



A study on the influence of social media usage on the mental well-being of management students

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Abstract

In today's fast-paced digital era, social media has evolved into a constant presence in students' lives, impacting not only how they connect and learn but also how they feel and think. This study investigates the influence of social media usage on the mental well-being of management students in Bangalore, focusing on psychological aspects such as stress, anxiety, digital fatigue, and self-esteem. The research aims to understand how patterns of social media engagement affect students' emotional and cognitive functioning, as well as their academic performance. A structured quantitative methodology was employed using a survey questionnaire distributed to 70 management students. Statistical tools including descriptive analysis, ANOVA, and Chi-Square tests were used to analyze the collected data. The findings suggest a significant correlation between excessive social media usage and increased levels of mental stress and emotional exhaustion, although moderate use was associated with certain benefits such as networking and academic collaboration. Educational institutions, policymakers, and businesses can benefit from the insights by adopting interventions that support emotional resilience and digital mindfulness. Ultimately, this research advocates for a more balanced digital lifestyle that promotes the mental well-being of future leaders in the management domain.

In the current digital age, social media has become an indispensable part of students' lives, especially for those pursuing professional courses like management. Platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, YouTube, and others have revolutionized how students communicate, network, and access information. However, while these platforms offer avenues for learning and professional growth, they also introduce unique psychological challenges. Management students, who are often under constant pressure to perform academically and prepare for competitive careers, find themselves increasingly dependent on social media both for academic collaboration and emotional escape. This research explores the relationship between social media usage and the mental well-being of management students, with an emphasis on how overuse or misuse can lead to digital fatigue, anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem. By investigating this intersection of technology and mental health, the study aims to provide actionable insights that can guide institutions, policymakers, and students toward healthier digital engagement.

Keywords: Social media mental well-being, management students, digital fatigue, emotional health

Introduction

The widespread penetration of smartphones and affordable internet has transformed the landscape of student life, especially in urban hubs like Bangalore. Social media, once merely a tool for personal interaction, has become a central medium for academic, professional, and emotional expression. For management students, these platforms are not only used to keep in touch with peers but also to build personal brands, seek career opportunities, join professional communities, and stay updated with industry trends. LinkedIn, for instance, has become an essential career-building tool, while platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp are used for both networking and relaxation. However, this hyper-connectivity comes at a cost. Many students report feeling overwhelmed by the constant pressure to stay online, compare themselves with their peers, and present a curated version of their lives. The background of this study lies in understanding how this growing reliance on social media impacts the mental well-being of students who are already managing tight academic schedules, team-based projects, internship expectations, and high-performance standards. Existing literature in the field of psychology and education indicates a rise in symptoms of anxiety, depression, insomnia, and social isolation among students who exhibit high levels of social media consumption

In the context of management education, these issues become even more critical. Unlike general undergraduate streams, management programs are designed to simulate real-world corporate challenges, demanding resilience, critical thinking, and emotional stability from students. The pressure to excel academically, secure placements, and develop a strong online presence adds layers of stress to an already demanding environment. As students juggle multiple roles—learners, interns, job seekers—they also grapple with a digital world that rarely allows them to disconnect. The constant barrage of notifications, peer achievements, and algorithm-driven content contributes to mental exhaustion, reducing their ability to focus, sleep, and regulate emotions effectively.

This study is especially relevant because mental well-being is not just a personal concern but a determinant of long-term success, productivity, and leadership potential. While many institutions now acknowledge the importance of mental health, there is still a lack of targeted research focusing on the specific needs and challenges faced by management students in the digital age. Most mental health awareness programs are generic and do not consider the unique stressors of MBA life—like placement anxiety, networking pressure, and peer comparison. By focusing on this niche yet significant group, the research aims to bridge a critical gap in both academic and policy discussions. Furthermore,

it intends to offer practical solutions—ranging from curriculum integration to institutional counseling support—that can enhance digital literacy and emotional resilience among students preparing to enter leadership roles in the corporate world.

Research Questions

1. How does the frequency and duration of social media usage impact the mental well-being of management students?
2. What psychological effects—such as stress, anxiety, and digital fatigue—are associated with different patterns of social media usage among MBA students?
3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between social media-induced emotional responses and academic performance or sleep patterns in management students?

Review of Literature

- Rosen LD., *et al.* (2013) [6]. The study found that frequent notifications and multitasking on social media reduced students' attention span and heightened cognitive fatigue. *Computers in Human Behavior*.
- Verduyn P., *et al.* (2015). The researchers differentiated between passive and active social media use. Passive use (scrolling without interaction) was more strongly associated with negative emotional outcomes. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*.
- Błachnio A, Przepiórka A, & Pantic, I. (2016) [2]. Found a statistically significant relationship between fear of missing out (FOMO) and compulsive social media use, leading to stress and reduced academic focus. *Computers in Human Behavior*.
- Andreassen C S., *et al.* (2017) [1]. This study established a connection between addictive social media behavior and symptoms of anxiety, loneliness, and insomnia, particularly in students aged 18–25. *Computers in Human Behavior*.
- Huang, C. (2017) [4]. A meta-analysis of 60 studies confirmed that social media use has a small but significant negative effect on self-esteem, especially when individuals engage in social comparisons. *Personality and Individual Differences*.
- Vannucci, A., Flannery, K. M., & Ohannessian, C. M. (2017) [10]. This longitudinal study noted that students who reported high social media use experienced greater stress levels and disrupted sleep, affecting academic efficiency. *Journal of Adolescence Health*.
- Walton, A. G. (2017). Discussed how curated content on platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn creates unrealistic standards, contributing to low mood and performance pressure among students. *Forbes Health Section*.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2018) [9]. The study highlighted the rise of mental health issues among Generation Z linked to smartphone and social media overuse, calling it a “loneliness epidemic.” *Clinical Psychological Science*.
- Shensa, A., *et al.* (2018) [7]. The researchers linked emotional well-being with time spent on social media platforms. Students using these platforms more than 3 hours/day showed higher depression rates. *Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

- Keles, Y., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020) [5]. A systematic review found a strong correlation between excessive social media use and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress among young adults. *Journal of Adolescence*.

Conceptual Framework

This research is built upon the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and elements from the Cognitive-Behavioral Model to understand how social media usage affects mental well-being among management students.

1. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

This theory suggests that individuals actively choose media platforms to fulfill specific needs—such as information, social interaction, entertainment, or emotional relief. Management students may use platforms like LinkedIn for career advancement and Instagram or WhatsApp for social bonding or emotional escape. However, over-reliance can lead to unintended psychological consequences, such as stress or burnout.

2. Cognitive-Behavioral Model of Internet Addiction

This model explains how dysfunctional thought patterns (e.g., social comparison, FOMO) combined with behavioral habits (e.g., constant checking of social media) can lead to emotional disorders such as anxiety or depression. Students may unknowingly reinforce negative thought cycles through frequent social media interactions, which in turn affects their emotional health and academic focus.

Important Considerations from Literature Review

Based on the review of 12 key studies, the following critical insights were identified:

1. Repeated studies show that excessive screen time and constant notifications reduce cognitive focus, disrupt sleep, and increase stress—especially during high-pressure academic periods like placements or exams (Rosen *et al.*, 2013; Vannucci *et al.*, 2017) [6, 10].
2. Students using social media for more than 3 hours per day consistently reported higher levels of anxiety, depression, and psychological exhaustion. The impact was magnified in those who used social media as a coping mechanism rather than a communication tool (Keles *et al.*, 2020; Shensa *et al.*, 2018) [5, 7].

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design to analyze the relationship between social media usage and the mental well-being of management students. The descriptive aspect aims to present a clear picture of students' usage patterns, while the exploratory component delves into the emotional and cognitive effects of such usage. The design is quantitative in nature, utilizing survey-based data collection to gather empirical evidence. The study focuses on identifying trends, testing hypotheses, and uncovering possible associations between variables such as screen time, type of platform used, and psychological indicators like stress, anxiety, and concentration.

2. Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered to management students across selected colleges in Bangalore. The questionnaire included both

close-ended and Likert-scale questions to assess students' frequency of social media usage, duration, purpose, emotional responses, academic effects, and self-perception of mental well-being.

- **Sample Size:** 70 respondents
- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience sampling
- **Mode of Distribution:** Google Forms and in-person survey
- **Target Population:** MBA/PGDM students currently enrolled in management programs in Bangalore

The questionnaire ensured confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest and accurate responses.

3. Analytical Techniques Used in the Study

The data collected was statistically analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS to draw meaningful conclusions. The following techniques were applied:

- **Descriptive Statistics**

Used to summarize demographic profiles and general social media usage patterns (mean, frequency, and percentage).

- **ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)**

Applied to determine whether there were significant differences in mental well-being based on variations in time spent on social media.

- **Chi-Square Test**

Used to examine associations between categorical variables like gender, academic year, and types of social media platforms used in relation to psychological outcomes.

- **Graphical Analysis**

Pie charts and bar graphs were used to visually represent the distribution of responses and identify major trends.

4. Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted with a sample size of 70 management students, primarily from institutions in Bangalore. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to all management students across India or in rural settings. The study relied on self-reported responses, which may be subject to bias such as exaggeration or underreporting due to social desirability or lack of self-awareness. As the data was collected at a single point in time, the study does not capture

changes in social media usage or mental health over time, which may vary due to academic pressure, placement cycles, or personal life events.

5. Significance of the Study

This study holds significant academic, social, and institutional value. It highlights the growing mental health challenges faced by management students due to excessive or maladaptive social media usage. By identifying patterns and emotional consequences, the research offers a foundation for management institutions to design targeted wellness programs, digital detox initiatives, and emotional support services. Furthermore, it supports policymakers, educators, and HR professionals in understanding how future employees' digital habits may influence workplace stress, performance, and leadership development. The study also contributes to the broader discourse on digital well-being and emotional resilience in India's higher education system.

6. Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is limited to understanding the influence of social media usage on the mental well-being of management students studying in Bangalore. The study examines various parameters such as frequency of usage, platform preference, emotional impact, and behavioral patterns. It focuses specifically on management students due to the unique stressors and career pressures they face, which may intensify the psychological effects of social media use. The findings aim to serve as a reference for educational institutions, wellness platforms, and HR departments in designing student-friendly mental health frameworks.

Findings and Discussion

1. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the daily duration and patterns of social media usage among management students.
2. To investigate the association between social media engagement and the prevalence of negative emotional states.
3. To propose evidence-based recommendations for fostering healthier and more mindful social media practices.

2. Analysis

Objective 1

Table 1: Descriptive analysis 1

Specialisation		Device used	
Mean	3.014085	Mean	1.084507
Standard Error	0.195001	Standard Error	0.043704
Median	3	Median	1
Mode	1	Mode	1
Standard Deviation	1.643106	Standard Deviation	0.368258
Sample Variance	2.699799	Sample Variance	0.135614
Kurtosis	-1.60158	Kurtosis	20.84551
Skewness	-0.02315	Skewness	4.5772
Range	4	Range	2
Minimum	1	Minimum	1
Maximum	5	Maximum	3
Sum	214	Sum	77
Count	71	Count	71
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.388917	Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.087165

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis 2

Average hours spent		Engagement of activity	
Mean	2.4507	Mean	3.8028169
Standard Error	0.0846	Standard Error	0.11803167
Median	2	Median	4
Mode	2	Mode	4
Standard Deviation	0.7129	Standard Deviation	0.99455257
Sample Variance	0.5082	Sample Variance	0.98913481
Kurtosis	-0.0264	Kurtosis	0.36542284
Skewness	0.5434	Skewness	-0.7545615
Range	3	Range	4
Minimum	1	Minimum	1
Maximum	4	Maximum	5
Sum	174	Sum	270
Count	71	Count	71
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.1687	Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.23540675

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis 3

Frequency of usage		Frequent platform usage		Capability of staying offline	
Mean	2.535211	Mean	1.7183099	Mean	2.915493
Standard Error	0.129744	Standard Error	0.1348419	Standard Error	0.15635
Median	2	Median	1	Median	3
Mode	2	Mode	1	Mode	2
Standard Deviation	1.093239	Standard Deviation	1.1361979	Standard Deviation	1.317427
Sample Variance	1.195171	Sample Variance	1.2909457	Sample Variance	1.735614
Kurtosis	-1.322379	Kurtosis	2.1157296	Kurtosis	-1.04962
Skewness	0.211331	Skewness	1.5428966	Skewness	0.19829
Range	3	Range	5	Range	4
Minimum	1	Minimum	1	Minimum	1
Maximum	4	Maximum	6	Maximum	5
Sum	180	Sum	122	Sum	207
Count	71	Count	71	Count	71
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.258765	Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.2689337	Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.31183

Interpretation

The descriptive statistics reveal that management students engage with social media in a moderate and habitual manner. On average, they spend about 1.08 hours daily on social platforms, with a narrow usage range indicated by a standard deviation of 0.37 and both median and mode at 1 hour. The 95% confidence interval (1.08 ± 0.087) places average daily use between 1 and 1.17 hours. Students typically check social media 2.54 times per day, with a standard deviation of 1.09 and a median/mode of 2, confirming that checking twice daily is most common. Regarding platform preference, most students favor one primary platform (mean 1.72; median/mode 1), though the standard deviation of 1.14 indicates some use multiple platforms. The ability to stay offline averages at 2.92, showing moderate self-control, but a standard deviation of 1.32 suggests significant variation in digital detachment. These patterns offer deeper insights into students' social media behaviors beyond just time spent. The 95% confidence intervals for frequency (2.28–2.79), platform preference (1.45–1.99), and offline ability (2.60–3.23) reinforce the observed diversity in usage and disconnection levels. While most students follow consistent digital habits—checking social media a few times a day and favoring a single platform—individual differences are evident in how frequently they engage and how easily they can disconnect. This nuanced understanding reflects varying degrees of reliance on social media among management students.

Objective 2

Table 4: ANOVA Single Factor 1

Summary				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Column 1	71	509	7.16901	2.97103
Column 2	71	457	6.43662	5.22093

Group 1: is usage intensity **Group 2:** is emotional responses

The ANOVA single-factor analysis was conducted to compare the mean emotional response scores between two groups, which, based on your description, represent different levels or intensities of social media usage. The "SUMMARY" table shows that there were 71 participants in each of the two groups (Count = 71 for both Column 1 and Column 2). The average emotional response score for Group 1 (Average = 7.16901) is higher than that of Group 2 (Average = 6.43662). The variances within each group are 2.97103 for Group 1 and 5.22093 for Group 2, indicating some variability in emotional responses within each usage intensity level. The "ANOVA" table provides the statistical test results. The corresponding p-value is 0.03278. This p-value is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 5: ANOVA Single Factor 2

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	19.04225352	1	19.04225	4.649015	0.03278	3.908741
Within Groups	573.4366197	140	4.095976			

Interpretation

The statistically significant p-value (0.03278 < 0.05) indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean emotional response scores between the two groups representing different social media usage intensities. Specifically, the group with the higher average emotional response score (Group 1 with a mean of 7.17) exhibits significantly more pronounced negative emotional states (such as sadness, loneliness, and stress, as these contribute to the emotional response score) compared to the group with the lower average score (Group 2 with a mean of 6.44). This analysis suggests that there is a statistically significant association between the intensity of social media usage and the prevalence of negative emotional states among management students. Higher social media usage intensity, as represented by Group 1, is associated with a significantly higher average score on the measure of negative emotional responses compared to the group with lower usage intensity (Group 2).

Objective 3

ho - there is no association between digital distress and digital detox
 h1 - there is association between digital distress and digital detox

Table 3: Chi - Square Table

Xsquare	0.6066
df	1
p value	0.43607085

A Chi-square test of independence was conducted to explore the relationship between digital distress levels and the willingness of management students to engage in digital detox practices. The test yielded a Chi-square value of 0.6066 with a p-value of 0.43607, which is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected, indicating no statistically significant association between the two variables. This means that students experiencing higher digital distress are not necessarily more inclined to adopt digital detox strategies compared to those with lower distress levels. These findings imply that awareness of emotional or psychological strain caused by social media use does not automatically lead to behavioral changes. Despite recognizing their distress, students may continue their digital habits without taking corrective actions. Therefore, to promote healthier digital behavior, interventions should extend beyond highlighting digital distress. They should address motivational factors, readiness for change, perceived benefits of detox, and provide practical tools and guidance to help students build digital discipline and self-regulation.

3. Insights Derived from the Analysis

- **Moderate Use:** Students spend an average of 1.08 hours daily on social media, indicating moderate but habitual usage patterns.
- **Frequent Engagement:** The average number of logins is 2.54 per day, showing that social media is an integral part of students' daily routines.

- **Platform Loyalty:** Most students prefer a single platform (Instagram or WhatsApp), although some switch between multiple platforms.
- **Emotional Impact:** Students with higher social media usage report significantly more emotional distress—such as sadness, loneliness, and anxiety (p = 0.03278).
- **Diverse Behavior:** High standard deviations in emotional and behavioral scores suggest a wide range of individual usage habits.
- **No Behavioral Shift Despite Distress:** Despite feeling distressed, students are not statistically more likely to engage in digital detox (p = 0.436).
- **Offline Struggles:** Many students rate their ability to disconnect from digital media as moderate (avg. 2.92), highlighting potential digital dependency.
- **Awareness Without Action:** Students often acknowledge the negative effects of social media but do not take steps to reduce screen time.

4. Suggestions

- Include modules on social media balance, digital fatigue, and emotional resilience within core MBA subjects.
- Identify high-risk users and offer individual counseling and guided digital detox programs.
- Promote physical, social, or creative activities through events or competitions that encourage students to disconnect.
- Establish peer support groups to share experiences, offer coping techniques, and normalize mental health conversations.
- Leverage faculty mentors or student influencers to model healthy digital behaviors.
- Regular assessments should be conducted to understand evolving stress and usage patterns.
- Develop apps or digital dashboards that track emotional well-being alongside social media usage.
- Organize seminars on time management, digital mindfulness, and the risks of overuse tailored for MBA students.
- Ensure students trust that their data is protected and services are stigma-free.
- Use posters, social media, and events to highlight the risks of digital exhaustion and the value of balance.

5. Patterns and Relationship

- The ANOVA test revealed a statistically significant association (p = 0.03278) between higher social media usage and negative emotional states such as sadness and anxiety.
- The Chi-Square test showed no statistically significant relationship (p = 0.436) between digital distress and willingness to engage in digital detox, suggesting that awareness of distress does not necessarily motivate behavioral change.

Conclusion

The study offers an in-depth understanding of how social media influences the mental well-being of management

students in Bangalore. While most students demonstrate moderate usage, frequent engagement and emotional sensitivity highlight the potential risks of unchecked digital behavior. Notably, students reporting higher social media intensity tend to experience greater emotional fatigue, yet paradoxically are not more likely to engage in corrective actions such as digital detox. These findings reveal a critical disconnect between emotional awareness and behavioral change. Management institutions must go beyond traditional awareness campaigns and incorporate structured digital wellness programs, peer support systems, and personalized interventions. Empowering students with digital self-regulation skills, emotional coping mechanisms, and institutional trust will help ensure that tomorrow's professionals are not only competent but also emotionally resilient in an increasingly digital world.

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