


Understanding Social Media and Socio-Emotional Issues Among the Young: An Empirical Study

Arora, P.¹  and Idnani, D.²  

¹B.El. Ed Graduate, Department of Education, SPM, University of Delhi, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Education, SPM, University of Delhi, India

 **Corresponding Author:** Idnani, D, **E-mail:** deepa.idnani.15@ucl.ac.uk

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: August 11, 2021

Accepted: September 25, 2021

Volume: 1

Issue: 1

DOI: 10.32996/jpbs.2021.1.1.2

KEYWORDS

Social Media, Socio-Emotional Issues, Empirical Study, well-being of children

ABSTRACT

The present study aims at studying the impact of social media on socio-emotional well-being of children. The methodology used here was random sampling through snowballing technique. A sample of around 50 children aged 11-18 years was collected to understand their responses about their own socio-emotional well-being. The results of the study showed that people use social media for different reasons, but they also face a variety of challenges, from physical health to mental health issues, the most prominent of what is needed is gratitude, resilience, calmness, compassion, and the pursuit of hobbies, fitness, and one's own peace of mind and happiness.

1. Introduction

Due to globalization and modernization, we are developing into an economically developed country. Entering the modern age full of innovation and invention is the greatest achievement of mankind. "Human resources" are considered the assets of the country and play a vital role in the economy. I believe that if young people in the country are educated and healthy, they will contribute to building a strong country. Globalization and modernization are very encouraging, but it has brought a world that is fully tech-savvy. In recent years, young people who use the Internet on a large scale and spend a long time on the Internet have increased substantially. Due to the ongoing pandemic situation, the use of social media has increased significantly. The use of various social media applications, such as Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, etc. increased so much that has affected children in various ways, as well as and led to an increase in health and psychological problems.

The present study aims at studying the impact of social media on socio-emotional well-being of children. Socio-emotional skills and aptitudes enable children to become independent and confident, and resolve conflicts, facilitate their behavior and attitudes in a manner that can help them grow and control their impulses and emotions in a sustained environment in the long run. In addition, it helps to form attitudes, habits, and personalities that are essential to the mental health of children. With the introduction of social media, it covers all aspects of our lives bit by bit, and reliance on various social media applications has greatly increased. With the global pandemic, it has faced blockades and spent time at home. Network on various social media. The platform has grown stronger. However, for children, it is also about visiting and participating in online courses, and sticking to their education. On the one hand, social media connects people with the outside world. All information can be obtained by clicking a mouse or touching a finger, but it makes people move from the physical world to the virtual world, which is quite chaotic. For children, apart from being able to access so much information, blurs the difference between how to deal with and build relationships. In a recent study conducted by Idnani, D. (2021) it was found that 77.9% young students had changes in sleeping pattern, and around 40.5% faced psychological issues during the period of lockdown and COVID-19. Further, no one can deny that social media has been a link connecting international markets and businesses but it affects the productivity level immensely. In the present research, we have worked with the data from adolescents and found out about how we can manage to create a safe and dynamic learning zone for the youth.

2. Literature Review

Social-emotional well-being is a broad term used to denote the mental state responsible for society and emotional intelligence. Children grow up in a world that is a direct learning environment for them. They are doing new learning every day and absorbing it into their subconscious mind. In their learning process, we cannot prevent or form any obstacles. It is up to the child to determine the rationality behind everything. As adults, we can improve your social-emotional health because it is the foundation of the learning process. It fosters your communication skills and makes decisive decisions based on your mentality. Social media has been found to be related to children's social and emotional development.

It can be clearly seen that social media has had a tragic impact on adolescent behavior changes. Inevitably, the impact of this effect will soon spread to the target audience and trigger changes and trends. Children are so immersed in the digital world that everything that happens online is reflected in their offline behavior. Tapscott (1997) referred to youth as the "Internet generation" in his research. There is no question that children benefit from social media in many ways, such as independence, freedom of expression, closeness and breadth, but we cannot ignore its frustrating effects. The child socializes in virtual space and loses confidence in real space. As young people pay more attention to being accepted by society, the gap between parents and children continues to widen. They ignore real abilities, including intellectual openness, innovation, self-reliance, tolerance, truthfulness, confidence, sensitivity, and harmony.

3. Methodology

The research project is the study of the influence of social media on socio-emotional development of children. The methodology used here was random sampling through snowballing technique. A sample of around 50 children aged 11-18 years was collected to understand their responses about their own socio-emotional well-being. The data was collected through the Google Forms- by email, Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Messenger etc. during May- June, 2020. . The information sheet on the google form explained instructions about the study and its objectives. The respondents voluntary participated in the study, after providing informed consent for the same. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively.

4. Findings and Analysis

The project took place from May- June, 2020. It focused on studying the psychological effects of social media on the young children and it's impact on their well being. The survey revealed that the students were of different age groups. The figure- 1 below represents that children belonged to age group 10-18 years, while majority of the children were in the age group 13-14 years.

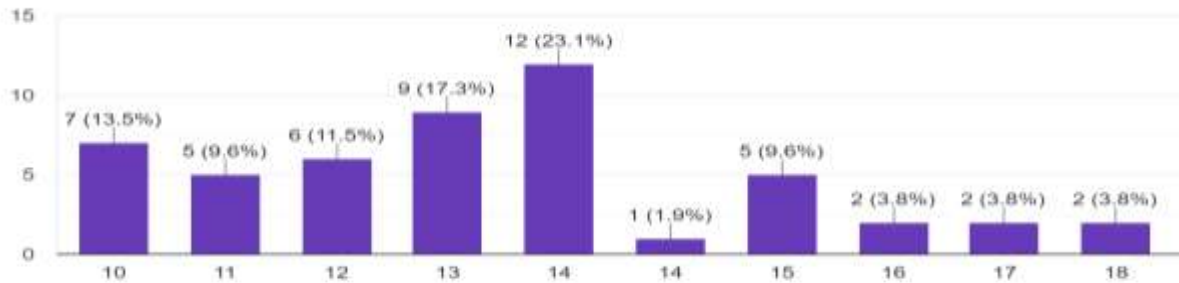


Figure 1

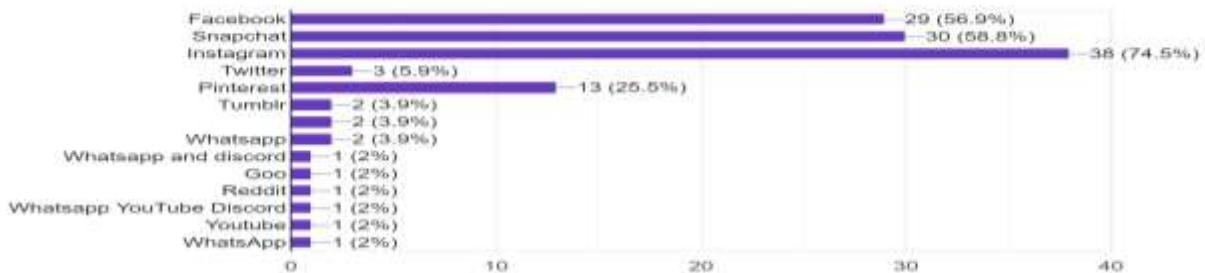


Figure 2

With respect to the usage of social media it was seen that the applications Figure 2, that are used most by the respondents are Instagram 74.5%, followed by Facebook and Snapchat. Studies have shown that Facebook and Instagram set unrealistic standards leading to comparisons where children are put into categories of inferior and superior. On the other hand, some believe that using Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat has helped them cope up with their loneliness and depression.

The participants revealed the average time spent on these social networking sites and the responses were as follows seen in Figure 3 below-

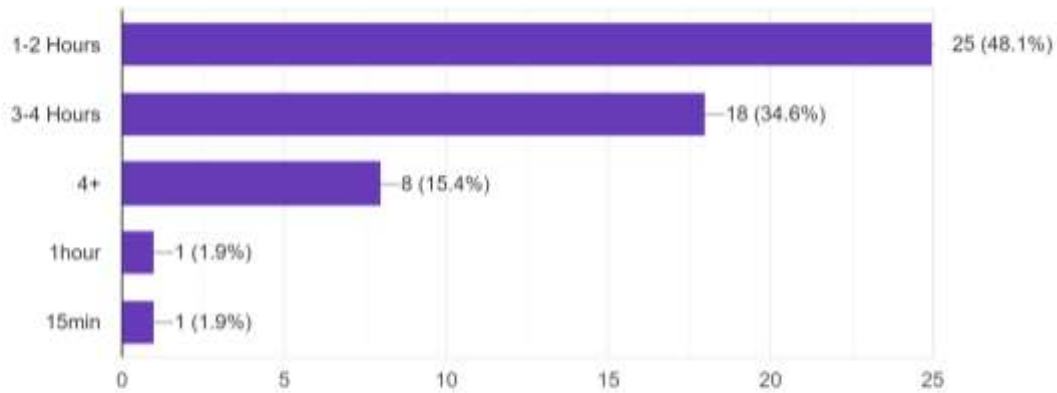


Figure 3

There are approximate four percent of children that spend 1 hour or less than that on social media sites while we can see a huge number of children spending almost 1-4+ Hours. In the study, they were asked the reasons for using social networking sites. The data that the respondents provided for their usage was as follows-

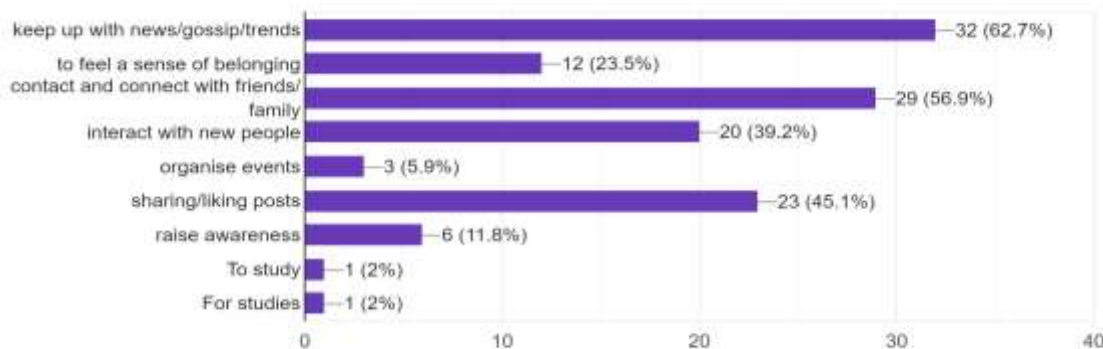


Figure 4

From the above data, we can see that only 4% of children use social media sites to learn. Most children use social media to learn about gossip, trends and news, and to keep up with their family members. Children continue to update and revise their news so that nothing is missed. It is possible to get used to it, which can disrupt sleep patterns and affect mental health. The second most important answer is to connect and connect with friends and family. Social media misleads children into believing that they are establishing contact with people who are far away from them, and the truth is that they are keeping a distance from those around them in real life. In addition, websites are used to share and like posts. Children see likes and comments as reinforcements that motivate or weaken them, and there are temperament problems and mood swings among them.

The next research question was regarding the personality benefits of using social networking sites. According to the respondents, the advantage of using social networking sites are as follow-

76% of the participants believe that the greatest benefit of social networks is entertainment. 67% of people believe that it allows us to be in contact with people. Their responses indicate that social media can eliminate boredom and loneliness because it is an open platform that can connect with a wider audience and understand different cultures and ideas. 31% of respondents believe that networking sites Social networks help them learn new skills and 24% of the participants can get similar answers from the answers. They believe that social networking sites are useful for their learning.

However, due to the global pandemic, students have to study online at home. 21% of respondents believe that social media is a platform where they can share common interests and hobbies, such as music, art and games, and fitness. 11% of participants thought it formed a digital impression. Some people also believe that various social media applications help provide more opportunities, such as internships, jobs, etc. Social media has the potential to manipulate children and immerse them in a digital culture. The following statistics show that teenagers' addiction to social networks (Figure 5) shows that 34% of the respondents believe that they are extremely addicted to social networks. 48% said they might be addicted to social media. 18% of participants revealed that they are not addicted to social media. The data comes from the time allocated to social networks by respondents. Most teenagers fall within a time interval of more than 1-4 hours, which defines their use of social networks for a long time. Addiction is increasing rapidly, which is very harmful to children.

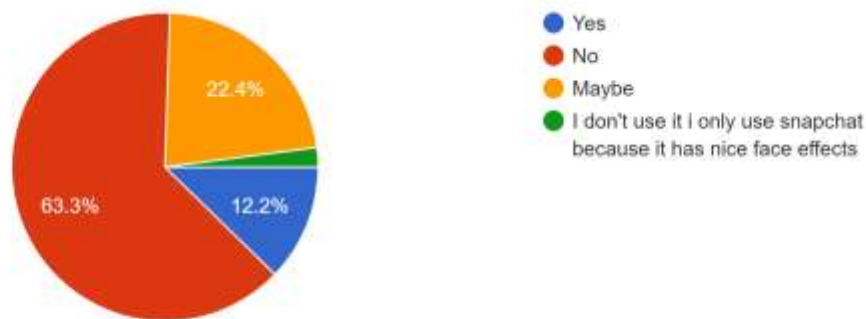


Figure 5

Drawing on this data revealed, the majority of children feel that 'likes' they get on their pictures do not affect their opinion about themselves while some are unclear regarding whether it affects or do not affects their opinion and we got one response stating that Snapchat has nice visual effects which is disturbing as we see many children believing that filters make them look pretty, nice, smart etc. with the effects. What is indicated is that they tend to suffer from FOMO- which is fear of missing out. They feel that if they do not check their pictures or their friends' pictures they would lose something really important which was quite evident in the responses.

Another interesting response is that social networking sites are time-consuming, and it causes health issues like headaches and eye problems, setting unrealistic expectations and generate(s) negative feelings and emotions. Despite the knowledge about the disadvantages of excessive use of social media children still prevail to use it unreasonably. Their mood depends heavily on how well they are appreciated by others. They are easily influenced by negative things, affecting their mental peace and leading to disappointment, disheartenment, anxiety, and irritation.

Survey responses with regards to children's overall well-being by virtue of excessive use of social networking sites were-

44% of teenagers report that this affects their ability to build good relationships with others. 35% of people believe that social media can increase trust. 33% said it gave them a sense of social and emotional isolation. 31% believe that social media has brought them a positive outlook. 25% of people believe that social media is a source of inspiration and motivation. Another group of 25% said that social media would increase their anxiety. 17% said that their emotions controlled their thoughts. The remaining participants reported that it could cause serious health problems.

As per the data, we can see that these emotions impact children's overall well-being. It affects their ability to relate with others, i.e., they can connect with them in virtual space but in real space, they find themselves disconnected from reality and lost. It also heightens their anxiety as the superficial world has surrounded them so much that they forget the essence of engaging deeply with others. They also suffer from health issues by thinking about it too much. On the other hand, the positive sides are motivating, inspiring, and giving them a confidence boost. Many youngsters find it easy to communicate and interact on social

media platforms. Some of them learn somewhat online but apply it offline, such as empathy, consideration, friendship, and relationship.

Children often compare their lifestyle to the people they see online and feel bad about themselves. The following survey revealed how the idea of intriguing events happening on the social platforms makes the young minds feel that their lives are not cool or eventful-

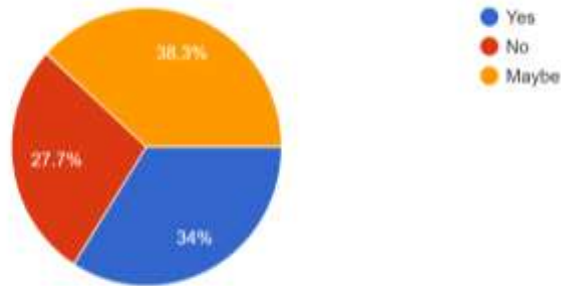


Figure 6

The majority of responses in Figure 6 are 'yes' and maybe make it clear that children believe that people they see online have better, healthy, happy, eventful and cool lives than they have. They do not check their backgrounds or have incomplete or partial knowledge about the people they see when comparing them with their own 'self'. This is also because what is seen outside on the virtual platform is not always the truth or reality, as everyone has their own struggles, challenges, context. It is also to acknowledge and bring forth that each one tries to show our achievements and happy moments on social media rather than our failures and sorrows.

With respect to the data regarding whether children feel distracted after using social networking sites. Not surprisingly, survey results indicated the following-

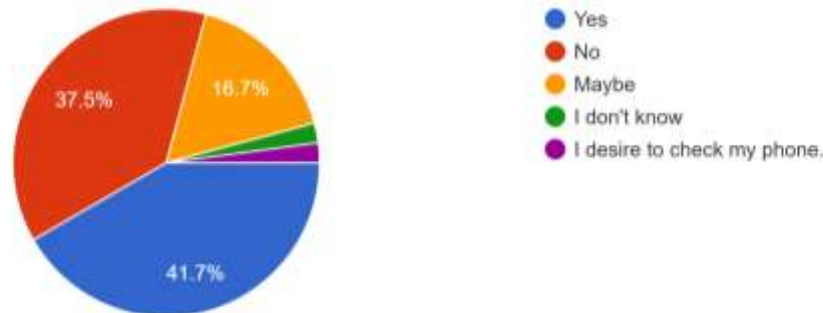


Figure 7

The majority of the survey respondents stated that social media distracts them when they need to be productive. The internal locus of control is ruined among the youngsters because of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). They cannot focus because their mind is on what might be happening in the virtual world.

The next question was to introspect whether children feel that parents and peer pressure enhance through social media. According to the sample of the responses collected, not only the children but parents are also highly influenced by social media, and it has severe impacts on their children. We can see from the data below-



Figure 8

The parental and peer pressure enhances through social media as they also have faith in social media handles and see their children as a showpiece to show off to others. Sometimes, parents post their child’s achievements and other parents try to emulate them, which eventually burdens their own child with high expectations. It has been argued that the urge for competition among parents and peers had increased manifold due to the presence of social media. The responses present the following data-

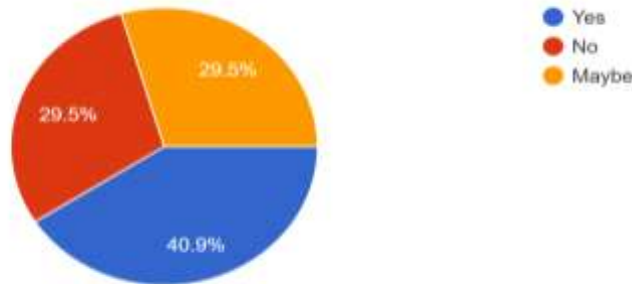


Figure 9

Participants were asked to reflect upon, “Do parents and peers set unrealistic standards by the influence of social media?”. The responses included- that *parents “...read their message and ask them to stay away from mobiles and not to watch it for long duration”*; some said *“... parents take away their phone”*; *“.....unrealistic demands on them... without realizing that most information can be accessed through social media applications now days”*. The replies were intriguing as they indicate how often parents get influenced by social media, which may have a depressing effect on the socio-emotional development of their child. On probing this aspect further, the target group of participants were investigated if they felt the need to isolate themselves from everyone else. The results indicated the following statistics shown in Figure 10-

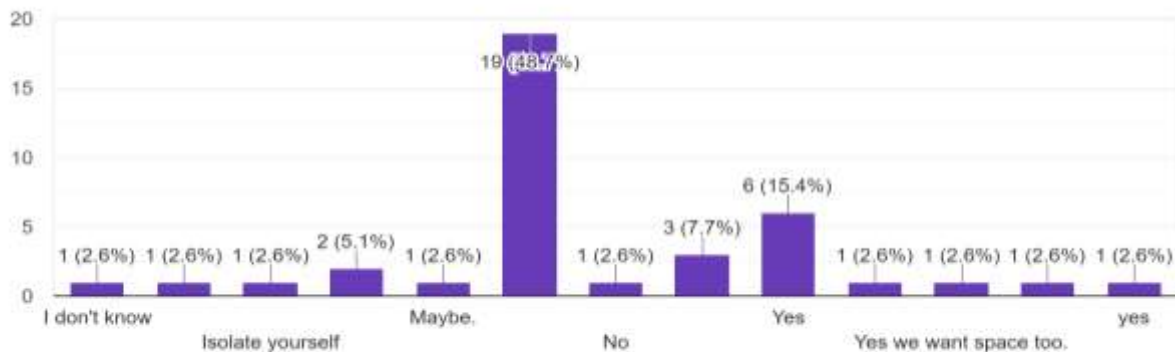


Figure 10

The biggest answer is "No", but we can see that there are many other different answers, and some people think they want space too. Children will eventually isolate themselves without realizing that they are actually under the same roof but far away from each other. Similarly, participants were asked about their views on social media and believed that they were the main cause of physical aggression because 36.6% said they had played games like PUBG, which had built-in violence. The participants stated that social media is a source of physical and non-physical attacks. When things do not develop according to their wishes, they are full of hostility, frustration, and violence. Research has also shown that playing video games involving murder and murder will eventually disrupt the minds of children who try to imitate what they see in reality. These websites will affect the psychology of students and affect their social and emotional development.

The survey respondents reflected their opinions on social media as an effective tool for reducing stress and anxiety. The analysis of argumentation clearly showed how social media is leaving imprints in the minds of the youth.

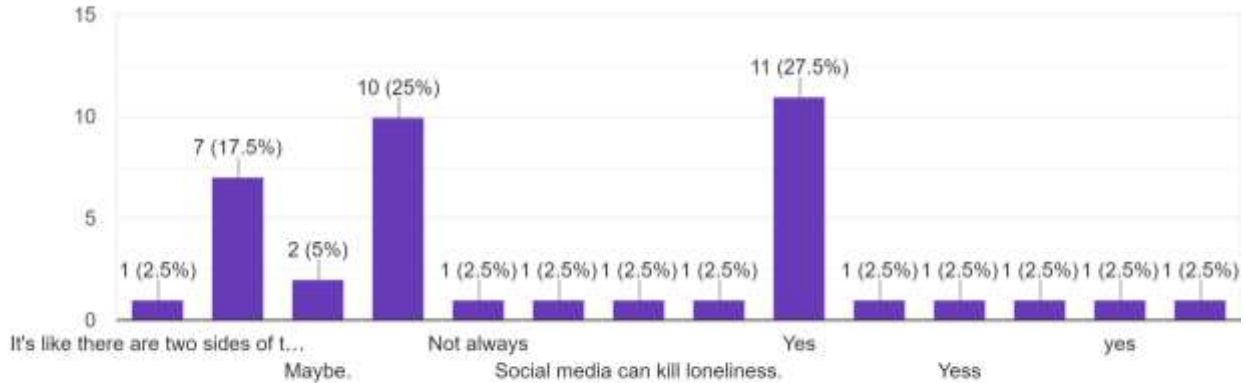


Figure 11

Fifty percent of children believe that it reduces stress, while the other fifty percent believe it does not reduce stress or anxiety.

The responses of the target group of participants showed the probability of their dependence on social media as a source of excitement, or to cope with boredom or loneliness. The statistical data represented the following information-

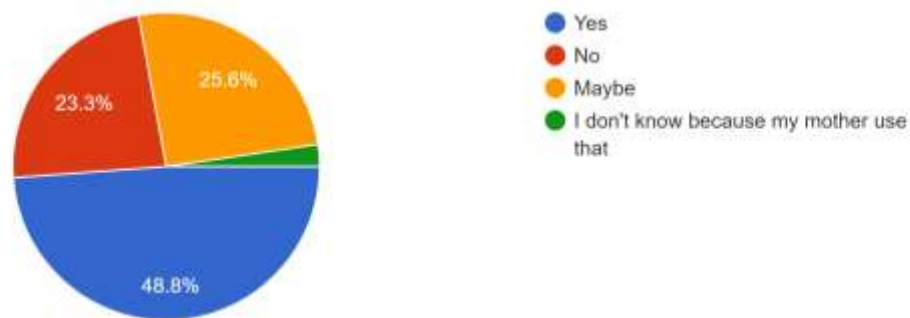


Figure 12

So, most of the children believe that social media helps to cope up with loneliness and boredom. As it has numerous entertaining contents which children find fascinating. The substantive debate about the rift that social media creates with our loved ones was surveyed with the respondents, which is reflected in the following figure 13-

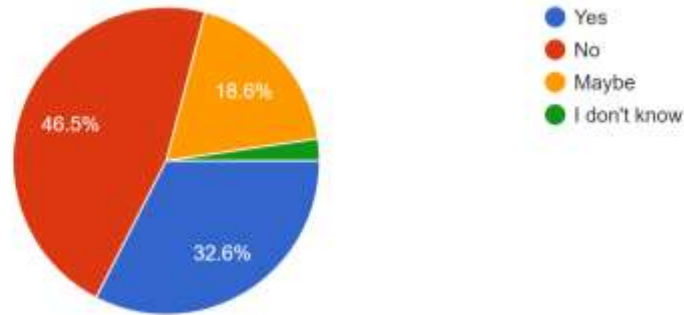


Figure 13

Most of the children, 46.5% believe it does not cause any rift between our loved ones, while the next most filled category says that yes, it causes a rift between our loved ones. We share too much information online that all the excitement of telling that information offline to our loved ones goes away. We do not have a common topic to talk about, which leads to communication gaps.

Lastly, the target participants were investigated if their attempt to quit social media failed and the responses indicated the following statistics-

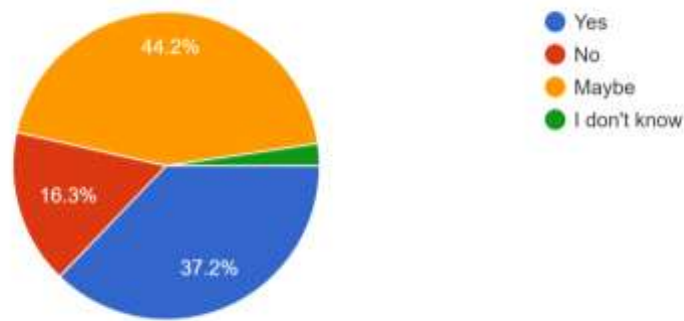


Figure 14

Most responded: "Yes, the attempt to leave social media failed." We can see that the main method of communication now is social media. We cannot deny the fact that social media weakens and impoverishes children in terms of our mental health. Children are so addicted to social media that it is difficult for them to quit smoking, in part because the options are so limited. They use social media as part of their daily life and it becomes part of their daily life. Therefore, it controls children's thoughts and affects their happiness.

5. Discussion

The survey results indicate that respondents are aware of the harmful effects of social media, but because of some of the advantages it provides, they continue to use it. The social and emotional development of the participants varied in terms of family issues because the parents considered it an unnecessary waste of time. Others saw its potential, education and creativity. However, some participants described how social media could cause mental health problems, while some participants shared their own personal narratives and coping mechanisms. From qualitative analysis, it is found that social networking sites can profoundly affect young people's cognitive and behavioral processes and change their sleep patterns, enthusiasm, thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. Social networks make us believe that "virtuality is real and brings us to a world where everything seems to be real, even though it is not."

It allows young people to go on a journey, everyone is in fast mode, anxiety and lack of patience, so the pleasure of "being yourself" is reduced, and there are behavioural and attitude problems, anxiety, mental health, depression, except for young

people There is more and more frustration among people. On a personal level, in addition to communication problems, young people also feel lonely, sad and interpersonal. Some people shared their privacy concerns and how they play games for long periods to stay away from news about the pandemic, make videos and share them with friends and colleagues on social media. For some, this is also a way to access online courses, seminars, different professional opportunities, internships, vacancies, etc. information and understanding.

One of the limitations of this project is that it was carried out on a small sample in New Delhi; however, a larger sample among different age groups and different states would help provide in-depth analysis and wider context.

6. Conclusion

Whether social networks are a blessing or a curse is a broader issue that allows experiencing the digital world and provides ample opportunities for young people from local to global. It ranges from information to crowdsourcing and awareness-raising, enabling people to be more sensitive to broaden their horizons and help them improve their research skills. It was effectively used during the pandemic when people worldwide were unable to leave their homes.

People use social media for different reasons, but they also face a variety of challenges, from physical health to mental health issues, the most prominent of what is needed is gratitude, resilience, calmness, compassion, and the pursuit of hobbies, fitness, and one's own peace of mind and happiness.

References

- [1] Ahn, J. (2011). The effect of social network sites on adolescents' social and academic development: Current theories and controversies. *Journal of the American Society for information Science and Technology*, 62(8), 1435-1445.
- [2] Berson, I. R., & Berson, M. J. (2005). Challenging online behaviors of youth: Findings from a comparative analysis of young people in the United States and New Zealand. *Social Science Computer Review*, 23(1), 29-38.
- [3] Chen, W., & Lee, K. H. (2013). Sharing, liking, commenting, and distressed? The pathway between Facebook interaction and psychological distress. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking*, 16(10), 728-734.
- [4] Chou, H. T. G., & Edge, N. (2012). "They are happier and having better lives than I am": The impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others' lives. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking*, 15(2), 117-121.
- [5] Idnani, D. (2021). COVID- 19: Empowering the 'learners' at higher education in India: Opportunities and Challenges (under publication).
- [6] Livingstone S. (2009). *Children and the Internet: Great Expectations, Challenging Realities*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- [7] Lusk, B. (2010). Digital natives and social media behavior: an overview. *The prevention researcher*, 17(S1), 3-7.
- [8] McQuillen, J. S. (2003). The influence of technology on the initiation of interpersonal relationships (1). *Education*, 123(3), 616-624.
- [9] Subrahmanyam, K., & S Mahel, D. (2011). *Digital youth: The role of media in development*. New York: Springer.
- [10] Tapscott, D. (1997). *Growing up digital: The rise of the net generation*. New York: McGrawHill.
- [11] Weiser, M. (2001). Whatever happened to the next-generation Internet?. *Communications of the ACM*, 44(9), 61-69.