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Exploring the Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Mental Health Indicators: A Survey-Based Analysis

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Abstract
The high rate of growth of social media has changed the communication trends leading to concerns of its effects on the mental health and wellbeing. In this study, the association between the use of social media and self-reported mental health indicators was examined using a survey-based, cross-sectional study design. A structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data of 120 respondents, which included time-related and behavioral details of social media use, such as binge consumption, time loss, and night-time use. Oral self-reported measures were used to measure mental health indicators including anxiety, stress, mood disturbances, sleep quality and social comparison tendencies. Descriptive analysis showed moderate results of social media use and significant differences in behavioral patterns of use. Correlation analysis revealed that there were significant correlations between intensive social media use and higher levels of anxiety, stress, and sleep disturbances. Binge-watching and time loss were positively correlated with mood-related issues, whereas social comparison showed significant correlations with anxiety and emotional distress. In addition, night-time use was also associated with poorer sleep quality. The results affirm that there is a significant association between mental health indicators as reported by themselves and the use of social media. The research is not causal, yet it gives the importance of the learning of behavioral patterns of digital use. The findings can be contributed to the existing literature since they provide evidence-based on surveys and emphasize the significance of being cautious and balanced when using social media to facilitate psychological wellbeing.

Keywords
- Social media usage
- Mental health indicators
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Sleep quality
- Social comparison
- Behavioral patterns
- Survey-based analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

The blistering development of digital technologies has also changed the trends in communication and interaction greatly, with social media becoming a part of everyday life in all parts of the world. People are becoming more and more dependent on Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube as communication platforms, sources of entertainment, and sources of information, which results in a significant increase in the time spent online. Although these platforms have a lot of advantages such as improved connectivity and access to information, there is an increasing concern about their possible effect on mental health and wellbeing. The current literature suggests that social media use can be linked to a higher stress, anxiety, and emotional distress levels, especially in younger age groups (Kelly et al., 2018; O'Reilly et al., 2018). Besides, recent research points out that the multidimensionality of social media communication can affect people emotionally and overall psychological functioning, thus, requiring a better comprehension of its consequences (Kross et al., 2021). The topicality of this question has been additionally highlighted by the recent global processes, during which the growing use of digital communication has led to an even greater concern about socioemotional wellbeing (Hamilton et al., 2022). However, the unregulated and overuse of social media content has been associated with a number of negative consequences although it is widely used. People tend to use it extensively without even knowing how much time they have been using it and this may cause them to have a disturbed life as they may not get enough sleep and may lack focus in their thinking. It has been hypothesized that excessive and compulsive checking and binge use of social media can cause adverse psychological effects and behavioral addictions (Sarkar et al., 2025). Moreover, more screen time, especially at night, has been linked to sleeping problems and tiredness that consequently may impact emotional stability and mental health. These trends underscore the need to study the role of certain usage behaviors and not exposure alone in determining psychological well-being. Moreover, more recent extensive research has shown that problematic screen time is prospectively linked to mental health difficulties, such as anxiety, depressive symptoms, and poor sleep quality, which supports the necessity to tackle the problem (Nagata et al., 2026). Although a vast number of articles about the link between social media usage and mental health can be found, most of the research done up to date is conducted using clinically proven diagnosis tools and psychological scales. Even though this research provides very valuable insights, it may lack certain information compared to the representation of everyday lives and perception of people in reality. On the contrary, there is currently a lack of literature that concentrates on behavioral measurements reported by people themselves. Such aspects include how individuals perceive their time management, engage in activities, make social comparisons, etc., and are included in surveys aimed at exploring behavioral factors that may influence mental health issues in the future. The recent review shows the need for more behavior and context-specific studies in a fast-moving digital environment (Chhabra et al., 2025). Given all these factors, the present research paper will be dedicated to exploring the link between using social networks and self-reports regarding mental health factors in light of a questionnaire-based analysis. Specifically, the study is going to explore the trends in using social networks, analyze the frequency of such behavioral issues as stress, anxiety, and sleep disorders, and explore the links between the discussed variables. A comprehensive view of how using social networks influences the mental well-being will be offered due to the attention being paid to both factors. In addition, the study provides answers to some of the significant research questions, including whether a higher degree of psychological distress is linked to a higher degree of social media use, whether excessive social media use is linked to poorer sleep quality, and whether social comparison behaviors are linked to high levels of anxiety. Such exploratory analysis renders the study a contribution to the growing body of literature on the topic since it provides empirical evidence on the complex relationship between social media use and mental health during a digital age.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media Usage Trends

The rapid growth of the social media has brought about significant transformations in communication and patterns of interaction that have made people spend more time on different digital platforms. The user population now uses a variety of applications, such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, and frequently uses different applications during the day. This platform diversification has been linked to increased rate of engagement and in few instances, problematic usage behaviors. The studies have shown that excessive use can lead to behavioral addiction, where individuals are compelled to remain attached to social media, which is frequently supported by the feeling of missing out (FOMO) (Brown & Kuss, 2020). In addition, the recent researchers indicate that problematic use of social media is not only a frequency problem but a behaviour pattern such as compulsive checking and overuse of the social media which can negatively affect the overall wellbeing of users (Metwally et al., 2025). The growing sophistication of user interaction on different platforms highlights the necessity to explore time-based and behavioral aspects of the social media use.

2.2 Social Media and Mental Health

The relationship between the use of social media and mental health outcomes (particularly anxiety, stress, and depression) is a topic that has a substantial body of research. Empirical studies indicate that the more one is exposed to social media content, the more they experience psychological distress particularly at times of uncertainty like the COVID-19 pandemic (Gao et al., 2020). Theoretical and empirical models also imply that the nature of engagement is a major factor, and passive listening to the content may be linked to negative emotional outcomes, and active listening may be linked to less obvious implications (Verduyn et al., 2022). Recent meta-analyses and systematic reviews confirm the fact that the use of social media is associated with internalizing symptoms, including anxiety and depression, but the strength of these associations is dependent on the patterns of usage and personal differences (Ansari et al., 2024; Fassi et al., 2024). Also, the mediating role of psychological alienation and emotional dependency has been identified in the connection between the use of social media and mental health (Hammad & Awed, 2023). All these results suggest that the use of social media is a multifaceted phenomenon with both direct and indirect effects on the psychological wellbeing.

2.3 Sleep and Digital Behavior

In recent years, digital behavior and sleep are increasingly a subject of interest, particularly in terms of the issue of nighttime use of social media. Excessive screen time especially in the evening has been linked with disruption of the circadian rhythm and low quality of sleep. The factors that contribute to trouble with falling asleep and sleeping are such behavioral patterns as spending much time scrolling and going to bed late. Studies have shown that sleep disturbances are related to problematic social media use and internet addiction, which, in their turn, can worsen mental health problems (Zewude et al., 2025). In addition, the constant presence of online information and messages tend to motivate users to spend additional time on the internet, which leads to sleep deprivation over time. These results indicate the necessity to consider the amount of social media use, as well as the time and context of the use.

2.4 Social Comparison Theory

The social comparison theory can be used to gain insight into the psychological effects of using social media. Curated and idealized images of the lives of others are frequent on platforms, and can prompt users to make upward social comparisons. These comparisons are related to greater degrees of social anxiety, lower self-esteem, and negative emotional conditions. Social media has been shown to cause psychological distress more often in people who engage in frequent comparisons with others (Alaska et al., 2024). Also, recent studies indicate that emotional needs and affective responses of users are important factors influencing their online behavior and the following mental health outcomes (Deng et al., 2023). The psychological effect of social comparison is also supported by the impact of algorithm-based content, which provides an increased exposure to idealized images and lifestyles, which in turn increases the psychological impact of social comparison.

2.5 Research Gap Summary

Although there is a lot of literature concerning social media and mental health, there are still some gaps. The vast majority of the current literature is based on clinical or computational methods, such as machine learning models to identify mental health based on online information (Zhang et al., 2023). Although these methods are useful in offering information, they do not consider subjective user experiences and personally reported behavioral patterns. Additionally, recent studies highlight the fact that the impact of social media is highly contextual, and differs by platform and by individuals (Beyens et al., 2024; Van Der Wal et al., 2026). Integrated, survey-based research studies that concomitantly investigate social media use, behavioral engagement, and self-reported mental health indicators are needed. To bridge this gap, the current study will be exploratory in nature and will examine these interrelated dimensions to understand the relationship between the use of social media and mental health in a more holistic way.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design in this study is quantitative, cross-sectional, to investigate the association between social media use and mental health measures. The survey method was employed to gather data of the respondents at a single time and this is appropriate in determining patterns and relationships between behavioral and psychological variables. The cross-sectional design of the study enables the study to investigate the existing relationships without necessarily causing them to be causal, which is in line with the exploratory purpose of the study.

3.2 Data Source and Sample

In this study the responses are based on the self reports of the participants regarding their social media use behaviors and mental states. Data cleaning and reduction resulted in the retention of 120 valid responses to be analyzed (Anshika Arora, 2025). The sampling methodology made sure that various groups of respondents, especially in professions, were represented in proportion hence keeping the diversity and enhancing the representativeness of the data set.

3.3 Variables Description

The variables of interest in this research fall into two broad categories, including social media use variables and mental health variables. Social media usage was measured using the time-based and behavioral dimensions. Variables with time include perceived and actual time on various platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube and can absorb the extent of use. In addition, behavioral measures such as binge watch reels, time wastage in social media, and social media before bed were included to reflect the trends of overuse or habitual use of the social media. Self-reported, non-clinical measures of mental health were used to measure mental health indicators, which are based on the psychological and behavioral conditions of respondents. These consist of emotional indicators like mood_disorder, anxious stressed, and nervous anxious, and cognitive and behavioral such as focus quality and compare with others. Other variables related to sleep such as sleep quality general and trouble sleeping month were also included to reflect on the effect of using social media on sleep patterns. These variables combine to give a complete picture of perceived mental health and wellbeing.

3.4 Measurement Scale

The measurements of all the variables in the study were done on ordinal, Likert-type scales whereby respondents indicated the frequency or intensity of their experiences. These scales will be used to measure subjective perceptions, i.e. the lower to higher levels of agreement or occurrence. Since the data is self-reported, it shows perceived behaviors and mental conditions as opposed to clinically validated conditions. This is suitable in exploratory research but it must be taken with care in generalizing the results to clinical settings.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis of the data done in an Excel-based method with concentration on descriptive and inferential statistics relevant to ordinal survey data. The characteristics of the dataset and general tendencies in the social media use and mental health indicators were summarized with the help of descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, percentages, and mean values. Reliability analysis (where necessary) was taken into account to determine the internal consistency of grouped variables through Cronbach alpha. Correlation analysis was conducted to test the relationship among the variables using Pearson or Spearman correlation coefficients, but the latter was most suitable because the data were ordinal. Through this analysis, the strength and direction of relationships between the use of social media and mental health indicators were identified. Furthermore, optional basic regression analysis was used to assess the predictive power of variables of social media use to the chosen mental health outcomes to obtain additional understanding of the connection between these constructs.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The sample consists of the answers of 120 respondents, and the demographics were divided by occupation. The sample is well-representative of the respondents belonging to various professional groups, which guarantees variability in the pattern of social media use and mental health indicators as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Profession_Code	Frequency	Percentage
0	106	88.33
1	1	0.83
2	1	0.83
3	1	0.83
4	1	0.83
5	1	0.83
6	1	0.83
7	3	2.5
8	1	0.83
9	1	0.83
10	1	0.83
11	1	0.83
12	1	0.83

Table 2 summarizes descriptive statistics of the key variables of the study. The findings suggest moderate social media usage levels in terms of both the average actual and perceived usage as shown in the mean value of actual and perceived usage. There is also observable variance among respondents in behavioral indicators like binge reel consumption, lack of time awareness and pre-bedtime use of social media.

Regarding the mental health indicators, the average scores indicate that there could be self-reported symptoms associated with mood variations, anxiety and sleep disturbances. Variables like anxious stressed, nervous anxious and sleep related indicators have an average of moderate values, which means that a significant percentage of the respondents have psychological and behavioral impacts related to the use of social media.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Std_Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Avg_actual_time	2.682	0.726	0	4
Avg_perceived_time	2.689	0.674	0	4
Binge_watch_reels	3.117	1.323	1	5
Time_loss_social_media	3.808	0.416	2	4
Social_media_before_bed	0.85	0.359	0	1
Mood_disorder	3.108	1.401	1	5
Anxious_stressed	0.45	0.5	0	1
Nervous_anxious	2.392	1.337	1	5
Focus_quality	3.267	1.419	1	5
Sleep_quality_general	3.292	1.198	1	5
Trouble_sleeping_month	2.542	1.34	1	5
Compare_with_others	2.825	1.376	1	5

4.2 Social Media Usage Patterns

The platform-specific usage analysis indicates that there are important patterns of user engagement. As Figure 1 shows, some of the platforms have a higher average level of use than others, which suggests preferences in digital interaction among the respondents.

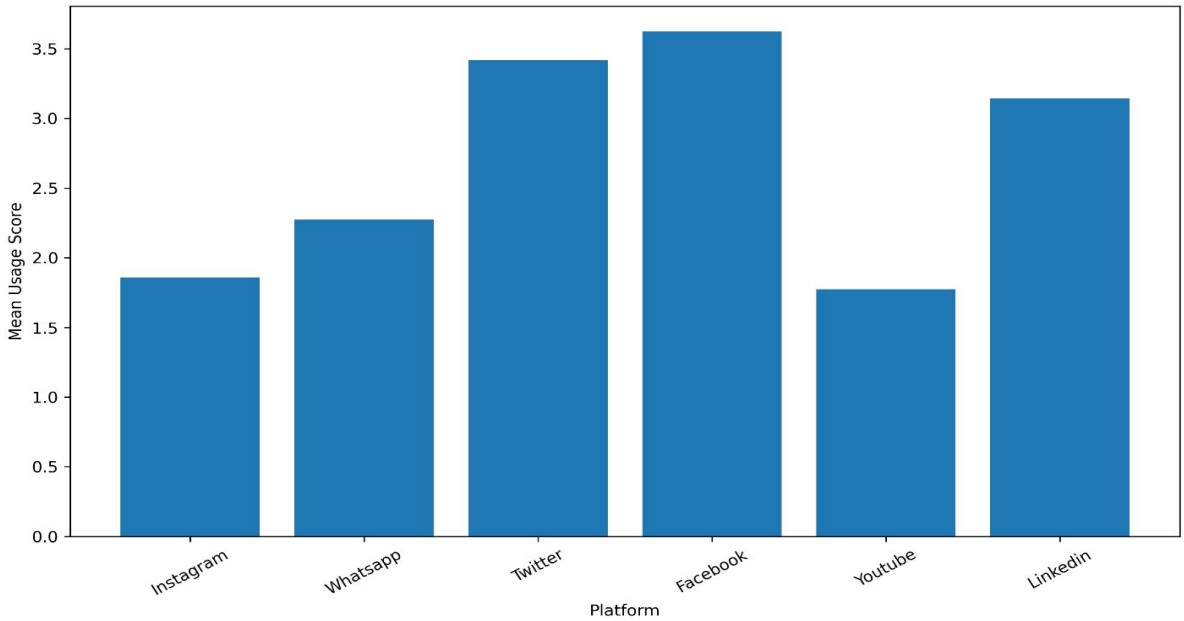

Figure 1: Average Actual Social Media Usage by Platform

In addition, Figure 2 provides a comparison between the perceived and actual time spent on social media platforms. The results indicate that there are some inconsistencies between the perceived and actual usage, which implies that the respondents are quite conscious of the time they spend on social media, although there are some little differences in the actual usage of the platforms.

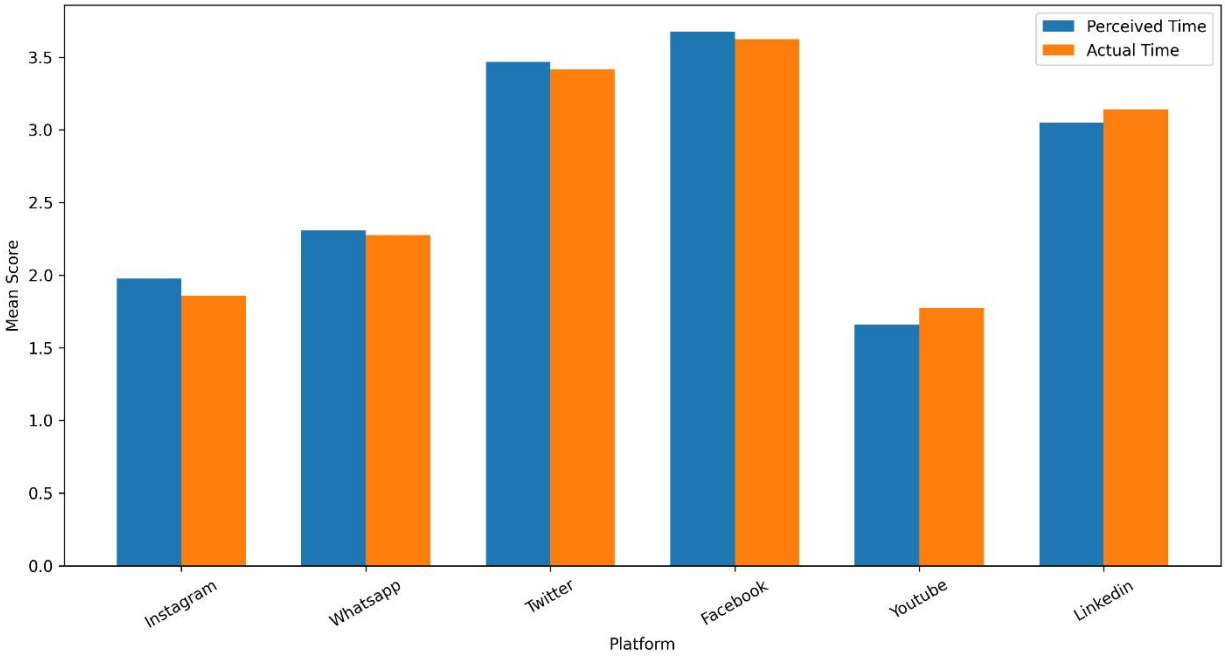

Figure 2: Perceived versus Actual Social Media Usage Time

Also, behavioral trends show that a significant percentage of the respondents use social media at night, which can potentially affect sleep quality and wellbeing. The existence of the binge-watching habit and the loss of time also indicate the trends of a possible overindulgence.

4.3 Mental Health Indicators Overview

Figure 3 shows the distribution of mental health indicators in the form of the means of the most important psychological and behavioral variables. The findings show that there are differences in the degree of anxiety, stress and sleep-related concerns between respondents.

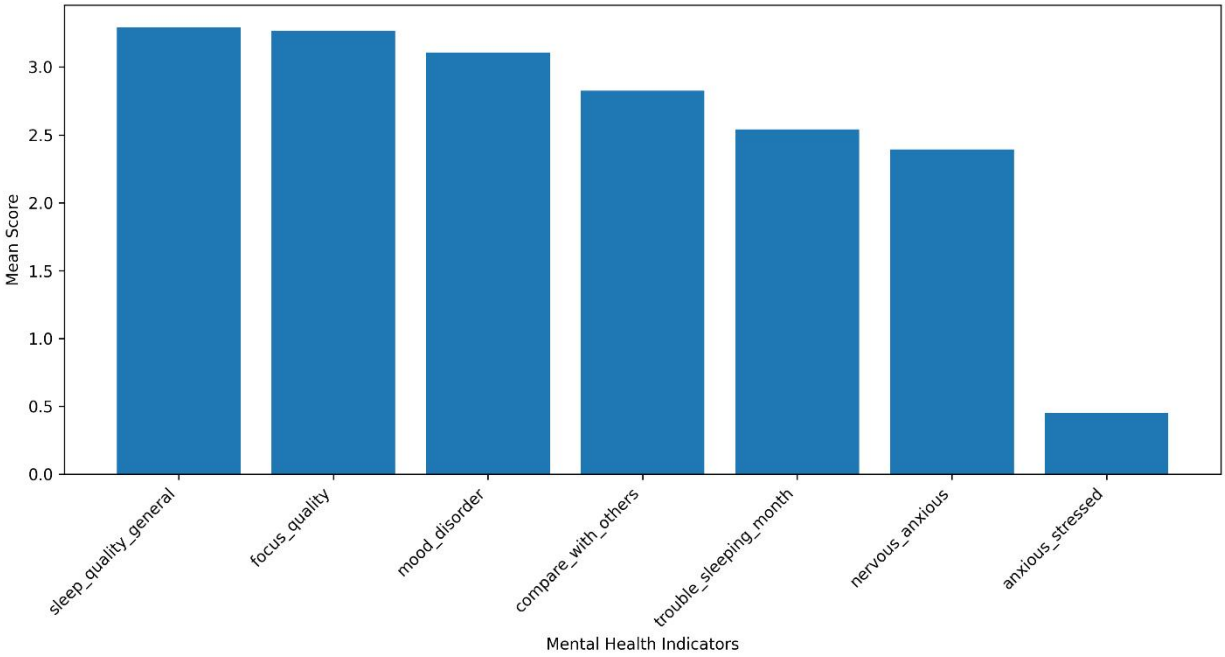

Figure 3: Mean Scores of Mental Health Indicators

Interestingly, such indicators like anxious_stressed and nervous_anxious demonstrate rather high mean values, which implies that a part of the sample is emotionally distressed. Sleep variables, such as sleep quality general and trouble sleeping month, also bring to the fore issues to do with rest and recovery. Moreover, the variable compare_with_others indicates tendencies to social comparison, which can lead to adverse emotional consequences. In general, the results show that mental health measures are moderate in the sample, as it is observed in the behavioral surveys.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Spearman correlation analysis was done to test whether there is any relation between social media usage and mental health indicators. Table 3 gives the results.

Table 3: Spearman Correlation Matrix of Social Media Usage and Mental Health Indicators

Variable	Avg_actual_time	Binge_watch_reels	Time_loss_social_media	Socialmediabeforebed	Mooddisorder	Anxious_stressed	Nervous_anxious	Sleep_quality_general	Trouble_sleeping_month	Compare_with_others
Avg_actual_time	1	-0.152	0.059	-0.12	-0.137	-0.112	-0.156	0.111	-0.213	-0.207
Binge_watch_reels	-0.152	1	0.171	0.152	0.309	0.19	0.347	-0.206	0.199	0.401
Time_loss_social_media	0.059	0.171	1	-0.139	0.319	0.171	0.195	-0.082	0.082	0.271
Social_media_before_bed	-0.12	0.152	-0.139	1	-0.054	0.005	0.162	-0.199	0.166	0.186
Mood_disorder	-0.137	0.309	0.319	-0.054	1	0.415	0.363	-0.166	0.258	0.291
Anxious_stressed	-0.112	0.19	0.171	0.005	0.415	1	0.484	-0.273	0.159	0.344
Nervous_anxious	-0.156	0.347	0.195	0.162	0.363	0.484	1	-0.211	0.332	0.461
Sleep_quality_general	0.111	-0.206	-0.082	-0.199	-0.166	-0.273	-0.211	1	-0.276	-0.19
Trouble_sleeping_month	-0.213	0.199	0.082	0.166	0.258	0.159	0.332	-0.276	1	0.264
Compare_with_others	-0.207	0.401	0.271	0.186	0.291	0.344	0.461	-0.19	0.264	1

The discussion shows that there are some interesting relationships. The variables of the social media use, especially, the average actual time, binge consumption, and time loss are positively correlated with the variables of anxiety and stress. This implies that the more one is engaged, the more the psychological strain.

On the same note, there are strong correlations between social media use and sleep variables. With more use, especially prior to sleep, there is worse quality of sleep and more sleep disturbances. Moreover, the variable compare with others also shows significant correlations with the mood and the anxiety-related indicators, which shows that the behavior of social comparison affects the development of psychological wellbeing. The correlations are moderate in size, but they are always pointing in one direction, that is, they show that there is a directional relationship between greater involvement in social media and poor mental health outcomes. Significance level p-values are shown in Table 4. From the correlation analysis, there were several significant relationships identified between social media behavior and psychological factors.

Table 4: Significance Levels (p-values) of Spearman Correlation Analysis

	Avg_actual_time	Binge_watch_reels	Time_loss_social_media	Social_media_before_bed	Mood_disorder	Anxious_stressed	Nervous_anxious	Sleep_quality_general	Trouble_sleeping_month	Compare_with_others
Avg_actual_time	0	0.0979	0.5246	0.1913	0.136	0.2245	0.0885	0.2274	0.0197	0.0231
Binge_watch_reels	0.0979	0	0.062	0.0964	0.0006	0.0378	0.0001	0.0238	0.0291	0
Time_loss_social_media	0.5246	0.062	0	0.1297	0.0004	0.0621	0.0332	0.3726	0.3762	0.0028
Social_media_before_bed	0.1913	0.0964	0.1297	0	0.5572	0.9594	0.0768	0.0294	0.0695	0.0415

Mood_disorder	0.136	0.0006	0.0004	0.5572	0	0	0	0.0708	0.0044	0.0013
Anxious_stressed	0.2245	0.0378	0.0621	0.9594	0	0	0	0.0026	0.0826	0.0001
Nervous_anxious	0.0885	0.0001	0.0332	0.0768	0	0	0	0.0208	0.0002	0
Sleep_quality_general	0.2274	0.0238	0.3726	0.0294	0.0708	0.0026	0.0208	0	0.0023	0.0379
Trouble_sleeping_month	0.0197	0.0291	0.3762	0.0695	0.0044	0.0826	0.0002	0.0023	0	0.0035
Compare_with_others	0.0231	0	0.0028	0.0415	0.0013	0.0001	0	0.0379	0.0035	0

4.5 Key Findings

The study findings point out a number of significant findings. To begin with, the use of the social media among the respondents is high and some platforms have a higher level of engagement. Second, patterns of intensive usage can be indicated by behavioral indicators (e.g., binge consumption and time loss). Third, there is moderate presence of mental health indicators, especially anxiety, stress and sleep disturbances in the sample. The results also show that the social comparison behavior is a significant psychological aspect.

Above all, the correlation analysis shows that the levels of social media usage are related to anxiety, stress, and sleep-related problems. Although the study is not causal, the associations observed are evidence to support the research objective of establishing relationships between social media use and indicators of mental health. In general, the results indicate that there is a significant relationship between social media use and self-reported mental health outcomes, which supports the significance of responsible digital practices and the consideration of its psychological consequences.

5. DISCUSSION

The current research was a survey-based study that set out to examine the correlation between the use of social media and self-reported mental health indicators. The results show that the increased levels of social media use, especially in terms of time spent, binge usage, and behavioral addiction, including time loss, correlate with the increased levels of anxiety, stress, and sleeping disturbances. These findings are consistent with other studies that have indicated that excessive digital usage may have quantifiable psychological consequences. As an example, researchers have found that the greater the use of social media is, the more the emotional distress and mental health difficulties, especially in young users (Saha et al., 2025). Likewise, recent empirical data confirms that the use of social networking sites is highly related to depressive and anxiety symptoms, which supports the trends in the current study (Shen et al., 2026).

The major evidence of this research is the correlation between the use of social media and sleep quality. The respondents who indicated increased levels of usage especially before bedtime also reported poorer sleep quality and more cases of sleep disturbances. One way to explain this relationship is that nighttime digital activities are disruptive as long-term exposure to screens disrupts circadian rhythms and delays the onset of sleep. Furthermore, being bombarded with stimulating information and notifications can also lead to cognitive arousal, and thus, one would find it hard to switch their mind and get a restful sleep. These results align with the general literature that has attributed negative effects of excessive digital connectivity to poor wellbeing and poor functioning in everyday life (Burger et al., 2026). The consequences of sleep disturbance are not only physical exhaustion, as sleep quality can be characterized by emotional instability and worse cognitive functioning.

The other significant feature of the findings is associated with the role of the social comparison in determining mental health outcomes. According to the study, those who regularly engage in the self-comparison with other people on social media are more likely to report more anxiety and mood-related issues. This finding can be supported by the current literature that proposes that negative self-assessment and emotional distress may result due to exposure to curated and idealized content. Social media sites tend to enhance upward comparisons whereby people view others as more accomplished or satisfied and thus help develop a sense of incompetence. In addition, the growing popularity of social media content that is related to mental health can also have an additional impact on users perceptions and emotional state, which in certain cases can increase psychological susceptibility (Bhuiyan et al., 2024). These dynamics reveal the need to consider the number of social media usage as well as the qualitative factors of user interaction.

The results also give an insight into the contribution of cognitive overload to the explanation of the association between social media use and mental health indicators. Cognitive resources can be high in terms of the constant exposure to large quantities of information, rapid switching and multitasking of information and content across mediums. This overload can cause a decrease in attention span, lack of focus and mental overload as indicated in the study results on the level of focus and stress level. This problem is further enhanced by behavioral addiction tendencies where users are likely to become compelled to stay involved despite undesired effects. The meta-analytic data supports the fact that digital problematic behaviors are associated with addictive signs and symptoms, including loss of control and compulsive use pattern (Afrashteh et al., 2023). These behavior patterns are the components of an over-engagement and mental stress loop.

Overall, the results of this study can be connected with the already existing literature, which demonstrates that the use of social media is a rather complicated phenomenon with a behavioral and psychological dimension. The findings indicate that the duration of use is not the sole factor that can produce a strong influence on the mental health outcomes but also some behaviors, such as binge use and social comparison. Although the research does not determine causality, the identified

relationships give valuable information on how digital activity is interrelated with self-reported psychological wellbeing. These data highlight the necessity to encourage the healthy and responsible use of social media, and raise awareness of its possible effects on mental health in the modern digital setting.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Practical Implications

The results imply that awareness campaigns on responsible use of social media and digital wellbeing should be implemented. Screen-time management, restricting night-time use, and decreasing social comparison behaviors are some of the strategies that can be used to reduce negative psychological outcomes. Since the use of social media is related to internalizing symptoms, the structured interventions aimed at changing behavioral patterns are necessary (Fassi et al., 2024; Metwally et al., 2025). Moreover, the social comparison tendencies can be addressed to minimize anxiety and enhance emotional wellbeing (Alaska et al., 2024).

6.2 Academic Implications

The current research adds to the body of research on behaviors by offering a survey-based data on the correlation between mental health indicators and social media use. It promotes new methods, which combine self-reported information with computational and observational techniques in mental health assessment (Ríssola et al., 2021).

7. CONCLUSION

The study has examined the relationship between social media use and self-reported mental health indicators using a survey-based, cross-sectional study. The results show that social media activity, time, binge use and patterns of behavior like loss of time and night-time use are related to higher anxiety, stress and sleep disturbances. These results confirm the primary objective of the study that is to identify patterns of usage and its relation to psychological and behavioral outcomes. Social comparison and mental activity are also identified as contributors to mental health experiences in the discussion. People who tend to compare themselves with other individuals or those who become immersed with the material of social media are more likely to report emotional distress. In addition, the fact that the given correlation between the utilization of social media and the disturbance of sleep exists demonstrates the increased importance of the digital conduct on the wellbeing in general. On balance, the paper finds that there is a significant relationship between the use of social media and self-reported mental health indicators. The findings are not causal but provide an excellent contribution to the behavioral and psychological aspects of online interactions. The results emphasize the necessity to promote responsible and conscious use of social media and increase awareness regarding its potential impact on mental health in the contemporary digital environment.

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