

# Influences of Social Media on Omani Youth's Health

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## Abstract

*The study focused on the influences of social media on Omani Youth and their lifestyle. The challenges associated with social media may be especially risky for young people who are already experiencing mental health difficulties, as suggested by the bidirectional relationship between the use of electronic media and a decrease in psychological well-being. Social media causes depression and anxiety from stress. Depression and emotional instability are some of the main psychological problems shown in many youths. There is a need for public awareness campaigns and social policy initiatives that promote nurturing home and school environments that foster resilience as youth navigate the challenges of adolescence in today's world. The youth should avoid excessive use of social media. They should be balanced in their life and give proper time to other activities that will help them to develop their capabilities.*

**Keywords:** *Social Media, Health, Youth, Psychology, Lifestyle.*

## Introduction

Social media could impact youth, especially youth life in positive and negative ways. Social media might sometimes seem like just a new set of cool tools for involving young people and the emergence of social media potentially has a bigger impact than that. It impacts young people growing up in an age where media is not about broadcast content from the TV but about interactivity, multimedia, and multitasking. And it impacts organizations that need to remain relevant to a new generation, and who find their work and structures being changed by changing communication tools and patterns of communications (Anthony, 2009). Social media's impact on youths globally on both good and bad and it applies to Omani youth as well. Omani youth are also influenced by social media which has enhanced the exposure of the people and created more awareness among youth. (Shabir, et al., 2014). Social media is becoming more and more popular day by day. Using social media websites is one of the most common routine activities of today's youth. The growth of social networking technology has been exponential in recent years (Al-Hinai, et al., 2015). Social networking sites focus on building social relations among people by allowing them to share information including photos, videos, personal interests, and activities, use blogging to express their views, and so on (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

### *Purpose & Method*

Digital devices have made our lives easy but complicating it is perhaps beyond control. Today our social interactions have been reduced to impersonal, mobile contacts or through other electronic media available. Social media is steadily but surely impacting the way we live and communicate with one another. (Subrahmanian, 2017). The burst usage of social media has brought many opportunities, changes, and challenges into our world. The impact of social media can be social, psychological, and economic. For many societies, the social impact is a major concern since these technologies with their rapid spread have succeeded in influencing the attitudes of various groups of individuals.

The role that social media played in the recent unrest in the Arab world is an example of such an impact. Oman, like all other countries, is also facing the same challenge (Renjith Kumar, et al., 2023). This dramatic growth in the use of social media will bring with it several influences on the social system in Oman (Al-Hinai, et al., 2015). Social media plays a major role in the youth population in Omani society. The dramatic growth in the use of social networking media will bring with it several influences on the social system in Oman. Most Omanis spend more than six hours daily on social media. The excessive usage of social media has become a growing phenomenon and a controversial issue. Omani youth are also influenced by social media

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which has enhanced the exposure of the people and created more awareness among youth. However, the influence of social media on Omani youth's health is not yet explored. It is very important to study and understand the impact of the rapidly growing social media on this group. An exploratory study is intended to understand and explore the influences of social media on Omani's Youth lifestyle and to create awareness among the youth regarding the health issues in using social media. This paper is a research adventure to identify the most recognized challenges in the usage of social media among the youth population and analyze how the Omani Government supports the youth population to have a better social life.

### *Significance of the Study*

The usage of social media is important for youth since that provides a bigger platform for them to discuss, analyze, and present certain information that is of national importance. At the same, it should not take their precious time just discuss certain issues that make a lesser contribution to their career development. Thus, there must be a streamlining process that defines the effective utilization of social media platforms. This study will address the issue of streamlining the use of social media in its importance perspective. Many studies reveal that excessive use of social media would cause certain distress in the psychological behavior and lifestyle of the youth. Thus, it would present a broader spectrum of mental health issues that the youth would be exposed to due to the excessive use of social media platforms (Çam & Isbulan, 2012, Palyan, 2019).

Awareness is a must for the youth on the use of social media platforms. The regulative authorities would get a broader picture of the importance of awareness to be created on the use of social media and about the ways and means to be used for creating awareness. Labor Productivity improvement has been the core of the vision 2040 of the Sultanate of Oman. Streamlining the use of social media platforms must be given due recognition as time spent on such a platform could be diverted to productivity improvement processes. This study is expedient to apply social media in the right direction for Omani youth and create cognizance among youth that proper use of social media becomes a solid tool to educate, inform, and groom the mentality level of youth social media to refine their living style of public, especially for youth.

### **Literature Review**

Social networking platforms a unique because they combine both different methods of communication and different kinds of content (chats, video, visual images, audio), which gives this technology a distinctive entity compared to traditional technologies. The examination of behavioral assumptions as a foundation of teenagers' choices can provide an interesting insight into how people interact with social networking sites (DiMaggio, et al., 2001).

Social media has been described by Cortesi (2013) as an important part of a young person's life and a platform for experimentation, creative self-expression, and identity formation (Ocansey, et al., 2016). Many social networks have nowadays emerged, and they reshape people's communication, interaction, cooperation, and even their learning process (Çam & Isbulan, 2012). Murray (2008) argued that social networks and software in today's societies have changed both the way people communicate with each other and knowledge-sharing. To give an example of this issue, the time that users spend on social networks has now been two to threefold higher than that when such networks emerged. Many people of all ages participate in social networks with different aims and the number of users who attend online social networks is continuously increasing every day, but it is very high in the case of youth. The survey conducted by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2018) shows that 90% of the youth population has used social media. 75% report having at least one active social media account and 51% report visiting the social media sites at least daily. Most of the youth population's day starts with social media activities.

The study supports the finding of Kulandairaj (2014) that social media is very beneficial to the youth population in connecting to peers, connecting with potential employers, and recruiters, to showcase their

creativity and skills, a great way of enjoying the time. The study found that social media is very helpful in identifying new friends, communicating with each other with similar interests and preferences, sharing information, and keeping updated on the latest developments, at the same time it is also found that social media consumes more time and is not trustworthy.

A survey was done by Oxygen Media and Lightspeed Research Center among girls (aged 18 to 34) and they found out that 34% of the participants confessed that they log in to Facebook as soon as they wake up every morning whereas 39% identify themselves as Facebook addicts (Abhijit, 2011). Specialists remarked that the desire to be on social networks is superior to the desire for sleep and rest, pointing to a social disaster, and, they discussed social media addiction is more harmful than smoking and drug addiction (The Telegraph, 2012). r Studies showed that over 21 million teenagers have access to and actively use the Internet on a daily or regular basis globally approximately 85 percent (Al-Hinai, et al., 2015; Donner J. and Walton M., 2013).

Çam & Isbulan (2012) summarized the condition as involving excessive mental preoccupation with social media through the Internet, coupled with repetitive thoughts of limiting or controlling this use and a subsequent failure to prevent access. Excessive mental preoccupation with internet usage for social media, repetitive thoughts about limiting or controlling the use, failure to prevent the desire for access, continuation of using the internet through functionality being ruined at various levels, spending more and more time on the internet, craving for using the net when no access is available are the remarkable problems with the internet usage. Through this fast growth and unlimited features, social networking sites open to teenagers' wide horizons of virtual expression, freedom, and connectivity. Yet these same features can also bring many social challenges for society, parents, and teenagers themselves (Al Hinai, et al., 2015). Also, indirectly the youths were forced to be involved in social media due to peer pressure rather than the real desire, and later they become an addict.

## Discussion

Digital technologies have become a universal feature of young people's lives (Nesi, 2020). The Internet has been able to construct a new world in which people start creating society. It resulted in the invention of social media websites (AlHinai, et al., 2015). Social media platforms are significant places for young people to form identities, and create and sustain relationships (Brough, et al., 2020; Way & Malvini Redden, 2017).

Social media is an innovative idea with a very brilliant opportunity with additional scope for advancements (Akram and Kumar, 2017). Social media have been known as a platform to build social relations among individuals. These have made it possible to easily connect with the world and these applications have attracted millions of users, plenty of whom have integrated these into their everyday practices. Social media have thus changed the way people connect across the world (Ali, 2016 Haythornthwaite, 2005). The impact of social networks on young people is significant. Due to the advancement in technology, people are pressured to accept different lifestyles. Social media can assist young people to become more socially capable (Singh, et al, 2017). Social media is inevitable among youth nowadays.

Social Media sites have been known as a platform to build social relations among individuals. This has especially been so for individuals who for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. However, recently the excessive use of social media among youth has been reported due to internet access. The amount of time spent on social media has dramatically increased over the last few years since electronics have become popular in our everyday lives (Valkenburg and Peter, 2007 & Hanna, et al., 2011). Social media has become a major part of our daily lives and in this way, the boundaries between online and real-world communities are rapidly stretching if not completely fading (Ocansey, et al., 2016). The excessive use of social media in turn has been reported to affect the performance of individuals in real life (Arif, et al., 2014). The rise in the use of social media by the youth has several threats and consequences (Ocansey, et al., 2016).

Social media is inevitable among youth nowadays. This craze of social media has led to a host of questions regarding its impact on society, while it is agreed that social media affects people's lifestyles, it is an ongoing

process to identify the nature of these influences in every society and country, especially on youth (Jangra, 2016). Social media is a useful tool for youth, so its use is essential to get information and knowledge. Positive use of social media can develop the youth's academic career, skills, better living style, to adopt new trends, fashion, anthropology so on (Shabir, et al., 2017). Evidence from a variety of cross-sectional, longitudinal, and empirical studies implicates social media use will increase mental distress, and other health impacts among youth; there is a dose-response relationship, and the effects appear to be greatest among youth (Çam & Isbulan, 2012, Palyan, 2019).

Many social networks have emerged nowadays, and they reshape people's communication, interaction, cooperation, and even their learning process. Social media could be able to impact youth lives in positive and negative ways. Youth have become addicted to various social media platforms, social networking can impact users physically, psychologically, attitudinally, and/or socially. The youth population is more involved in social media than in other walks of life Heavy usage of social network sites can lead to symptoms of substance-related addictions including salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, relapse, and problems with behavioral addictions.

Youth population who use social media excessively have reported feeling unproductive and distracted in school, universities, at work, and from relationships (Arif, et al., 2014). Instead of focusing on work, school, and family, the youth today spend the majority of their time online. As a consequence of spending time on social media, the youth population tends to neglect obligations. This has been reported to negatively impact the lives of the youth and their relationships with families (Ali, 2016). The impact of social media utilization on interpersonal connections is changing the way individuals interact in face-to-face communications. Social media is a two-edged sword. It is more useful for modern society, but the hidden risks and challenges are high. The youth population should strike a balance in using the latest technological inventions in social media without affecting their health, social behavior, and career growth (Renjith Kumar, et al., 2023).

Recent statistics by NapoleonCat (2020) about the Sultanate of Oman found that there were 2.65 million Facebook users which accounted for 50% of its entire population, 1.36 million Instagram users which accounted for 25.9% of its entire population, 8.49 Lakhs of Messenger users which accounted for 16.1% of its entire population. 5.34 Lakhs of LinkedIn users accounted for 10.1% of its entire population. The recent data released by the National Centre of Statistics and Information; it is stated that the Sultanate had a total of 46.7% of youth in the age group 18 to 30 years (Oman Observer, 2018). The most important thing to be noticed is that among social media users, young people were the largest user group.

According to a report by the National Centre of Statistics and Information (NCSI), most Omanis spend more than six hours daily on social media and WhatsApp is the most common social media app., When we compare this with the world average of 3 hours daily. The NCSI survey conducted last year was mainly focused on the behavior of Omanis on social media. The data showed that 94% of Omanis own or use social media accounts. The most common is WhatsApp, which is used by 93% of social media users, which is followed by YouTube by 71% of social media users, and Instagram by 50%. The survey indicated that the average daily use of social media was at least six hours per day and that the most frequent use of social media happens in the late evening (8:00 pm to 12:00 am). The results of the survey also revealed that on average, the Omani citizen has up to three accounts on different social networking sites (Times of Oman, 2019). Looking at the average human life expectancy of 77 years and assuming people start using it from 10 years old, on average a person may spend around 16 years of his life on social media (Al-Hinai, et al., 2015). The excessive usage of social media has become a growing phenomenon and a controversial issue. People have become addicted to various social media platforms, social networking can impact users physically, psychologically, attitudinally, and/or socially (Andreassen, et al, 2012).

On the other side in the last decade, increasing mental distress and treatment for mental health conditions among youth has paralleled a steep rise in the use of social media by the youth population (Çam & Isbulan, 2012; Palyan, 2019). Concerns have been raised about social media platforms having been deliberately designed in highly sophisticated ways that use behavioral psychology, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence to promote behavioral reinforcement and behavioral addiction. Social media causes depression and anxiety from the stress produced by constantly trying to project an unrealistic and unachievable perception of

perfection within your social network (Amedie, 2015). Scientific evidence suggests that heavy usage of social network sites can lead to symptoms of substance-related addictions including salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, relapse, and problems with behavioral addictions (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Numerous studies have identified linkages between social media use and negative outcomes such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, compulsive behavior, and narcissism around the world (Andreassen, et al, 2012, Al-Hinai, et al., 2015). Several studies have found an association between social media use and depression, anxiety, sleep problems, eating issues, eye strain, social withdrawal or lack of sleep, increased suicide risk, and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (Palyan, 2019, Shabir, et al., 2014).

The challenges associated with social media may be perilous for young people who are already experiencing mental health difficulties, as suggested by the bidirectional relationship between the use of electronic media and a decrease in psychological well-being (Abi-Jaoude, et al., 2020). The dramatic growth in the use of social networking media will bring with it several influences on the social system in Oman mainly in youth. However, the impact of social media on Omani youth's health is not yet explored. To fill the information gap, the current study is planned to find out the role and the impact of social media on Omani youth's health.

Depression and emotional instability are some of the main psychological problems shown in many youths. There is a need for public awareness campaigns and social policy initiatives that promote nurturing home and school environments that foster resilience as youth navigate the challenges of adolescence in today's world (Abi-Jaoude, et al., 2020). The youth should avoid excessive use of social media. They should be balanced in their life and give proper time to other activities that will help them to develop their capabilities. The most important issue is to balance between allowing the use of social media and preventing harm and educating them on how to use social networking sites responsibly among the youth population in Oman. The authorities in Oman would be able to make policies and regulations on the use of social media platforms so that youngsters would be able to devote their time to productivity improvements.

The Authorities would be able to make policies and regulations on the use of social media platforms so that youngsters would be able to devote their time to productivity improvements. One of the strategic directions of Oman Vision 2040 is the national talent with dynamic capabilities and skills that are competitive locally and internationally. There is a huge scope to utilize the youth population of Oman's talents in nation-building. Generations Z would get a clear understanding of the use of social media platforms and the impact of using them excessively. The strategic direction of Oman Vision 2040 states that community awareness will increase regarding the concept of health, the recommendations will insist on clear awareness of mental health issues that they would get due to excessive use of social media platforms. Thus, it is expected to yield a minimum utilization of national resources. Strategic reinforcement strategies are required to reduce the amount of time spent on social media. Well, a well-defined lifestyle and cutting-edge information technology mix would be made known to the youth population of the Sultanate of Oman.

The Government should provide guidelines for the Omani youth population to create cognizance among youth that proper use of social media becomes a solid tool to educate, inform, and groom the mentality level of youth social media to refine their living style of public, especially for Omani youth. The government should develop a guideline for usage of social media to promote responsible social media usage and reduce negative impact on health. Every individual should be encouraged to have offline social interaction which will reduce the negative impact. Social media awareness campaigns can be organized by every higher education institution to educate the youth population about the potential negative impact of social media on their health. Labor Productivity improvement has been the core in the vision 2040 of the Sultanate of Oman. Streamlining the use of social media platforms must be given due recognition as time spent on such a platform could be diverted to productivity improvement processes (Muthuraman, et al., 2023).

## Conclusion

Awareness of social media usage will start accumulating once the respondents of the data collection instrument start responding to the questions asked. The data collection instruments are expected to address/highlight some of the core mental health issues of using social media extensively. So, the respondents would be exposed to such information, which in turn creates awareness of such issues. The study will help the youth population of Oman on the most important issue is to balance between allowing the use of social media and preventing harm, and to educate them on how to use social networking sites responsibly. The study tries to provide guidelines for the youth population of Oman on the effective utilization of social media platforms so that they do not excessively use them and become addicted to them. Limits on using social media would be defined and the youth population of Oman would know about such limits.

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