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EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT
The quick spread of social media has shaped the psychological growth of adolescents substantially, mainly in terms of emotional intelligence (EI). The present research investigates the complex impacts of social media on different aspects of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills. While social media sites provide the opportunity for greater connectivity with others and expression of the self, excessive or uninhibited use can be associated with emotional dysregulation, decreased face-to-face social interaction, and increased vulnerability to cyberbullying or unattainable social comparison. Conversely, used responsibly, social media can facilitate greater understanding of emotions and potentially empathy through varied interactions and exposure to emotional material. This paper provides an overview of literature and empirical studies to examine both positive and negative effects of social media on the emotional development of adolescents.
KEYWORDS: *Social Media, Adolescents, Emotional Intelligence, Empathy, Emotional Regulation, Self-Awareness And Online Communication.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The sudden emergence of social media has made a great impact on the manner in which teenagers socialize, communicate, and view themselves and others. With this online world still developing, there have been concerns about its influence on teenagers' emotional development, specifically their emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence, originally described by Salovey and Mayer (1990), is the capability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions well in oneself and others. This idea was extended further to encompass its contribution to social functioning and psychological health (Mayer & Salovey, 1993; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). Goleman (2005) reiterated that EI can prove to be a more significant indicator of success than conventional intelligence measures, underscoring its significance in the adolescent stage.

Adolescence is important in terms of developing emotional and social skills. But research indicates that overuse or maladaptive use of the internet and social media can hinder these developmental processes. Increased social media usage has been correlated with the downtrends in subjective well-being (Kross et al., 2013), increased depression and anxiety rates (Lin et al., 2016; Primack et al., 2017; Mamun & Griffiths, 2019), and sleep and cognitive disturbance (Xanidis & Brignell, 2016). Ha et al. (2007) and Morrison and Gore (2010) established correlations between internet addiction and increased psychological distress among youth, while McNicol and Thorsteinsson (2017) noted that these trends can compromise coping.

In addition, emotional intelligence has been found to mediate stress-mental health relationship (Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson, 2002) and can facilitate prosocial behavior among adolescents (Wang et al., 2021). However, teens who use much of their communication online might struggle with acquiring social skills in face-to-face settings, thus narrowing their potential for emotional regulation and empathy (Casale, Tella, & Fioravanti, 2013; Silingardi & Tremolada, 2018). The internet paradox, as explained by Kraut et al. (1998), is its potential to diminish real-world social engagement and psychological health despite its promise of connectivity.

In light of these dynamics, it is essential to investigate the way social media affects the emotional intelligence of teenagers. This understanding not only facilitates the identification of risks that come with excessive use of digital media, but it also provides insights into developing emotional and psychological resilience among today's youth.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A body of research investigates the complex interplay between adolescents' use of social media and their emotional intelligence. EI is an umbrella term used to describe a theoretical construct formed by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso as being able to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions to facilitate thought and behavior (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008; 2000). Emotional intelligence has been globally associated with psychological health,

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resilience, and adaptive social functioning, particularly during adolescence—a period of heightened emotional sensitivity and social exploration.

Several studies indicate that greater emotional intelligence can act as a buffer against numerous psychological problems. For example, Fernández-Berrocal et al. (2005) showed that cross-cultural and individual differences in self-perceived emotional intelligence strongly predict depression levels. Likewise, Domínguez-García and Fernández-Berrocal (2018) identified the reverse correlation between emotional intelligence and suicidal behavior, which establishes the EI role in mental health. Conversely, emotional dysregulation has been identified as being close to extreme or pathological digital behaviors. Saraiva et al.'s (2018) and Hamissi et al.'s (2013) studies show a reverse relationship between EI and technology or internet addiction, pointing out that those with low EI are at higher risk of developing harmful digital habits.

In the case of social media usage, this would be especially significant. Tutgun-Ünal (2015) established that there is a strong correlation between social media dependency and emotional distress in university students. Likewise, Jelenchick, Eickhoff, and Moreno (2013) established a connection between excessive Facebook usage and depression symptoms in older teenagers. This fits within larger studies that link excessive internet or social media use to mental health issues including anxiety, low self-esteem, and sleep disturbance (Woods & Scott, 2016; Dhir et al., 2018). In addition, Kim et al. (2006) and Senormancı et al. (2014) support that internet addiction is strongly linked with depression and suicidal ideation, particularly among young users.

Studies also point to the mutual nature of the relationship between EI and digital behavior. Jafari and Fatehizade (2011) posit that low EI can be used to predict excessive use of the internet, and addictive behavior can also further degrade emotional control and social awareness. Emotional intelligence can serve as a buffer in dealing with online stressors, whereas its lack amplifies vulnerability to online fatigue, peer comparison, and compulsive acts (Dhir et al., 2018; Andreassen, Pallesen, & Griffiths, 2017). Hansenne and Bianchi (2009) also differentiate between state and trait aspects of EI in relation to major depression, suggesting that whereas some facets of EI might be stable, others are susceptible to emotional disturbances possibly exacerbated through excessive use of digital technology.

In the end, such research emphasizes the essential juncture between adolescents' emotional intelligence and social media use. High EI seems to buffer against risks emanating from online interaction, yet low EI could heighten the psychological vulnerabilities revealed through ongoing digital engagement. Such a dynamic requires intervention that not only encourages healthy media use but also encourages emotional competency development throughout adolescence.

3. OBJECTIVES

To examine the impact of social media usage on the emotional intelligence of adolescents.
To analyze the relationship between the amount of time spent on social media and emotional intelligence in adolescents.

4. DEVELOPING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK BASED ON VARIABLES AND JUSTIFICATION

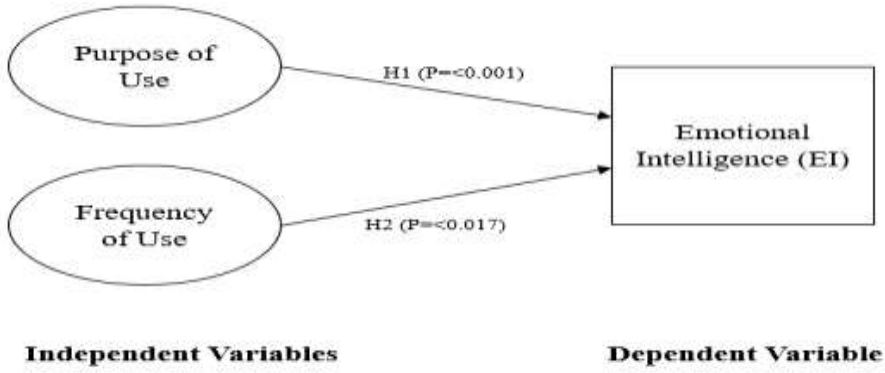


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

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From the above figure given, a theoretical model constructed to investigate the impact of social media usage on the emotional intelligence (EI) of adolescents in terms of two important independent variables: frequency and purpose of use. Emotional Intelligence, the dependent variable, means an individual's ability to know, understand, manage, and apply emotions effectively. For teenagers, EI is an essential area of personal growth and social competence that includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills.

Purpose of social media use describes the different motivations adolescents have to use social sites, e.g., entertainment, communication, education, or self-expression. The purposes of social media use can influence the type of emotional and cognitive involvement users have. Educational or communicative uses, for instance, can create productive emotional interactions, improving self-awareness and empathy. Excessive usage of social sites for entertainment or passive viewing may offer few chances for emotional development. As indicated in the hypothesis (H1, $p \leq 0.001$), the significant statistical connection between the purpose of use and EI implies that the nature of engagement has an important role to play in emotional development.

In the same way, usage frequency—meaning how many times teenagers use social media per day—can also have both positive and negative effects on EI. Heavy usage can raise the number of chances for social contact and expressing emotions, leading to increased social competence and empathy. Yet, heavy or obsessive use can also interfere with in-person interpersonal experience and emotional management. The evidence corroborates this with a strong relationship (H2, $p < 0.017$) between frequency and EI, which supports that the time devoted to social media is a determining factor in the development of emotional competencies.

Combined, these independent variables form a basis for comprehending how the context and scope of social media usage influence emotional intelligence among adolescents. In examining these associations, this theoretical framework substantiates the argument that both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of social media conduct are essential components of adolescent emotional growth. This model not only assists in the identification of social media influence patterns but also gives insights to teachers, parents, and policymakers to direct healthy digital behaviors that facilitate emotional growth.

5. METHODOLOGY

Primary and secondary data are the two types of data used in research studies. Secondary data helps identify variables. This study collected primary data from 50 participants using a structured questionnaire. Create a structured questionnaire that includes demographics like gender, qualification and age group, all of which are measurable through percentage analysis.

Descriptive statistics of Demographic Profile

The descriptive statistics of the demographic variables in terms of gender, qualification and age group, along with the following information in brief, including frequency and percentage.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of Demographic profile

Demographics Variables	Gender	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	17	34%
	Female	33	66%
Qualification	PhD	7	14%
	Master's Degree	18	36%
	Bachelor's Degree	25	50%
Age Group	18–24 years	4	8%
	25–34 years	12	24%
	35–44 years	18	36%
	45–54 years	9	18%
	55+ years	7	14%

The demographic profile of the participants in this study offers important context for understanding the sample population. Out of the total respondents, a majority were female, accounting for 66%, while males represented 34%. In terms of educational qualifications, half of the participants (50%) held a Bachelor's degree, followed by 36% with a Master's degree, and 14% holding a PhD. The age distribution was varied, with the largest group being individuals aged 35–44 years, comprising 36% of the sample. This was followed by 24% in the 25–34 age group, 18% in the 45–54 bracket, and smaller proportions in the 18–24 and 55+ categories, each representing 8% and 14% respectively. These descriptive statistics suggest that the study drew from a relatively educated and age-

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diverse group, with a notable skew toward female participants. This demographic composition may influence the generalizability of the findings, particularly in understanding how social media impacts emotional intelligence across different age groups and educational backgrounds.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Data analysis encompasses the reliability of Cronbach's Alpha measurement items, the chi-squared test, and Kruskal-Wallis-Test using relevant statistical methods

6.1 Cronbach's Alpha

Table 2 The following table shows Cronbach's Alpha value with variables and measurement items.

Variables	Item	Cronbach's Alpha
Time and Frequency of Use	I spend more than 3 hours per day on social media	0.89
	I check my social media accounts multiple times a day.	
	I feel the need to be constantly updated through social media	
Purpose of Use	I use social media to stay in touch with friends and family	0.81
	I use social media mainly for entertainment	
	I use social media to express my thoughts and emotions	
	I follow educational or self-improvement content on social media	
Emotional Intelligence	I am aware of how I feel in different situations	0.89
	I can manage my emotions even when I see upsetting content online	
	I try to understand how others feel through their posts	
	I communicate effectively with others online	
	I feel confident in expressing myself on social media	
	I feel inspired to achieve my goals after seeing positive content online.	

In the context of this research on the effects of social media on adolescents' emotional intelligence, Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales for each variable. The results revealed high reliability across all three major constructs: time and frequency of social media use, purpose of use, and emotional intelligence. Specifically, the Cronbach's Alpha for the "Time and Frequency of Use" scale was 0.89, indicating excellent internal consistency among items such as daily social media usage duration, frequency of account checks, and the need for constant updates. Similarly, the "Purpose of Use" scale demonstrated good reliability with an alpha value of 0.81, covering aspects like using social media for communication, entertainment, self-expression, and educational content. Most notably, the "Emotional Intelligence" scale also achieved a high reliability coefficient of 0.89, suggesting that items related to self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication, confidence, and motivation are strongly interrelated and effectively measure the intended construct. These results affirm that the survey instruments used in the study are both consistent and reliable for evaluating the targeted variables.

6.2 Hypothesis 1

- **H01 (Null):** There is no significant relationship between social media usage and emotional intelligence in adolescents.
- **H_1 (Alternative):** There is a significant relationship between social media usage and emotional intelligence in adolescents.

The following table shown Rank and Kruskal-Wallis-Test for hypothesis 1: Social media usage and Emotional Intelligence

Rank				Kruskal-Wallis-Test		
Groups	n	Median	Mean Rank	Chi^2	df	p
I use social media to stay in touch with friends and family	50	4	258.77	20.18	9	0.017
I use social media mainly for entertainment	50	4	265.17			
I use social media to express my thoughts and emotions	50	4	242.84			
I follow educational or self-improvement content on social media	50	4	238.33			

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I am aware of how I feel in different situations	50	4	268.48			
I can manage my emotions even when I see upsetting content online	50	4	237.21			
I try to understand how others feel through their posts	50	4	220.21			
I communicate effectively with others online	50	5	316.57			
I feel confident in expressing myself on social media	50	4	237.21			
I feel inspired to achieve my goals after seeing positive content online.	50	4	220.21			
Total	500	4				

The first hypothesis (H_{01}) posited that there is no significant relationship between social media usage and emotional intelligence, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) proposed that such a relationship does exist. Using the Kruskal-Wallis test, the study found a statistically significant association between the purpose of social media use—such as staying in touch with friends, entertainment, self-expression, and following educational content—and various dimensions of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, empathy, and communication. With a chi-square (χ^2) value of 20.18 and a p-value of 0.017, which is below the accepted significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result confirms that how adolescents use social media meaningfully influences their emotional intelligence.

6.3 Hypothesis 2

- **H02:** Time spent on social media does not significantly affect the emotional intelligence of adolescents.
- **H2:** Increased time spent on social media is significantly associated with lower emotional intelligence among adolescents.

The following table shown Rank and Kruskal-Wallis-Test for hypothesis 2: Time spent on social media and Emotional Intelligence

Ranks				**Kruskal-Wallis-Test**		
Groups	**n**	**Median**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi²**	**df**	**p**
I spend more than 3 hours per day on social media	50	4	261.41	28.33	8	<.001
I check my social media accounts multiple times a day.	50	4	225.29			
I feel the need to be constantly updated through social media	50	4	253.61			
I am aware of how I feel in different situations	50	4	231.29			
I can manage my emotions even when I see upsetting content online	50	4	203.36			
I try to understand how others feel through their posts	50	4	188.05			
I communicate effectively with others online	50	5	275.08			
I feel confident in expressing myself on social media	50	4	203.36			
I feel inspired to achieve my goals after seeing positive content online.	50	4	188.05			
Total	450	4				

The second hypothesis (H_{02}) stated that the amount of time spent on social media does not significantly affect emotional intelligence, whereas the alternative hypothesis (H_2) suggested that increased time spent on social media is associated with lower emotional intelligence. Again, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed statistically significant results, with a chi-square (χ^2) value of 28.33 and a p-value of <.001, strongly indicating that excessive social media use—especially spending more than three hours daily or frequently checking platforms—is linked to lower levels of emotional self-regulation and empathy. Therefore, the second null hypothesis was also rejected. These findings reinforce that both the purpose and frequency of social media use play a critical role in shaping adolescents' emotional development. In conclusion, the study establishes a significant and complex relationship between social media behaviors and emotional intelligence, highlighting the need for awareness and guided usage among youth.

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7. DISCUSSION

The results of this research indicate a strong connection between social media use and the emotional intelligence among adolescents. In particular, it was illustrated through analysis that both the frequency and reason for social media use have quantifiable impacts on major aspects of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and communication skills. The null hypothesis rejection for both supports the fact that the manner in which adolescents utilize social media — to entertain, communicate, or learn — and how much time they spend on it influences their emotional development tremendously. Spending too much time on social media was linked to decreased emotional regulation and empathy, lending support to worries about the adverse psychological effects of excessive use. But the research also discovered that some positive applications, like remaining in contact with others or viewing motivational material, can complement emotional consciousness and social skills. Such findings point towards a complex interaction where social media neither causes entirely negative effects nor entirely positive outcomes but operates with an impact that varies based on the intent and activities of the users. This highlights the value of encouraging digital literacy and healthy patterns of usage among teenagers as well as more work on the long-term emotional and psychological impacts of social media exposure.

8. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research hold a number of significant managerial implications for educators, parents, policymakers, and mental health professionals who impact the development of adolescents. To begin with, the findings are a call to provide guided instruction in social media use that motivates adolescents to interact with websites in manners that foster emotional maturity instead of undermining it. As the study indicates that overuse and unguided usage can adversely affect emotional intelligence—especially emotional control and empathy—stakeholders need to emphasize developing awareness programs to teach young people responsible social media use. Educational institutions and schools can include digital literacy and emotional intelligence training as part of their curricula, enabling students to critically analyze online material and analyze their emotional reactions. Moreover, social media sites themselves can be incentivized to create features that facilitate healthy interactions, like content filters, break reminders, and tools that enable empathy and respectful communication. Mental health practitioners and counselors can also take into account adolescents' online behaviors when making assessments and interventions, as they can affect emotional well-being. Finally, regulating the social media use of adolescents with well-balanced strategies can aid in their emotional growth and help lead to healthier social and psychological outcomes.

9. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media use has a substantial effect on the emotional intelligence of teenagers, with both frequency of use and motivation being impactful. The research clearly shows that although social media can provide excellent avenues for emotional expression, communication, and access to good content, overuse or inadvertent use can obstruct important emotional skills like empathy, emotional management, and self-awareness. The fact that both null hypotheses were rejected ensures that social media is not emotionally neutral for teenagers; it actually configures their emotional responses and social behaviors. Thus, the association between social media and emotional intelligence is multifaceted and situation-specific. In order to maximize its advantages while limiting possible damage, teenagers require education on conscious and intentional usage of online platforms. The research highlights the need to incorporate digital responsibility in education and parental guardianship as well as ongoing research in this emerging field. Through awareness and control of the emotional impact of social media, stakeholders can more effectively facilitate adolescents' psychological development in the digital era.

10. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this research is informative about the correlation between social media use and emotional intelligence among young adolescents, it also leaves open a number of avenues for investigation. Subsequent studies could examine this correlation in wider and more diverse groups, such as younger adolescents and people from other cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds, to enhance generalizability. Moreover, longitudinal study designs would assist in gaining insight into long-term emotional and psychological impacts of persistent social media usage over the years. It would also be important to study the function of particular social media sites and their special features, as these websites can impact emotional intelligence differently. A further key area for future research entails evaluating the effects of interventions, for example, digital literacy training, mindfulness courses, or parental counseling, on encouraging healthier social media usage and supporting emotional development. Lastly, incorporating qualitative methods, for instance, interviews or focus groups, could offer further understanding of the inner world of the emotional experiences of adolescents in online environments. On the whole, broadening the research focus will help deliver a more complete picture of how virtual interactions influence the emotional intelligence of adolescents in an increasingly changing technological environment.

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