-life social responsibilities. Young individuals, especially those between 18 and 30 years old, are deemed more susceptible to PSNSU owing to their heightened reliance on digital communication, peer affirmation, and online social engagements. Research suggests that problematic social media users frequently utilise social networking sites to evade bad feelings, mitigate stress, or satisfy unfulfilled social requirements.

Chart: 01



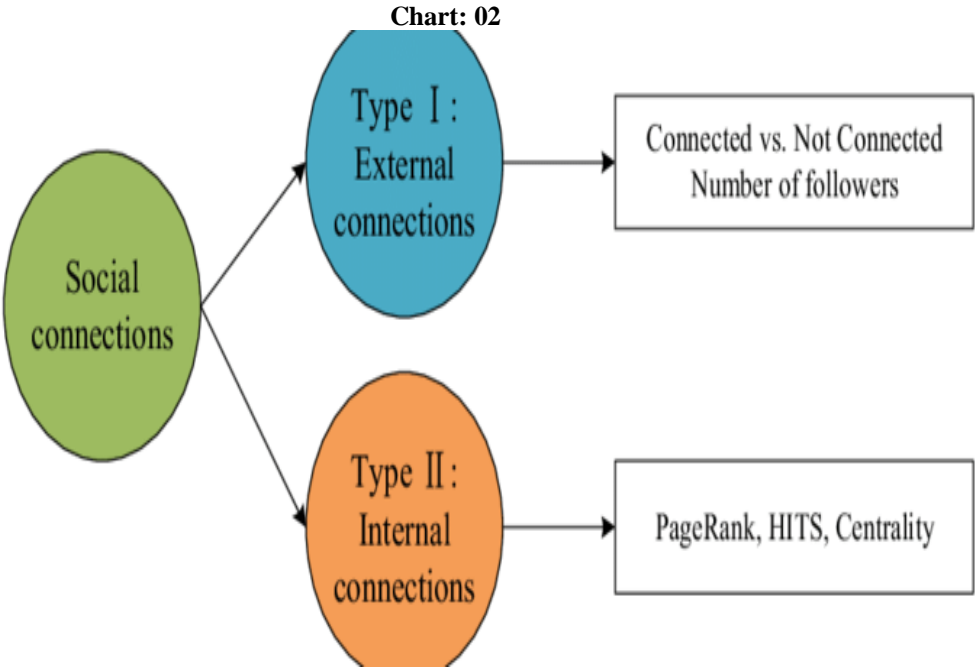
Defining Social Well-being

Social well-being refers to an individual’s perceived quality of relationships, social support, and overall satisfaction with social interactions. Key dimensions of social well-being include:

- Social connectedness: The sense of belonging and integration within a social network.
- Loneliness: Feelings of isolation despite being socially active online.
- Social support: The availability of meaningful relationships and emotional support from peers and family.
- Subjective happiness: The individual’s perception of their overall life satisfaction and social fulfillment.

Research suggests that excessive SNS use may weaken offline social ties, increase feelings of loneliness, and create a paradoxical sense of digital connectivity but emotional detachment. While SNS provide an illusion of constant social interaction, over-reliance on online interactions can reduce the depth and authenticity of real-world relationships.

Theoretical Perspectives on SNS and Social Well-being

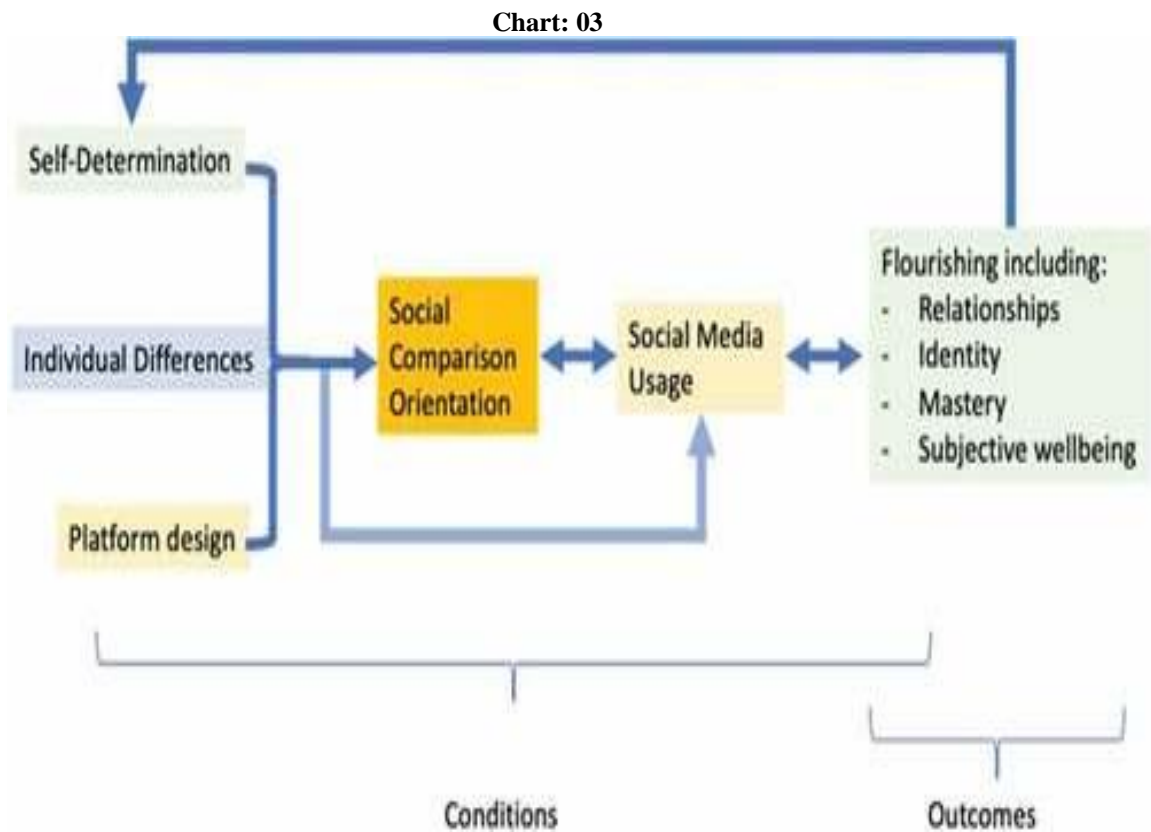


Several theoretical models help explain the relationship between SNS use and social well-being:

1. The Social Displacement Hypothesis: This theory posits that excessive SNS use reduces the time spent on offline social interactions, leading to weaker real-life relationships and lower social well-being. Individuals who substitute online interactions for face-to-face engagement may experience greater loneliness and social detachment.
2. The Compensatory Internet Use Theory: This framework suggests that individuals who struggle with social anxiety or have poor offline social skills may turn to SNS as a compensatory mechanism to fulfill social needs. However, excessive reliance on online interactions may reinforce avoidant behaviors, further deteriorating real-life social connectedness.
3. The Rich-Get-Richer vs. Poor-Get-Poorer Hypothesis: This model suggests that individuals with strong social networks may use SNS to enhance their relationships (rich-get-richer), whereas socially anxious or isolated individuals may experience worsening social well-being due to excessive SNS dependence (poor-get-poorer).

NEED FOR A META-ANALYTIC REVIEW

Despite comprehensive study on social networking sites (SNS) and well-being, current studies yield inconclusive results, with some indicating that SNS usage fosters social connectivity, while others emphasise its adverse impacts. Furthermore, the majority of research lacks a quantitative synthesis of the correlation between PSNSU and social well-being, resulting in discrepancies in comprehending its actual effect.



1. The Social Displacement Hypothesis: The Social Displacement Hypothesis suggests that increased online interactions may reduce the quality and frequency of offline relationships, leading to diminished social well-being. When young adults spend excessive time on SNS, they may neglect face-to-face communication, weakening real-life social bonds and increasing loneliness. This theory aligns with findings that PSNSU is associated with reduced social integration and emotional support.
2. The Compensatory Internet Use Theory: The Compensatory Internet Use Theory posits that individuals who experience social anxiety, loneliness, or low self-esteem may use SNS as a coping mechanism to fulfill unmet social needs. However, rather than improving social well-being, excessive online interactions can reinforce avoidant behaviors, further isolating users from real-life relationships. This theory explains why individuals with pre-existing social difficulties are more prone to problematic SNS use.
3. The Rich-Get-Richer vs. Poor-Get-Poorer Hypothesis: This model suggests that SNS use benefits individuals with strong offline social networks (rich-get-richer) while negatively impacting those with weaker social connections (poor-get-poorer). Young adults with strong support systems may use SNS to enhance their relationships, while those with limited social ties may experience worsening social isolation, particularly when their online interactions fail to provide meaningful emotional support.

Research Gap

1. Underexplored Gender Differences: While some studies suggest that gender influences social media engagement patterns, few have systematically analyzed how PSNSU affects males and females differently. Research indicates that females are more affected by social comparison and emotional distress, while males may experience greater detachment from offline relationships. A deeper examination of these gender-specific effects is required.
2. Cultural and Contextual Variations: Most studies on PSNSU and well-being have been conducted in Western countries, with limited research from Asia, Africa, and other non-Western contexts. Given the cultural differences in social media norms, further research is needed to explore how cultural factors shape SNS addiction and social well-being outcomes.
3. The Role of Specific Social Media Platforms: Existing studies often treat social networking sites as a homogeneous entity, without differentiating between platforms. However, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Face book serve different purposes and may have varying effects on users' social well-being. Research should explore how platform-specific behaviors influence social well-being differently.
4. Need for Intervention-Based Research: While studies confirm the negative impact of PSNSU on social well-being, few offer practical interventions to mitigate these effects. Future research should focus on developing and testing intervention strategies that help young adults manage social media use in a way that enhances rather than diminishes well-being. By addressing these research gaps, scholars can better understand the complexities of SNS addiction and provide actionable insights to improve young adults' digital well-being.

Importance of Study

Prolonged social networking service use has been associated with increased anxiety, depression, and social isolation. A significant number of young individuals lack awareness regarding the impact of their social networking service behaviours on their mental and social well-being. This study highlights the need of digital literacy initiatives that instruct consumers on prudent social media consumption and encourage balanced usage. The research can assist governments and authorities in formulating social media usage rules, especially for younger users. This study's findings can inform policies that enhance screen time awareness, safeguard privacy, and provide online mental health assistance. Parents and educators are essential in influencing teenagers' digital behaviours. By comprehending the implications of PSNSU, they may devise tactics that promote substantive online connections while mitigating addictive behaviours. Educational institutions might incorporate seminars on digital well-being to assist students in cultivating self-regulation skills.

Statement of the Problem

The extensive utilization of social networking sites (SNS) has significantly altered the manner in which young adults interact, socialize, and pursue emotional support. Although social media platforms like Instagram, Face book, and TikTok provide several advantages, such as enhancing social relationships and enabling self-expression, a growing body of research underscores the dangers linked to problematic social networking site usage. Despite increasing apprehensions, ambiguity persists over the degree to which PSNSU adversely affects the social well-being of young adults. Current research yields inconclusive results, with certain studies indicating that social media fosters social connectivity, whilst others emphasize its detrimental impact on mental health and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, a significant portion of the existing literature does not differentiate between healthy and excessive social networking service involvement, complicating the identification of when social media usage becomes harmful. A primary obstacle in tackling this issue is the lack of a standardized definition and measuring framework for PSNSU. Diverse studies utilise distinct criteria to evaluate SNS addiction, resulting in discrepancies in study outcomes. Moreover, gender disparities, cultural impacts, and platform-specific variances are frequently neglected, despite data indicating that these aspects profoundly influence users' experiences with social media. A significant concern is the contradictory character of social media interactions. Although social networking platforms aim to enhance connectedness and participation, overdependence on these digital environments may diminish face-to-face interactions, eroding offline relationships and heightening feelings of loneliness and social alienation. The paradox is especially evident among young adults, who, despite their significant engagement on social media, report elevated degrees of loneliness, anxiety, and unhappiness with their social life. Moreover, long-term studies on the enduring effects of PSNSU are few. Most research employ cross-sectional techniques, which constrain the capacity to ascertain causal links between excessive social networking service usage and diminishing social well-being. This study seeks to address the knowledge gap by rigorously examining empirical data, identifying significant patterns, moderating factors, and viable intervention techniques. It aims to establish a robust basis for future research and guide policies and best practices to foster healthy social media behaviours among young adults.

Objectives

1. To systematically review and analyze existing research on problematic SNS use and its impact on social well-being among young adults.
2. To explore the role of moderating factors such as gender, cultural influences, and platform-specific usage in shaping social well-being outcomes.
3. To provide evidence-based recommendations for digital well-being interventions targeting young adults.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Excessive social media usage is a worry not just in academic environments but also impacts business productivity and professional relationships. Employers might utilise findings from this study to build workplace rules that promote healthy

digital practices and reduce distractions from social media. This study identifies significant research deficiencies and advocates for additional investigations into the long-term consequences, cultural variances, and gender disparities in social networking service usage patterns. This work provides a meta-analytical evaluation, establishing a baseline for future research and assuring the significant advancement of digital well-being studies.

Table 1: Gender and perception of the respondents

Perception	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Z
Psychological Factors	Male	122	92.99	-3.102
	Female	78	112.75	
	Total	200		
Behavioral & Usage Patterns	Male	122	90.50	-3.757
	Female	78	116.82	
	Total	200		
Social & Relational Factors	Male	122	106.12	-1.815
	Female	78	91.34	
	Total	200		
Platform & Content-Related Factors	Male	122	86.75	-3.003
	Female	78	122.93	
	Total	200		
Moderating Factors	Male	122	102.20	-0.298
	Female	78	97.73	
	Total	200		

The results indicate significant gender-based differences in the perception of factors influencing problematic social networking site (SNS) use among young adults. **Psychological Factors:** Female respondents (Mean Rank = 112.75) perceived psychological factors such as FOMO, anxiety, and self-esteem issues as more influential in their SNS usage compared to male respondents (Mean Rank = 92.99). The negative Z-score (-3.102) suggests a statistically significant difference between genders, with females being more affected by psychological aspects. **Behavioral & Usage Patterns:** Female respondents (Mean Rank = 116.82) scored significantly higher than males (Mean Rank = 90.50), indicating that they are more likely to engage in compulsive SNS use, multitasking, or experience sleep disruptions. The Z-score (-3.757) further supports this finding. **Social & Relational Factors:** In contrast to the previous patterns, males (Mean Rank = 106.12) perceived social and relational factors—such as peer influence, social support, and relationship conflicts—as more impactful than females (Mean Rank = 91.34). However, the Z-score (-1.815) suggests that this difference is less pronounced compared to other factors. **Platform & Content-Related Factors:** Female respondents (Mean Rank = 122.93) were significantly more influenced by platform-related aspects such as algorithmic influence, viral trends, and exposure to misinformation compared to males (Mean Rank = 86.75). The Z-score (-3.003) indicates a strong gender-based variation. **Moderating Factors:** The mean ranks for males (102.20) and females (97.73) in this category are quite similar, with a Z-score of -0.298, suggesting no significant gender difference in how they perceive protective and risk-mitigating factors such as digital detox practices, self-regulation, and coping mechanisms.

Table 2: Social networking site use and intension

Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Awareness	200	15.7825	4.30519
Intention	200	14.4561	3.53824

The table presents the descriptive statistics for two key factors: **Awareness** and **Intention** related to social networking site (SNS) use among the respondents. The rising incidence of problematic social networking service usage presents substantial hazards to the social well-being of young people; nonetheless, the absence of cohesive evidence and intervention techniques continues to be a serious obstacle. This paper tackles the topic through a meta-analytic analysis aimed at quantifying the relationship between PSNSU and social well-being, examining possible gender and cultural disparities, and providing practical recommendations for fostering healthier and more balanced social networking site activity.

1. **Awareness:** The mean score for awareness is **15.78** with a standard deviation of **4.31**, indicating that respondents generally have a moderate to high level of awareness regarding SNS use. The standard deviation suggests some variability in awareness levels among the participants.
2. **Intention:** The mean score for intention to use SNS is **14.46**, which is slightly lower than the awareness score. The standard deviation of **3.54** indicates moderate variation in respondents' intention to engage with SNS.

The difference in mean values suggests that while respondents are aware of SNS and its implications, their intention to use these platforms may not be equally strong. A potential gap between awareness and intention could indicate external influences, such as perceived risks, social norms, or self-regulation, impacting SNS usage behavior. Further analysis, such as correlation or regression, could help determine whether **higher awareness leads to greater intention to use SNS** or if other factors mediate this relationship.

Table 3: Relationship between the awareness and intention

Factors		Awareness	Intention
Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	0.168
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.005
	N	200	200
Intention	Pearson Correlation	0.168**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005	
	N	200	200
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The table presents the Pearson correlation analysis between **awareness** and **intention** regarding social networking site (SNS) use. **Correlation Coefficient ($r = 0.168$)**: The Pearson correlation value of **0.168** indicates a **weak positive relationship** between awareness and intention. This suggests that as awareness of SNS use increases, intention to use SNS also tends to increase, but the relationship is not strong.

Implications for the Study

The results support existing frameworks like the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Problematic Internet Use Model, which highlight the interplay between online engagement and psychological well-being. From a practical standpoint, the findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to promote healthy SNS usage habits among young adults. Strategies such as digital detox initiatives, awareness campaigns, and self-regulation techniques can help mitigate negative effects. Additionally, social media platforms could implement responsible design practices, such as screen time reminders and content moderation, to enhance user well-being. Overall, this study underscores the importance of balancing digital engagement with real-world social interactions.

CONCLUSION

The study seeks to address knowledge deficiencies using a systematic and quantitative meta-analysis, investigating the impact of excessive social networking service participation on young people' social connectivity, loneliness, and general well-being. This project will synthesise data from several studies to offer significant insights for mental health practitioners, educators, and legislators in formulating measures that encourage healthy digital behaviours and balanced social networking site involvement. As social media increasingly influences contemporary communication and relationships, it is crucial to maintain equilibrium between digital participation and face-to-face social interactions. Although social networking platforms offer several benefits, their excessive usage and addictive nature present significant threats to the mental health and social welfare of young adults. The principal conclusion of this study is that digital well-being should be prioritised via education, self-regulation, regulatory interventions, and responsible platform design. Through the application of evidence-based measures, people and organisations may mitigate the adverse effects of problematic social networking service usage while enhancing its advantages. The objective should not be to fully dissuade SNS usage but to advocate for ethical digital consumption that augments rather than undermines well-being. By achieving an optimal equilibrium of awareness, intervention, and policy reform, young adults may effectively traverse the

digital landscape, promoting healthy relationships, personal development, and enduring societal welfare. The significance of examining PSNSU and social well-being is paramount. This study's findings enhance the existing research aimed at promoting healthy digital practices, guiding policy formulation, and assisting young adults in efficiently navigating the digital landscape. This research advocates for a balanced approach to social media participation, providing methods to alleviate the adverse consequences of problematic social networking service usage, so ensuring that technology functions as a means of social improvement rather than a source of social pain.

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