



Significance of Emotional Intelligence for Social Media Users

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Abstract

The advancement of technology has increased the number of internet and social media users. Smart phone, laptops, tablets are extensively being used by the people to access their social media accounts. These social networking sites are a medium to connect with large number of people at a time irrespective of their location on the globe. You can talk or interact with anyone at any time. But excessive use of these social media sites can affect your mental health. Depression, anxiety, loneliness are some of the common problems observed in the people who get addicted with social media. These negative impacts can be limited by using emotional intelligence and making few changes in the life style. This article will discuss about the adverse affects of social media on the mental health and suggest some solutions to maintain emotional intelligence during this situation.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Social Media, Anxiety, Depression, Mental Health

Introduction

The number of internet users in India has grown to 658 billion in 2022 which is approximately 47% of the total population of India. At the same time the number of social media users in India is 467 million and the average time Indians spend on internet is 2.36 hours daily (India Social Media Statistics, 2022). Social media has become a part and parcel of our lives. In this era of social media the desire to be liked has grown. The number of likes and followers is considered to be a parameter to measure the popularity of a person. The social media platforms have become a medium to share one's life with others. Nearly a decade ago a small conversation with a friend or phone call to some near one was used to express our emotions and feelings, to share the instances of grief or joy in our daily life (Noel Dsouza, 2017). With the increasing usage of social media, the phone call and the conversations have been replaced by the status on Whatsapp or Facebook and reels on Instagram. The personal attachment has been left behind. We are so busy in seeking likes and comments on our post by the virtual friends that we are least bothered if we have shared an achievement or our success with our parents, siblings, relatives and friends.

The social networking sites are considered to be the most convenient and best method by the researchers to track the emotions of the people to carry out a study in an area. The traditional questionnaire system used by the researchers may lead to wrong results at times. The answers provided by the people are affected by factors like carelessness, insufficient knowledge of the grading system of the survey and emotions of the persons at the time

of survey (Xiangyu et.al ., 2019). The social media is a rich source of information by which the researchers can reach a large number of people in less time. The college and university students are the largest users of the social media. They use it to connect with people globally and to share and view immeasurable data. The posts on the social media have a significant impact on their lives. Though the social media may seem to be supporting but it gradually has a negative impact on the mental health (Darren and Hans, 2020). This article will cover two objectives: (i) Impact of social media on mental health and (ii) Measure to improve emotional intelligence of the social media users.

Negative Impact of Social Media

The social media usage has become a necessity. At the same time it has become a threat for the mental health and well being of its users globally (Charoensukmongkol ,2018). Initially social media was used by the people to relieve stress, to connect with people and to chat and interact with them. But with time listening to stress of others resulted in adding up to the stress of the listeners (Fleck & Johnson-Migalski, 2015). Though some of the studies (Halston et.al, 2019) do not agree that interactions on social media influence the mood of a person but subsequently many studies have come up that agree that bad and low moods are common among the social media users. Some of the researchers found that people who spend more time on social media are more susceptible to loneliness, depression, hopelessness and inferiority complex (Aalbers et.al, 2018) and they experience increased levels of jealousy, anxiety and stress due to regular exposure to negative content on the social media. Increased use of social media can provoke the users to develop self comparing attitude or build up unrealistic expectations either for themselves or others. This may lead to lowering of self-worth, self-esteem and self-worth (Iwamoto and Chun , 2019). The impact of a social media sites on its users may vary according to its features. Facebook and Instagram have a direct impact on anxiety, stress and depression as these sites are used to post personal content like photos and videos and in return wait for likes and comments from the people viewing it (Darren and Hans, 2020).

The people are so obsessed to receive likes and comments that they feel uneasy if the number of likes, views and comments are below their expectations. Some may even remove a picture if they do not receive a good response from the friends and followers. The people spend a lot of time clicking the best picture, editing it and promoting it with popular hash tags while posting the pictures on social media. The number of likes and comments seem to be parameters of achievements for them. Many youngsters tend to visit a shopping mall, a picnic spot or a movie not to enjoy or hang out with friends but with a desire to click a picture and post it so that people know about their lifestyle. The people go out of their way to create a persona so that they seem to be attractive and more people like them. They do not want to reveal the real part of them to their social media friends and followers. As the people spend a lot of time on preparing posts for social media and then monitor the response, they do not have time left for interacting with their family and friends. The level and kind of emotions that gets developed among the people due to social media may vary according to their age and desires. For example young adults may feel insecure after finding that their school or college fellows are getting married and having kids. Some of the youngsters may feel depressed after seeing the pictures of their friends rejoicing at a popular tourist location but they were not able to go there. This is a kind of phobia called as fear of missing out (FOMO). This phobia is not considered to be good for the self-esteem as it develops feeling of loneliness and envy. Girls have a different type of insecurity related to their presence on social media. They always want to look beautiful and fit with proper make up. In case there are some harsh comments on their profile page it has a direct effect on their mental health. The expectations may vary but one thing is clear that these expectations become the reason for their loneliness, anxiety and depression.

Emotional Intelligence while using Social Media

The social media affects our decision making too. For example, selection of a phone may depend on the advertisements on YouTube and the comments received by the customers on the online shopping sites. If we look at the issues that arise due to social media and its impact on the mental health of its users it is essential that we enhance our decisive capabilities so that our decisions do not get emotionally influenced due to the online activities. To avoid the influence of social networks or social media on our emotions we can work on four aspects of emotional intelligence: self awareness (People for Success, 2020), self management, social awareness and relationship management (Melissa, 2018).

- **Self Awareness:** Emotional self awareness is the ability to recognize and understand our own emotions. It helps to understand you better by recognizing the changes in emotions and being aware of how emotions may bring changes in behavior, performance and decisions. A person with emotional self awareness is able to know how the emotions like fear, anger and frustration start controlling you and how it causes change in your behavior with others (Hugo, 2021). A person who is self aware is able to analyze the reasons of the changes in behavior. Like for example if a person is upset due to a disturbing post on one of the social media platform, he may be able to identify it and control it so that he does not get over consumed with those emotions. Self awareness and self esteem are closely related. Self esteem is positive and negative evaluation of you. The social media users build up an image of themselves on social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram. They are not able to judge their own abilities but depend on the likes and comments of their followers. This results in low self esteem. Self awareness helps to maintain self esteem by valuing your thoughts, opinion and ideas (Ahmed M, 2016). A person with healthy self esteem will have a positive representation in both online and offline settings.
- **Self Management:** Self management is an ability to control your emotions in adverse and disturbing situations. It helps to remain calm in stressful situation and adjust behavior according to the environment (O. C. Ikpesu, 2017). The social media causes social overload among its users. As the number of friends goes on increasing the social load increases. It happens due to high social demands like taking care of the friends and followers on social media, entertaining them, listening to their problems, give attention to them spend time to interact with them. All these activities lead to emotional exhaustion (C Maier, 2012). A person, who acquires the quality of self management, will be able to control his reactions and make clear headed decisions in difficult circumstances. As a self regulated person is able to adapt himself to the situations, he will be unaffected by the discomfort that is caused due to disturbing features of social media.
- **Social Awareness:** Social media can have both positive and negative effects on social awareness of an individual. The positive effect is that a person is able to connect with many people, understand them and learn from them that may be helpful in developing a higher level of understanding towards perspective of others (S. Gaun et.al, 2019). On the other hand the negative effect of social media is that, it weakens the ability of its users to empathize with others (W. AbdelKader and M. Elnakeeb ,2017). Some of the reasons that reduce empathy among the social media users are : (i) The interpersonal and physical distance during online interaction reduces the sense of responsible conduct due to which a person may neglect the feeling of others. (ii) Overexposure to global tragedies on the social media creates numbing effect on the individuals. (iii) The users create an entire universe of the self on social media that leads to self-centeredness. (iv) As the individuals spend more time on social media they are left with either less or no time for face to face interaction with others (S. Konrath, 2012). Social awareness should be

maintained on the social media as it allows to connect well with others, figure out what is important for the people they are speaking with and to develop leadership qualities.

- **Relationship Management:** Relationship management can be defined a skills that helps you to manage and maintain positive relationships with the people that may include family, colleagues, relatives, employees and friends. The people with whom we spend most of our time leave a great impact on us. We therefore prefer company of the people who are instrumental in creating an environment where growth comes naturally. Social media can connect you with the relationships that are rewarding and also with those that may disturb your life. Higher number of friends can be associated with strong social support; feeling connected and contented in their social relationships (V. Pornsakulvanich, 2018). On the other hand, the users of social media are more exposed to peer-pressure. The activity on the social media influences the ability of an individual to think independently. Exposure to unhealthy environment on the social media creates a feeling of avoiding people and preventing chances of interaction with them (N. Zietel-Bank & T. Ute, 2014). Increased consumption of friend's content can increase the chance of loneliness. The people are busy in viewing each and every post of their friends, comparing the likes received on your friend's post with your post, checking the phone on every notification due to which they are unable to connect with others outside the social media circle.

Solutions

So, here are a couple of things you can try to maintain emotional intelligence while using social media are:

- **Limit usage:** The best solution in this regard will be to limit the time you spend on social media. You don't need to use all the social media sites. Schedule a time for using it. Mute the notifications. Avoid checking phones every minute and keep the phone away from you during night to avoid using social media as first activity after you wake up.
- **Collect Memories not likes:** Spend time with your family and friends. Try to enjoy the movie, enjoy the meals in the restaurant, try to experience the beauty of the tourist place you have gone. Leave aside your phone for a moment and experience the love of the people with you. Though pictures are a beautiful way of creating memories, but limit clicking of pictures.
- **Take Care of Your Body:** Engage yourself in activities like walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, dancing, Yoga or any other exercise routine that interests you. All these activities release endorphins that strengthen wellness, reduce negativity and makes you feel more accomplished and in control. Try to have a sound sleep as it recharges mental and emotional energy and helps in preventing anxiety and depression.
- **Give time to you Hobby:** Try to devote some time to enrich your hobby. People can have different hobbies like dancing, painting, reading, signing etc. Give time to yourself and your hobby. Hobbies are opportunities to enhance life and de-stress yourself due to which the risks of depression are reduced.
- **Meditate:** Meditation is considered to be a simple and fast way to reduce stress. It gives you a sense of peace, calm and balance that can improve your emotional well being and your overall health. Meditation helps in diminishing the effects of depression and anxiety, improving concentration and overall psychological health.

Conclusion

Social media has become a necessity for number of people. When social media usage becomes an addiction it can have adverse effects on your health like anxiety, stress, depression and loneliness. Having knowledge of emotional intelligence and using it to avoid the ill effects of social media can ensure a healthy life for everyone. In this article we tried to study the negative effects of social media on mental health of its users and suggested methods to reduce those effects by using emotional intelligence. Seek support of your family and friends or approach a counselor.

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