



The Impact of Using Social Media on the Mental Health of Adolescents

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ABSTRACT: Social media usage has exponentially risen over the past decade, with about 4.26 billion social media users in 2021, and it is projected to increase to almost 6 billion by 2027. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend, leading to a significant increase in social media usage. However, excessive social media use may lead to negative impacts on mental health, such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. This research aims to investigate the impact of social media on the mental health of Thai teenagers, identify potential correlations between social media use and mental health outcomes, and develop strategies to mitigate the negative effects of social media on mental health. The questionnaires gather the participants' general information, the effects of utilizing social media, and the social media events that affect their mental health. With a total of 272 respondents, a survey distributed online to high school students from March 26 to May 6 was randomly chosen. According to our study, the type of school has a significant effect on the student's mental health. This is due to the fact that different high school students use social media in different ways and experience different effects on their mental health in both positive and negative ways. Statistics also reveal that youths in Thailand are more likely to be addicted to social media and use a variety of social media platforms. This study could serve as a guideline for further studies that specifically focus on the kinds of social media platforms used by adolescents and the kinds of content they consume.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents, Mental health, Media Platforms, Negative impacts, Social media.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has revolutionized the way we connect and communicate with others. Over the past decade, social media usage has experienced an exponential rise, with millions of people worldwide using various social media platforms to share information, connect with friends and family, and even conduct business. In 2017, there were about 2.45 billion social media users worldwide, which increased to about 4.26 billion in 2021, and the number is projected to increase to almost 6 billion in 2027 [1]. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend, as more people were forced to stay at home due to lockdowns and quarantine measures, resulting in a significant increase in social media usage, especially for video content consumption, e-commerce, influencer marketing, live streaming, and social activism. During the pandemic, social media has become an essential tool for staying connected with loved ones, colleagues, and even strangers, providing a sense of community and social support in a time of social isolation. However, the increased usage of social media also comes with potential side effects that can negatively impact our mental and physical health.

One of the most significant side effects of social media use is addiction. Social media platforms are designed to be addictive, with features such as notifications and infinite scrolling that keep users engaged for longer periods of time. This addiction can lead to various problems, including procrastination, decreased productivity, and disrupted sleep patterns [2]. Another potential side effect of social media use is cyberbullying. Social media provides a platform for individuals to anonymously harass and intimidate others, often leading to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem [3]. Moreover, social media usage can also lead to a loss of privacy, as users often share personal information that can be exploited by hackers or advertisers. Perhaps the most concerning side effect of excessive social media use is its impact on mental health. Studies have shown that people who spend more time on social media report higher levels of anxiety, depression, and social isolation [3]. Furthermore, social media use can lead to a distorted view of reality. People tend to present an idealized version of themselves on social media, leading to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem [4].

Since there is no study in Thailand about the impact of using social media on the mental health of teenagers, the objective of the research is to investigate the impact of using social media on mental health in Thailand through questionnaires. The survey



will collect data on individuals' social media usage habits. The survey aims to identify potential correlations between social media use and mental health outcomes as well as understand the mechanisms through which social media use may affect mental health. The survey results could inform strategies to mitigate the effects of social media on mental health and improve individuals' well-being.

METHODS

The survey research was conducted to reveal the correlation between how social media impacts the mental health of high school students in three types of schools in Thailand by using online questionnaires (Google Forms). The survey was anonymously conducted and we collected a total of 272 responses. The questionnaires consisted of 27 questions, which were categorized into 3 sections, including: 1) General information: consisted of six questions to examine the participants' background and social media usage, which might be a factor that affects their mental health. 2) Impact of using social media: to measure the frequency of the impact of using social media on mental health, each item is placed on a five-point scale: 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = usually, and 5 = always. 3) Social media events that affect their mental health: to measure their opinions on the effects of social media on mental health. Each item is placed on a five-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

In terms of the sampling procedure, a convenience sampling method was used in this study to test a hypothesis about the impact of using social media on mental health. The sampling included all students in grades 10 to 12. Respondents were given approximately 6 minutes to complete the survey, and 272 responses were collected for data analysis. Our questionnaire contained multiple choices, which can be measured on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5. The scales allowed the respondents to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement or its frequency, importance, and likelihood, ranging from "very low" to "very high" scales. Questions in the questionnaires were revised by three specialists and evaluated to have an index of item-objective congruence (IOC) score higher than or equal to 0.5. Finally, the reliability of the questionnaires was determined using Cronbach's alpha on the pilot study group to ensure that the survey results were reliable, and the reliability score was 0.832, which is widely acceptable [6]. Statistical analyses were performed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 26.

RESULTS

Table 1: Personal Information

| Personal Information | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|
| 1. Gender | | |
| Male | 72 | 26.5 |
| Female | 182 | 66.9 |
| Not specified | 18 | 6.6 |
| 2. School | | |
| Thai School | 182 | 66.9 |
| English Program | 40 | 14.7 |
| International School | 50 | 18.4 |
| 3. Grade | | |



| | | |
|-----------------|-----|------|
| Grade 7 | 10 | 3.7 |
| Grade 8 | 36 | 13.2 |
| Grade 9 | 13 | 4.8 |
| Grade 10 | 41 | 15.1 |
| Grade 11 | 97 | 35.7 |
| Grade 12 | 75 | 27.6 |
| 4. Hours | | |
| Less Than 3 | 17 | 6.3 |
| 4-6 hours | 79 | 29.0 |
| 7-9 hours | 103 | 37.9 |
| 10-12 hours | 48 | 17.6 |
| More Than 12 | 25 | 9.2 |

Table 1 shows the general information about our participants. Most of the participants were 182 females (66.9%), followed by 72 males (26.5%), and some participants preferred not to specify. Most of the respondents were in Thai schools 182 people (66.9 percent), followed by English Program Schools' 40 people (14.7%), and there were 50 international schools (18.4%). 35.7% of respondents were in the eleventh grade. Only 4.8% of respondents were in ninth grade at the time. The majority of respondents spend between 7-9 hours per day on social media, and the lowest percentage of respondents spend less than 3 hours per day on social media.

Table 2: One-Way Anova Table; Types of School and Impact of Using Social Media on Mental Health

| Sources | df | SS | MS | F |
|----------------|-----|---------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 2 | 4.012 | 2.006 | 4.68 |
| Within Groups | 269 | 115.110 | 0.428 | |
| Total | 271 | 119.122 | | |

According to Table 2, there is a significant effect of school types on mental health. The result from one-way ANOVA obtained a p-value of 0.010, which is lower than 0.05, as a consequence, there is a correlation between the two variables.

Table 3: One-Way Anova Table; Gender and Impact of Using Social Media on Mental Health

| Sources | df | SS | MS | F |
|----------------|-----|---------|-------|--------|
| Between Groups | 2 | 10.501 | 5.250 | 13.003 |
| Within Groups | 269 | 108.621 | 0.404 | |
| Total | 271 | 119.122 | | |



Table 3 indicates that there is a significant effect of gender on mental health. The result from one-way ANOVA obtained a p-value of 0.001, which is lower than 0.05 and so the two variables are considered to have a correlation.

Table 4: One-Way Anova Table; Grade and Impact of Using Social Media on Mental Health

| Sources | df | SS | MS | F |
|----------------|-----|---------|-------|-------|
| Between Groups | 5 | 7.930 | 1.586 | 3.794 |
| Within Groups | 266 | 111.192 | 0.418 | |
| Total | 271 | 119.122 | | |

Table 4 above demonstrates that there is an effect of grades that high school students study on mental health. The result from one-way ANOVA obtained a p-value of 0.002, which is lower than 0.05, considering that there is a correlation between the two variables.

DISCUSSION

Our research collected data from three groups of high school students who study in Thai schools, English program schools, and international schools to find the effect and differences in the impact of using social media on mental health. We decided to study this topic because these days high school students spend a lot of time on social media, which can affect their mental health in different ways, such as social media addiction, depression, anxiety, and isolation [7]. A study by the National Institute of Mental Health. has shown that prolonged use of social media by adolescents has led to an increase in mental health illnesses as much as 49.5% and 22.2% will suffer from severe mental illness [8]. Teens are most likely to be addicted to social media and receive both positive and negative feelings from using it. Also, there is an obvious effect between sources on social media that high school students spend time on and their impact on mental health [9]. Different types of social media affect the mental health of adolescents differently such as consuming aggressive or gloomy content like criminal and accident news on social media could result in negative emotions. While consuming bright or funny content like animal videos and family movies could result in positive emotions for high school students.

The results of our research on social media impacts indicated that there is a significant effect of high school students studying in different types of schools on mental health (Table 2). This means that different groups of high school students spend time on social media differently and the effect on their mental health is not the same. Moreover, our study goes in line with the previous study by Coyne, S.M. *et al.*, where they demonstrated that young adolescents spending time on social media are more at risk of becoming depressed and anxious [10].

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to find the impact of using social media on the mental health of Thai high school students. After collecting data and testing with the one-way ANOVA method, the results revealed an effect between two variables, which supports our hypothesis that different types of schools use different types of social media and have impacts on the mental health of high school students. However, there is a limitation to our study, where the collected samples have an unequal proportion of the respondents from each type of school, which could make the results to be biased. In the future, we could improve by controlling the proportion of each variable to create much more accurate results. We hope that this study will be able to bring more high school students' attention to the impact of using social media on their mental health.

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