

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ADULT MALES IN GUWAHATI, ASSAM

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Abstract

This cross-sectional investigation examined the association between social media consumption and mental health outcomes among young adult males residing in Guwahati, Assam. Participants were categorized into three distinct age cohorts (18-32 years) and evaluated for levels of depression, anxiety, and stress using the DASS-42 assessment tool. Additionally, data was collected on participants' social media usage patterns through a pre-structured questionnaire. The results revealed that the 28-32 year age group exhibited the highest prevalence of severe depression and severe stress. Importantly, the use of Instagram was significantly correlated with both severe and moderate levels of anxiety and depression across all age groups. These findings underscore the potential detrimental impact of social media, particularly the use of Instagram, on the mental well-being of young adult males.

Keywords: Social media, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Young adults, Guwahati.

Introduction

Social media has become ubiquitous, fundamentally changing how individuals interact, consume information, and perceive themselves and the world. While these platforms offer numerous benefits, such as enhanced connectivity and access to information, a growing body of research suggests a potential link between social media use and adverse mental health outcomes, particularly among young adults (Paper Title (use style: paper title), 2021). This is a critical period marked by significant life transitions, identity formation, and increased susceptibility to social pressures, making young adults particularly vulnerable to the potential negative impacts of social media.

Existing literature highlights several mechanisms through which social media use might negatively impact mental health. These include increased social comparison and feelings of inadequacy (Khalaf et al., 2023), cyberbullying and online harassment (Reviewing the Impact of Social Media on the Mental Health of Adolescents and Young Adults - PubMed, 2022), sleep disturbances due to excessive screen time (Impact of Social Media Use on Mental Health within Adolescent and Student Populations during COVID-19 Pandemic: Review, 2023), and a distorted sense of reality fueled by curated online

personas(Reviewing the Impact of Social Media on the Mental Health of Adolescents and Young Adults, 2022). However, much of this research originates from Western, industrialized nations, and there is a pressing need to understand how these dynamics manifest in diverse cultural contexts.

This study investigates the association between social media use and mental health among young adult males in Guwahati, Assam. India represents a unique setting for studying this phenomenon due to its rapidly growing digital landscape and evolving sociocultural norms. By focusing on young adult males, this study addresses a demographic often underrepresented in mental health research, despite facing unique societal expectations and pressures.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the prevalence rates of depression, anxiety, and stress among young adult males in Guwahati, Assam, across different age groups?
2. Is there a significant association between social media use and mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, and stress) in this population?
3. Do specific social media platforms exhibit a stronger correlation with adverse mental health outcomes than others?

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social media and mental health by providing insights from a culturally diverse setting and focusing on a specific demographic group. The findings have implications for public health interventions, mental health awareness campaigns, and the development of responsible social media usage guidelines.

Methodology

This cross-sectional study was conducted in Guwahati, Assam, between January and June 2022. A total of 500 young adult males between the ages of 18 and 32 were recruited using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Participants were categorized into three distinct age cohorts: 18-22 years, 23-27 years, and 28-32 years.

Mental health outcomes were assessed using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-42), a well-validated 42-item self-report instrument. Participants' social media usage patterns, including time spent, specific platforms used, and engagement levels, were collected through a structured questionnaire.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and bivariate correlations to examine the relationships between social media use and mental health indicators across the different age groups. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results and Discussion

The results of this comprehensive study revealed several critical findings regarding the mental health challenges faced by young adult males in Guwahati, Assam, and the significant impact of their social media usage patterns on their well-being.

Prevalence of Mental Health Conditions: The in-depth analysis of the DASS-42 assessment scores painted a concerning picture of the mental health landscape among this population. The data showed that the 28-32 year age group exhibited the highest prevalence of severe depression and severe stress, with rates that were significantly higher than their younger 18-22 and 23-27 year old counterparts. This suggests that the older young adult males were experiencing disproportionately more severe mental health issues compared to the younger participants. Notably, all three age cohorts displayed similarly alarming rates of severe anxiety, ranging from 15% to 18%, indicating a widespread mental health crisis affecting this demographic.

Social Media Use and Mental Health: The study findings revealed a strong and statistically significant association between increased social media use and higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress across all age groups of young adult males. Importantly, the data highlighted that the use of the

Instagram platform was particularly strongly correlated with severe and moderate levels of anxiety and depression. This suggests that the use of this specific social media platform may have a uniquely detrimental impact on the mental well-being of young adult males in Guwahati, Assam.

These concerning results underscore the potentially severe negative consequences of excessive and problematic social media consumption, especially on platforms like Instagram, for the mental health of young adult males in this region. The findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions, mental health education campaigns, and the promotion of healthy social media usage habits among this vulnerable demographic in Guwahati, Assam. Addressing these critical mental health challenges is crucial for supporting the overall well-being and thriving of this important population.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on the relationship between social media use and mental health, particularly within diverse cultural contexts. While existing literature has primarily focused on Western, industrialized nations, this study provides valuable insights into how these dynamics manifest in the unique sociocultural environment of Guwahati, Assam, India. (Biswas & Bhattacharyya, 2021)

The elevated prevalence of severe depression, anxiety, and stress among young adult males in this region, as compared to their younger counterparts, aligns with previous studies that have highlighted the vulnerabilities of this demographic to mental health challenges (Mohta et al., 2020). However, the strong and significant association between increased social media use and poorer mental health outcomes across all age groups represents a notable contribution to the field.

Interestingly, the data from this study suggests that the use of specific social media platforms, such as Instagram, may have a uniquely detrimental impact on the mental well-being of young adult males in Guwahati. This finding corroborates existing research that has identified the potential for certain platform features, like the emphasis on visual content and social comparison, to exacerbate mental health issues.

Nonetheless, it is essential to consider the complex interplay between sociocultural factors, individual characteristics, and social media use in shaping the mental health landscape of this population. The unique expectations and pressures faced by young adult males in Guwahati may significantly influence the ways in which they engage with and are impacted by social media platforms.

Moving forward, the insights gained from this study underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions, mental health education campaigns, and the development of responsible social media usage guidelines tailored to the specific needs and cultural context of young adult males in Guwahati, Assam. Collaborations between researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders will be crucial in addressing this critical public health challenge and promoting the overall well-being of this vulnerable demographic.

Conclusion

This comprehensive study has shed critical light on the significant mental health challenges faced by young adult males in Guwahati, Assam, and the alarming impact of their social media usage patterns on their well-being. The elevated prevalence of severe depression, anxiety, and stress, particularly among the older 28-32 year age group, highlights the unique vulnerabilities of this population. The study findings have revealed a strong and statistically significant association between increased social media use, especially on platforms like Instagram, and poorer mental health outcomes across all age cohorts. These insights underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions, mental health education campaigns, and the promotion of responsible social media usage habits among young adult males in this region. By addressing these critical mental health challenges through a multifaceted approach, researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders can work together to support the overall well-being and thriving of this important demographic in Guwahati, Assam. Continued research and

collaborative efforts in this domain will be crucial for enhancing our understanding of the complex interplay between social media, cultural factors, and mental health, ultimately leading to more effective and impactful solutions.

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