DIGITAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Digital media has become part of our nature and technologies like laptops and smartphones and social media all play an important role in our lives. But the overutilization of digital media and technology leads to social problems. We learn to become passive engagers. We watch someone else's profile but we don't engage and so we are losing the social connection. More the technology we consume, more we are susceptible to increased rates of depression. Electronic screens can also disrupt screen and lack of good sleep can result in a depressed mood, moodiness and irritability. It not only affects the hormones in our brains via blue light that comes off the screens but also hampers our social life directly or indirectly in such a way that we slowly and gradually we not only become lazy, but it also distresses our logical way of thinking and lose the will to do things which contributes in the society rather than give priority to the digital world. Spending too much time online like social websites, movies and TV series, web-surfing, etc. is also a psychological addiction like a substance addiction. It affects the impairment of various brain regions that those with drug dependence have. These brain regions control emotional processing, attention and decision making. Since, digital media provides immediate rewards with very little effort required, our brain begins to rewire itself making us desire these stimulations and we begin to crave more of this neurological excitement after each interaction which is likewise to a drug. The main aim of this paper is to make the readers aware of the impact of digital media on their mental health, how they can be identified and their possible solutions. The findings and limitations of the paper are also explained.

1. INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL ISSUES INDUCED DIGITALLY

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), anxiety is often explained as 'a feeling characterized by feelings of tension, distressing thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure'. With the excessive use of media's digital platform like Social Media, a new term has emerged known as 'social media anxiety' which focuses on the negative effects of social media. Because of digital media, people are now less social and more anxious about real-life events. Following are the main contributors to social media anxiety.

1. Compare and despair: It's human nature to make comparisons. We do it in real life and we do it online. But online, we are often comparing our reality to an illusion; an image of life, an image of perfection. If we are sharing for proving or validation and we don't get the response we desire, that can lead to feelings of inadequacy, self-consciousness, body image dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

2. Fear of missing out: This refers to anxiety or worry that activities or events are happening without you. It is characterized by constantly checking what friends are doing online; has been associated with lower mood and life satisfaction and higher levels of digital media engagement.

3. Notification overwhelms: Our devices are constantly demanding our attention. When we don't r can't respond to a notification we can fill anxious, stressed and distracted. Being

constantly contactable – while offering greater advantages – can be a source of distress and anxiety.

Speaking of social media anxiety, American Academy of Pediatrics has curbed a new term known as 'Facebook Depression' which can be defined as 'depression that develops when teens and preteens spend time on social media sites then begin to exhibit classic symptoms of depression because of the intensity of the net world'. The factors that will contribute to depression square measure the varied measures of recognition that Facebook creates. Such social media can make young ones feel inadequate due to online friend tallies, status updates, and pictures of others having a good time. For well-adjusted people, however, social media can have the opposite effect, boosting their already positive feelings about themselves. It starts when the well-adjusted or well- settled people tend to put their best foot forward, broadcasting only their best attributes and qualities online. They opt for what to reveal concerning themselves and filter or minimize negative characteristics. They can promote a somewhat deceptively positive sense of self. In response, their friends' feedback, comments, and posts tend to be overwhelmingly positive, creating a positive feedback loop. On the other hand, the less well-adjusted people, constantly reading about the

seeming success of their 'online friends' can make them feel worse than in real life where, at least, their peers visibly fail from time to time and make them feel insecure. The positive spin that people kids put on social media ends up widening disconnect between how less well-adjusted or unpopular people view others and how they view themselves.

Taking the relationship between technology and mental health into consideration, according to the Pew Research Center, by 2015, 73% of teens in the USA had smartphones. One scientific discipline professor at San Diego State University discovered that teens United Nations Agency pay five or additional hours each day on-line were seventy-one per cent additional seemingly to possess a minimum of one risk issue for suicide compared to teens United Nations Agency spent only one hour each day on-line. This risk will increase with solely two or additional hours spent on-line. This doesn't prove that disbursement time online causes suicide, but the link between time spent on-line and other factors linked to suicide is important to study. The number of digital media platforms used and how often they are used is related to youth mental health. A recent study found that the more social media platforms an adolescent use, the more likely they are to have symptoms of depression and anxiety, regardless of overall time spent on social media.

Digital media also triggers a release of dopamine (the feel-good chemical). Using MRI scans, scientists found that the reward centres in the people's brains are much more active when they are talking about their views as opposed to listening to others. We all love talking regarding ourselves, but it turns out that while 30-40% of face-to-face conversation involves communicating our own experiences, around 80% of digital media communication is self-involved. The same part of our brain associated with orgasms, motivation and love are stimulated by digital media use and even more, so we know we have an audience. Our body is physiologically rewarding is for talking about ourselves online. Studies on relationship have found that partners tend to like each other if they meet for the first time online rather than with face-to-face interaction. Whether it's as a result of folks square measures additional anonymous or maybe clearer regarding their future goals, there is a statistical increase in successful partnerships that started online. The internet has reformed our verbal communication with increase physical separation, perhaps, the ones that matter the most end up even closer.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this paper is on the link concerning social media use and ruined mental health reveals the significance of the topic that is the possible damaging effects surrounding social

media use have insightful concerns to individuals. Social media has been defined as "methods of electronic communication (like websites for social interacting and microblogging) over which operators generate online groups to share information, thoughts, private messages, and an additional content (like videos)". Twelve extraordinary profile social interacting sites contain Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Snapchat.

3. PROJECTION OF MENTAL PROBLEMS ON MASS MEDIA

Over for the years, there has been a trend that how sexualization and fetishization of mental illness is are often portrayed in films and TV. Such media often sexualize mental condition in a way that impresses the audience and makes them feel attracted not only to the character that is suffering from the illness on-screen but also to the illness itself.

The remilitarization of mental illness is the initial stage in which we often think about mental illness in a way it is more attractive and interesting as it is. This concept traces back its history in 1818 when Lord Byron published a narrative poem called 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage'. This poem introduced a character that started the trend of 'Byronic Hero' who is typically rebellious, arrogant, anti-social or in exile, and darkly, enticingly romantic. According to Katlyn Firkus, the Byronic hero is also always exceptionally intelligent. She states that 'a darker more distasteful hero that scares the reader, who is simultaneously being told that he's desirable'. Every generation took the Byronic hero and made him more extreme that is why we love seeing flawed heroes on the screen so much today. Lot of the times these flawed, broken and enticingly dark character is given a mental disorder to justify the actions. We see psychopaths and sociopaths and people with depression and all kinds of mental illnesses being portrayed as wealthy, successful, intelligent and good looking. And because of these traits, everything we want to be, we began relating to them. This concept reflects the idea that worse the life you have, more interesting you supposedly are. This Romanization and glorification of mental illness is so blown up today and has brought negative effects on us. If we search various internet pages we can find the entire collection of aesthetic, black and white pictures with text glorifying mental disorders, self-harm and suicides. It has gone to a point that the people have started faking mental illness just so that they can bring in love and attention. Faking of mental illness is also a mental disorder because sometimes these things can go to the extreme as people commit a crime before or to come off as grieving and populate it in digital media. All of these have also led to the people wanting to have mentally unstable partners. For example, ladies are often attracted to the idea of the troubled men who they can change or save. Whereas, men are often attracted to depressed ladies whom they can rescue. This is known as white-knight complex the attraction towards endangered women with a history of abuse, addiction and trauma and the ideology that they are pure and impossibly romantic.

Media also take the support of sex marketing or subliminal messages to use sexuality for selling a product to an audience whether that product could be a beverage or something artistic like a painting or a movie. Sex marketing is present in all forms of mass media. This is neither a good or bad thing necessarily, but it is an effecting tool to get people to consume. We fall for it a lot more often than we think but that is fine because sex is a part of human instinct. Sex marketing can be broadly classified into 4 types:

1. Equivocal Vocabulary – it includes double entendre and words that remind us of other words. The brands make us feel subconsciously attracted to the image in the thing we are associating with.
2. The Model – a model is a person whose body is being used to sell the product. His/her position must be enticing or sensual and their feature must be sharp enough to make them stand out. Models are often used to a show body part that is supposed to build sexual thought from us.

3. <u>The Artifact</u> – these are the objects made to look like or represent a sexual organ or enticing body parts. It comes to a point when symbols become less obvious and more subliminal making us fall for it without making any connection.
4. <u>Dynamic</u> – it is about the object or the people located within the frame to add more meaning to the picture.

The fetishization of mental illness builds its foundation on the ideology that sex marketing is not always negative but doesn't mean it cannot be used for negative things. For instance, in films, sex marketing has been used to fetishize mental health. There are subtleties and sex marketing and the way we absorb the messages without noticing them. When we hear some lines from the movies, we always don't consciously make a connection but if the movies do this repeatedly we watch depression and other mental illness being sexualized this way more and more we start to get attracted to it directly or indirectly and soon we begin to believe that mental illness is something desirable. In rare cases of films, where sexualization of mental illness is used to teach us a lesson but the fetishization of mental illness on film and television is not only immoral but dangerous as well because these media promote very serious mental disorders like depression, multiple identity disorder, schizophrenia etc. as the perceivers take them to be attractive, successful and a tool for social acceptance. People need to understand that poor mental health is not at all beautiful as it seems on the screen. The problem isn't necessarily that the production houses keeps hiring attractive actors/actresses to play mentally ill characters because such illness can incur in all pretty and ugly people, but the problem persists when they keep on sexualizing the actors along with the illness they are depicting on the screen because they can hire pretty people to play mentally ill character without sexualizing their condition. It is not right to the fetishization of mental illness, but it is never an artist's job to make us happy, it's up to us as a consumer to judge a product. The problem isn't necessarily the media is putting the stuff out, it's the people who aren't being conscious about it because we are not realizing what we are watching would affect us.

4. IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH

It's not that digital media doesn't have many advantages over the physical world. Digital media benefits people by enabling them to enhance their communication skills and social connections. Social media websites and applications permit the United States to create new friends, exchange ideas and pictures, develop new interests and experiment with new forms of self-expression. When youth use them, they can learn basic social and technical skills that are important for functioning in day-to-day society. Most of us use social media to build on social communication and friendships taking place at academic or professional institutions or during an event and other activities and extend it to the online world. They are not essentially meeting new folks such a lot as enriching their presently existing friendships. Because of this, barring teens from digital media use could potentially deprive them of valuable learning experiences and limits their social lives.
The rise of digital media has meant that we as a global population are more connected than we have ever been in the history of time. However, our reliance on social media can have a detrimental effect on our mental health, with the average a person checking their phone as much 28 times a day. While digital media platforms can have their benefits, using them too frequently can make us feel increasingly unhappy and isolated in the long run. Some of the ways are mentioned as follows that digital media could be negatively affecting our mental health without us even realizing.

1. <u>Self-esteem</u> – We all have our fair share of insecurities, some that we speak about openly and others that we prefer to keep to ourselves. However, equating ourselves to others on social media by stalking their artistically impeccable photos or staying up until now with their relationship standing may perhaps do very little to assuage our feelings of self-doubt.

2. Human connection – As human beings, it's so important for us to be able to communicate and forge personal connections with one another. However, it can be tough to try to thus once we are pasted to rectangular screens, becoming more acquainted with our friends' digital facades than their real-life personas.

3. Memory – Social media can be great for looking back fondly on memories and recounting how past events occurred. However, it may also distort the method within which you keep in mind bound tidbits from your life. Many folks' square measures guilty of paying way an excessive amount of time attempting to require the proper icon of a visible marvel, all the while not absorbing the firsthand experience of witnessing it together with your own two eyes. If we tend to direct all of our attention toward capturing the most effective shots for our social media followers to admire, less are on the market to relish alternative aspects of the experience in real-time. Spending too much time on our phones would detract from those other aspects of the experience, undermining the happiness we could be gleaning from them.

4. Sleep – Having enough sleep is of paramount importance. However, several folks use our phones ahead of time before selecting the hit the fodder, creating it tougher to go to sleep. Getting excited with anxiety or envy from what we tend to see on social media keeps the brain on high alert, preventing the US from falling asleep. Plus, the light from our mobile device just inches from our face can suppress the release of melatonin, a hormone that helps us feel tired.

5. Attention span – It's not just your subconscious brain that you need to worry about, but also the extent to which our brain can fully concentrate when we're awake. While it's unbelievable to reflect on the number of data pronto offered at our fingertips due to social media, it conjointly means individuals became much more simply distracted. Digital media has provided a means of constantly giving in to the temptation of instant, easy-access entertainment.

6. Mental health – Not only has digital media been proven to cause unhappiness, but it can also lead to the development of mental health issues such as anxiety or depression when used too much or without caution.

5. FINDINGS

Social Media up to this point determines that the individuals' function at a susceptible height: as an inhabitant, individuals are at a great risk of emerging mental health glitches as they practice developing adulthood. These same individuals are the most energetic operators of social media, which has a different association with mental health difficulties. This unjustifiable condition stresses more thoughtful perceptive that social media and mental health are connected is simply a jumping off idea. Accepting how and why social media might be disturbing people's mental health is the next phase to revealing the links at play among the individuals', their surroundings, their well-being as well as the role of social media.

Given the significance of this issue as established by the appraisal of the study, collective public alertness of the association amongst mental health and social media should be highlighted. Even though social media is a dominant tool and is surely here to stay, it is significant that the individuals recognize that nothing occurs without harmful side effects. As long as individuals are attentive of the possible harmful concerns that can be produced by their activities, they can create more refined varieties about their activities. If young grown-ups and their caregivers are conscious of the possible harmful effects of social media use, they can generate strong social media routines to safeguard against these possible effects.

It is vital that mental health experts and health care providers are conscious of the possible extortions that social media use can pose to young adults so that they can offer young adults with appropriate recommendations and supervision. Young adults should be well-versed of the dangers

they face, both in overall mental health care and in social media use. Simply through accepting that social media poses definite threats to their mental health can they self-monitor their performance on social media. It is suggested that young adults have an alertness of what online events make them feel fretful or sad, or when those online events might be getting in the way of other events that develop their health. Parents should also be conscious of the extortions to mental well-being that their kids face. By accepting in what way social media can distress the mental well- being of their kids, parents can talk to their kids about vigorous social media routines and corresponding their time on social media and aid guard their kids from suffering mental health problems later in life.

As mentioned above, some internet users are unable to control how much time they spend online. Though it's a psychological addiction sort of substance addiction, brain scans of these people show a similar impairment of cognitive regions that those with drug dependence have, specifically, there is a clear degradation of white matter in those cognitive regions that control emotional processing, attention and decision making. Since digital media provides immediate rewards with little effort, our brain begins to rewire itself making us desire these stimulations and we begin to crave more of this neurological excitement after each interaction similar to a drug.
We conjointly see a shift once gazing at multi-tasking. We might think that those who use digital media or constantly switch between work and websites are better multitasking, but studies have found that when comparing heavy media users to others, they perform much worse during tasks switching tasks. Increased multitasking reduces the brain's ability to filter out interference and can even make it harder for your brain to commit information to memory. Like when our phone doesn't buzz we assume it just did, it is known as Phantom Vibration Syndrome which is a relatively new psychological phenomenon where we think we felt our phone go off, but it didn't. In one study, 89% of test subject said they experienced this at least once every two weeks. It would seem that our brain perceives an itch or twitch as an actual vibration from our phone. Technology has begun to rewire our nervous system and our brains are being triggered in such a way that they never have been before in history.

6. COPING METHODS FOR MENTAL HEALTH DIGITAL MEDIA

Even though we live in a world where digital media is bombarding us all the time and that's not going to change. We also need to learn how to set some appropriate limits for ourselves so that it is us who dominates the digital media but not the digital media who has us in control.

- At least 30 minutes before bedtime should be a stop screen time for TV, cell phones, laptops etc.
- Promote face-to-face interaction and encourage meetings in social groups, is always a better way of knowing someone rather than to stalk their profiles just to know them.
- Be conscious of how we can use digital media and its impact on our mood and well-being. How is our mood afterwards- do we feel anxious or depressed?
- Limit the time we spend digital media and the number of social media platforms we use. If we find most of our time creeping on other people's accounts, comparing and despairing.
- Choose friends wisely so we're not exposing yourself to content that will only upset you or make you feel bad about ourselves.
- Turn off push notification for digital media on all electronic gadgets and enable priority mode or do not disturb so we would only receive notification dung a set time frame.
- Like anything else that can affect our mental health, if we're concerned about our digital media usage – talk to family, friends, teachers and access help.
- If you are watching any film or other related media, watch it as a source of entertainment rather than relating to yourself.

- Do not consider yourself as mentally ill just because you can see someone of your characteristics suffering from any disorder.
- Do not let technology dominate you. Always remember that it's the man who created the media and the related technology; they do not control us.
- Do not imitate someone else's mental disorder to get attention.
- One must be conscious of the stuff being projected on mass media
- Prefer reading books rather than visual tools, they are more detailed and does not depend on visual content, but it seeks creative imagination.

This could be a never-ending list, but the bottom line is, it is good to be digitally active but being so every-time is not a good habit and has a prolong consequences on our mental health. One must always take some self-time out and blend with the physical environment rather than seeing the world and life on screen.

7. LIMITATIONS

Innovative digital and social media simplify and encourage social connections as well as contribution and commitment that include both observing and generating content. The effects of media usage, nonetheless, are multifactorial and depend on the kind of media, the kind of use, the extent and range of use, and the features of the specific child or teenage using the media. Youngsters, nowadays, are developing up in an age of highly modified media use proficiencies; hence, parents should be stimulated to cultivate modified Family Media Use Policies for their families that attend to each kid's age, well-being, character, and growing phase and guarantee that each child can exercise and benefit from the fundamentals for strong development and improvement, such as a vigorous diet, good sleep cleanliness, sufficient physical activity, and affirmative social communications.

Parents should distinguish and recognize their personal roles in demonstrating suitable media use and steadiness amongst media interval and other accomplishments. Pediatricians can help people recognize and embrace a vigorous Family Media Use Proposal, diminish unnatural habits and actions, and identify and address problems that arise correlated to the use of old-fashioned and new media that can destructively affect fitness, wellness, social and personal growth, and educational presentation and accomplishment.

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