

The influence of Social Networking Sites on the Well-Being of Young Adults in the Sultanate of Oman

Subrahmanian Muthuraman¹, Mohammed Al Haziazi², Amani Al Balushi³, Arun Kumar.S⁴

Abstract

The rapid increase in the use of social networking sites is expected to significantly impact the social system of Oman, particularly among its youth. This study aims to evaluate how social media affects the well-being of young adults in the Sultanate of Oman. Utilizing a survey research design, a structured questionnaire was developed, focusing on factors such as usage habits, engagement, enjoyment, as well as the positive, negative, and behavioural impacts associated with social networking sites as independent variables, and the overall influence of these platforms as the dependent variable. The study included 138 young adults aged 18 to 25 who identified themselves as social media users. Results demonstrated that all six independent variables contributed statistically significantly to the prediction of the dependent variable, with $p < .05$, indicating that the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The findings underscore the need to promote the effective use of social media platforms. The study emphasizes the importance of community stakeholders providing moral support to educate young adults about the potential long-term negative impacts of social media usage. Additionally, young individuals are encouraged to perform self-assessments of their usage habits to identify early signs of technology addiction. As outlined in Oman Vision 2040, raising community awareness regarding health issues is crucial. The study specifically advocates for a greater understanding of the physical and mental health challenges that may result from excessive social media use and strongly recommends that young Omanis practice responsible use of social networking sites.

Keywords: *Social Media, SNS, Technology Addiction, Wellbeing.*

Introduction

Today, social networking sites use is nearly universal among teens. Young adults people see digital environments as important spaces for youth to connect with their friends and interact with others who share similar interests (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Turel and Serenko (2012) theorize that enjoyment on social network sites or an individual's intrinsic motivation for using social networking sites simply because of their emotional rewards, is what leads to high social networking sites engagement. Social network site operators may want to promote an enjoyable user experience for driving high engagement (Turel & Serenko, 2012).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to assess the influence of social network sites of young adults' wellbeing in the Sultanate of Oman and to investigate the relationship between influencing factors such as habit, engagement, enjoyment, positive impact, negative impact and behavior impact faced by the young adults while using the social network sites in the Sultanate and the wellbeing of young adults. Finally suggest the young adults on the usage of social network sites in the Sultanate of Oman.

Model for the study

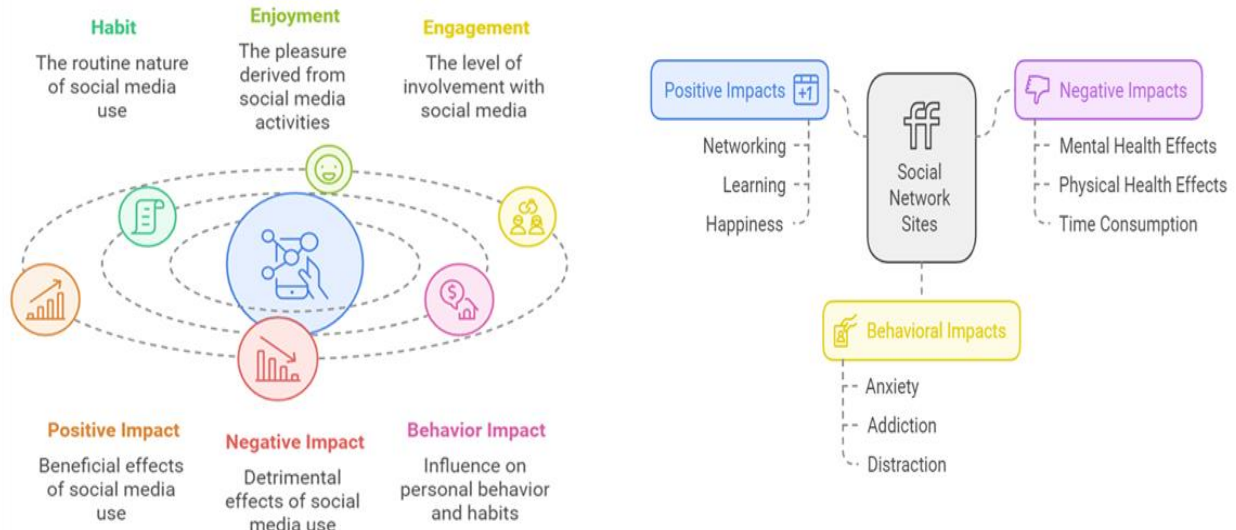
The dynamics of social network sites can be categorised as habitual social networking sites use, engagement with social networking sites, and enjoyment on social networking sites using the corresponding subscales developed by Turel and Serenko (2012) along with the impacts which can be classified as positive, negative and behaviour impact were each assessed.

¹ Faculty of Business Studies, Arab Open University, Oman

² Faculty of Business Studies, Arab Open University, Oman

³ Faculty of Business Studies, Arab Open University, Oman

⁴ SRM Institute of Science & Technology, Kattankulathur, India



Habitual Use of Social Networking Sites

Habitual use of social network sites refers to the regular and often automatic engagement of individuals with social networking platforms. For young adults, habitual use can lead to both positive and negative outcomes, such as increased opportunities for social interaction or the risk of developing unhealthy dependency on these platforms (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Engagement with Social Networking Sites

Engagement with social network sites encompasses the variety of interactions users have on these platforms, including posting content, liking, commenting, and sharing. Higher levels of engagement can foster a sense of community and belonging but may also expose young adults to cyberbullying or negative social comparisons (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009).

Enjoyment of Social Networking

Enjoyment relates to the positive emotions and satisfaction derived from using social networking sites. Research indicates that positive engagement can enhance well-being by facilitating social connections and self-expression, although excessive use may counteract these benefits (Grieve et al., 2020).

Positive impacts of social networking sites include enhanced networking opportunities, access to educational resources, and increased levels of happiness. Conversely, negative effects can manifest as mental health issues, physical health concerns, time consumption, and behavioural impacts such as anxiety, addiction, and distractions.

Positive Impacts

Networking: Social media platforms allow young adults to connect with peers, fostering friendships and a sense of belonging (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). **Learning:** Young adults can access diverse educational resources and engage in collaborative learning experiences online (Bennett et al., 2012).

Happiness: Interaction on social networks can enhance feelings of happiness and well-being through social support and shared experiences (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009).

Negative Impacts

Mental Health Issues: Excessive use of social media has been linked to increased rates of anxiety and depression among young adults (Twenge et al., 2019). Physical Health Issues: Sedentary behavior associated with prolonged social media use can lead to physical health problems, including obesity (Saint-Maurice et al., 2019). Time Consumption: Young adults often spend significant time on social networks, which can detract from academic responsibilities and real-life interactions (Ritholtz et al., 2018).

Behavioural Impacts

Anxiety: Social media can contribute to anxiety, particularly through cyberbullying and fear of missing out (FOMO) (Przybylski et al., 2013). Addiction: Some young adults may develop addictive behaviors related to social media use, impacting their daily lives and responsibilities (Andreassen, 2015). Distraction: Social media can be a major source of distraction, affecting concentration and productivity in academic settings (Ravichandran & Manuel, 2021).

Methodology

The study employed a survey research design utilizing a structured questionnaire. The data used in this research are primary and secondary. The primary data was collected through a closed ended questionnaire and the secondary data obtained through various literature related to this research. The questionnaire was designed by focusing on habit, engagement, enjoyment, positive impact, negative impact and behaviour impact faced by the young adults in the Sultanate of Oman as independent factors and influence of social network sites as dependent factor. Cronbach Alpha value was calculated, and it was found to be 0.839 and the total numbers of questions were 34. The values were found to be in the range of 0.60 and 0.90, hence it might be suggested that all the scales met the reliability condition (Marcoulides & Hershberger, 2014). This study was conducted quantitatively using survey. An online cross-sectional survey was conducted using a convenience sampling method. Participants were young adult who are 18–25-year-olds and identified themselves as social media users. One hundred and eighty university students consented to participate and started the online survey in the Sultanate of Oman. The final sample was comprised of 138 samples were taken for the final analysis and hypothesis testing. After collecting the responses, the data analysis was carried out in descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results & Findings

Table 1 - Number of social platforms used by the respondents

| Response | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|-----------|------------------|------------|
| 1 | 5 | 3.6% |
| 2 | 19 | 13.8% |
| 3 | 41 | 29.7% |
| 4 | 38 | 27.6% |
| 5 | 14 | 10.1% |
| 6 & above | 21 | 15.2% |
| Total | 138 | 100% |

As per the survey data, in the Sultanate, 29.7% of the respondents use 3 social platforms on an average followed by 4 social platforms (27.6%) and 6 and above social platforms by 15.2% respondents respectively

Table 2 - Time spends on social platforms

| Response | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Less than 1 hour per day | 6 | 4.3% |
| 1-2 hours per day | 21 | 15.2% |
| 2-3 hours per day | 25 | 18.1% |
| 3-4 hours per day | 34 | 24.7% |
| More than 4 hours per day | 52 | 37.7% |
| Total | 138 | 100% |

The young adults in the Sultanate of Oman spend more than 4 hours (37.7%) on the social platform in a day followed by 3-4 hours per day by 24.7% of respondents which is quite high. The young adults should be aware of the impact of screen presence on their health.

Table 3 - Purpose of using Social Platform

| Response | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------|
| Learning | 27 | 9.9% |
| Business | 51 | 18.8% |
| Networking | 70 | 25.7% |
| Entertainment | 73 | 26.8% |
| Information Gathering | 51 | 18.8% |
| Total | 272 | 100% |

* Multiple responses by respondents

The young adults are using social platforms for entertainment purposes (26.8%) followed by networking (25.7%) and then the young adults use it for information gathering and business purposes each 18.8%.

Table 4 - Social Network Sites Accounts

| Response | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| Facebook | 21 | 7.4% |
| Instagram | 12 | 4.2% |
| X (Twitter) | 31 | 10.9% |
| Snapchat | 35 | 12.3% |
| TikTok | 50 | 17.6% |
| YouTube | 40 | 14.1% |
| Other social media | 95 | 33.5% |
| Total | 284 | 100% |

* Multiple responses by respondents

The table above shows that apart from Facebook, Instagram, X, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, the young adults use many other social network sites (33.5%) in their daily lives. Many networking sites are growing like mushroom every day. The young adults are attracted towards such sites.

Table 5 - Activities neglected because of social network sites

| Response | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Exercising | 31 | 13.1% |
| Studying | 51 | 21.4% |
| Socializing with friends | 46 | 19.3% |

| | | |
|-------------------|-----|-------|
| Sleeping | 58 | 24.4% |
| Hobbies/Interests | 52 | 21.8% |
| Total | 238 | 100% |

* Multiple responses by respondents

The above table show that the young adult is neglecting sleep (24.4%) because of using social networks followed by studies (21.4%) and hobbies (21.8%). It is very important for the young adults to understand that the social network sites impact greatly their health and mental wellbeing.

Table 6 - Break from social network sites to improve well-being

| Response | No of Respondent | Percentage |
|----------|------------------|------------|
| Yes | 35 | 25.4% |
| No | 34 | 24.6% |
| Planning | 69 | 50% |
| Total | 138 | 100% |

It is very clear that 50% of the young adults are planning to take a break from social network sites and 24.6% of them are wished to continue using the social network sites.

Table 7 – Impact of the Social Network Sites

| Impact | Factors | Yes | No | Sometimes | Score | Rank |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-----|----|-----------|-------|------|
| Positive Impact | Networking | 43 | 29 | 66 | 1.83 | 1 |
| | Learning | 4 | 41 | 93 | 1.36 | 3 |
| | Happiness | 34 | 37 | 67 | 1.76 | 2 |
| Negative Impact | Affects the mental health | 34 | 46 | 58 | 1.83 | 3 |
| | Affects the physical health | 37 | 49 | 52 | 1.89 | 1 |
| | Time Consuming | 38 | 46 | 54 | 1.88 | 2 |
| Behaviour Impact | Anxiety | 27 | 48 | 63 | 1.74 | 2 |
| | Addiction | 40 | 45 | 53 | 1.91 | 1 |
| | Distraction | 22 | 53 | 63 | 1.70 | 3 |

The positive impact of using social network sites was analysed using weighted average and it was evident that networking was ranked one and followed by happiness. The third rank was learning. It shows that the learning thorough social network sites is very low by the young adults. While analysing the negative impact it was evident that affecting the physical health was ranked one and followed by affecting the mental health. The third rank was time consuming. The young adult was not worrying about spending time in social network sites and at the same time they understand their physical and mental health is getting affected. When come to behaviour impact, addition was ranked one followed by anxiety and distraction. It shows that the young adults are aware that they are addicted to the social network sites, which needs more attention for the wellbeing of the young adults in the Sultanate of Oman.

Relationship between influencing factors of social network sites and wellbeing of young adults

Karl-Pearson correlation analysis is carried out to find the relationship between the influencing factors of social network sites and wellbeing of young adults

H₀: There is no significant relationship between influencing factors of social network sites and wellbeing of young adults

H₁: There is a significant relationship between influencing factors of social network sites and wellbeing of young adults

Table 8 - Relationship between influencing factors of social network sites and wellbeing of young adults

| Influencing factors of social network sites | Wellbeing of young adults | Statistical Inference |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Habit | R = 0.528 | N= 138, P=0.001 |
| Engagement | R = 0.497 | N= 138, P=0.001 |
| Enjoyment | R = 0.482 | N= 138, P=0.001 |
| positive Impact | R = 0.512 | N= 138, P=0.001 |
| Negative Impact | R = 0.459 | N= 138, P=0.001 |
| Behaviour Impact | R = 0.519 | N= 138, P=0.001 |

It is inferred from the above table that there is a significant relationship between the influencing factors of social network sites and the wellbeing of young adults at 1% level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It is observed from the table that all the influencing factors of social network sites are positive and highly correlated with and wellbeing of young adults.

Friedman Test

To determine the significant differences among the influencing factors of social network sites

Table 9 - Friedman Test

| Influencing factor | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Rank | Test Statistics ^a | |
|--------------------|--------|----------------|-----------|------------------------------|--------|
| Habit | 3.0000 | .92884 | 2.65 | N | 138 |
| Engagement | 3.5000 | .80440 | 3.71 | Chi-Square | 40.621 |
| Enjoyment | 3.7308 | .86581 | 4.37 | df | 5 |
| Positive Impact | 3.4231 | .84821 | 3.79 | Asymp. Sig. | .000 |
| Negative Impact | 3.2692 | .76991 | 3.33 | a. Friedman Test | |
| Behaviour Impact | 3.1923 | .97092 | 3.15 | | |

There is a statistically significant difference in the mean ranks among the related groups, indicating notable differences among the various influencing factors of social networking sites, including Habit, Engagement, Enjoyment, Positive Impact, Negative Impact, and Behavioural Impact. The results clearly demonstrate that each of these factors is distinct and has its own influence on the well-being of young adults. It is essential for every young adult to recognize how each factor significantly impacts their well-being, enabling them to address challenges that arise from using social networking sites and maintain good health.

Multiple Regression

In this study the researcher tried to explain the influence of social network sites from habit, engagement, enjoyment, positive impact, negative impact and behaviour impact faced by the young adults in the Sultanate of Oman (Refer Table 10, 11 & 12)

Table 10 - Multiple Regression - Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .778 ^a | .606 | .553 | .50609 |

a Predictors: (Constant), habit, engagement, enjoyment, positive impact, negative impact and behaviour impact

Table 11 - Multiple Regression – ANOVA (b)

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 21.097 | 9 | 5.274 | 8.345 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 200.347 | 169 | .632 | | |
| | Total | 221.444 | 173 | | | |

a Predictors: (Constant), habit, engagement, enjoyment, positive impact, negative impact and behaviour impact

b Dependent Variable: influence of social network sites

Table 12 - Multiple Regression – Coefficients (a)

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval for B | |
|-------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.618 | .462 | | 5.668 | .000 | 1.688 | 3.549 |
| | Habit | .021 | .114 | .025 | .181 | .857 | -.210 | .251 |
| | Engagement | .316 | .146 | .406 | 2.162 | .036 | .022 | .611 |
| | Enjoyment | -.060 | .118 | -.069 | -.511 | .612 | -.298 | .177 |
| | Positive Impact | .456 | .154 | .511 | 2.966 | .005 | .147 | .766 |
| | Negative Impact | -.255 | .136 | -.259 | -1.873 | .068 | -.528 | .019 |
| | Behaviour Impact | -.122 | .128 | -.129 | -.953 | .345 | -.379 | .135 |
| | | .103 | .058 | .095 | 1.769 | .078 | | |
| | | -.108 | .053 | -.119 | -2.011 | .045 | | |
| | | .215 | .043 | .296 | 5.029 | .000 | | |

a Dependent Variable: Influence of Social Network Sites

The variables are explained below:

1. Dependent Variable : **Influence of Social Network Sites**
2. Independent Variable :
 - a. **Habit** X1
 - b. **Engagement** X2
 - c. **Enjoyment** X3
 - d. **Positive impact** X4
 - e. **Negative impact** X5

f. **Behaviour impactX6**

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| 3. R Square Value | : 0.606 |
| 4. F Value | : 11.521 |
| 5. P Value | : 0.000** |

The sample co-efficient determination of R Square or R² (r² is commonly used in simple regression analysis while R Square is approximately reserved for multiple regression analysis). It measures the goodness – of – fit of the estimated SRP in terms of the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable explained by the fitted sample regression equation or SRP. Thus, the value of R Square is 0.606 that independent variables explain 60.6% of the variability of dependent variable, Intention to start own business is explained or accounted for by the estimated SRP that uses Habit (X1), Engagement (X2), Enjoyment (X3) Positive impact (X4), Negative impact (X5) and Behaviour impact (X6) as the independent variable. The information is quite useful in assessing the overall accuracy of the model. This model is significant at 5% level. The estimated SRP or Sample Regression Equation can be written as:

$$Y = 2.618 + 0.021 x_1 + 0.316 x_2 - 0.060 x_3 + 0.456 x_4 - 0.255 x_5 - 0.122 x_6$$

Result: A multiple regression was attempted to predict the influence of social network sites from habit, engagement, enjoyment, positive impact, negative impact and behavior impact faced by the young adults in the Sultanate of Oman. The "R" column represents the value of R, the multiple correlation coefficients. R can be one measure of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable: influence of social network sites. These variables statistically significantly predicted success factors, F (6, 45) = 11.521, p < .0005, R² = .606. All independent variables explain 60% (i.e R square value .606) - All six variables added statistically significantly to the prediction, p < .05. The overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table shows that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable (i.e) p < .0005 The F-ratio in the ANOVA table tested whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data.

Discussion

Social media has become an essential part of daily life for many people. Consequently, it's no surprise that parents, researchers, and policymakers are worried about its impact on the well-being of young adults (Irmer & Schmiedek, 2023). In today's tech-driven world, there is increasing concern about how screen use affects young adults (Nagata, et al., 2024).

Young adults believes that social networking sties helps them become more civically minded and exposes them to greater diversity either through the people they interact with or the viewpoints they come across (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Social networking sites can provide benefits for some youth by providing positive community and connection with others who share identities, abilities, and interests (Uhls, et al, 2017). The ability to form and maintain friendships online and develop social connections are among the positive effects of social media use for youth (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Social networking sites can be used for education in an innovative way. Students should be taught to use this tool in a better way, in the educational classes' media just being used for messaging or texting rather than they should learn to figure out how to use these media for good (Kalia, 2013). Social networking sites has increased the quality and rate of collaboration for students. With the help of social media students can easily communicate or share information quickly with each through various social sites. The access of social networking sites provides the opportunity for educators to teach good digital citizenship and the use of Internet for productivity (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016).

Across studies, social aspects, including feelings of social support, social connectedness, and positive interaction quality, emerged as protective factors for social networking sites users. The social networking sites network structure itself may play an important role in supporting mental health, in that some platforms may better provide social resources to individuals with depression (Seabrook, et al, 2016 and Homan, et al., 2014). Social networking sites may encourage and perpetuate maladaptive tendencies. Social networking sites maintain and reflect the complexities of the offline social environment and the risks and benefits it may pose to mental health (Seabrook, et al, 2016).

Positive interactions, social support, and social connectedness on social networking sites were consistently related to lower levels of depression and anxiety, whereas negative interaction and social comparisons on social networking sites were related to higher levels of depression and anxiety (Seabrook, et al, 2016). Social networking sites use may increase an individual's exposure to negative social interactions (eg, cyberbullying), which may negatively impact mood and mental health (Best, et al., 2014). The prominent risk factors for depression and anxiety that emerged from this review included frequent social networking sites social comparison, negative perceived interaction quality, addictive or problematic social networking sites use, and rumination (or brooding). These factors represent cognitive and interactional styles that have well-established associations with depression and anxiety but may be enhanced by the enduring nature of social content on social networking sites (Lup, et al., 2015 and Tandoc, et al., 2015).

Rather than concentrating on work, school, and family, today's youth allocate most of their time to being online (Muthuraman, 2024). Continuing research on these dynamics and consequences of social networking sites use is critical to help people anticipate, understand, and maintain greater control over the consequences of social networking for their wellbeing, and to help parents, teachers, and mental health workers help children and teens navigate social networking to reduce negative effects and support growth and positive development (Lup, et al., 2015). Despite a wealth of research on this subject, the evidence remains ambiguous, sparking intense debates about whether social media use is harmful, neutral, or potentially beneficial to the well-being of young people (Ophir, et al., 2020 and Twenge, et al., 2020). Excessive screen time in children and young adults has been associated with various mental and physical health issues, including obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and sleep problems (Nagata, et al., 2021 and Paulich, et al., 2021).

Young adults people credit these online platforms with several positive outcomes including strengthening friendships, exposing them to different viewpoints and helping people their age support causes they care about (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). There are periods of time in which young adults people experience more positive emotions while on social networking sites and other times in which they experience more negative emotions. These short-term emotional impacts, when experienced regularly, could have important implications for psychological well-being (Tuck, & Thompson, 2021). A well-defined lifestyle combined with advanced information technology will be made accessible to the youth population of the Sultanate of Oman (Muthuraman, et al., 2023). Findings suggest that social networking sites use are associated with both positive and negative related social outcomes, but largely negative pandemic-related emotional outcomes. Young adult should find a balance in their use of the latest technological advancements in social media to ensure that their health remains unaffected (Muthuraman, 2024).

Implication

There are several practical implications of the current research. The dramatic growth in the use of social networking sites will bring with it several influences on the social system in Oman mainly in youth (Muthuraman, 2024). Depression and emotional instability are among the primary psychological issues affecting many young people today. There is a pressing need for public awareness campaigns and social policy initiatives that promote supportive home and school environments, helping to cultivate resilience as youth face the challenges of adolescence in the contemporary world (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020). First, research findings suggest that the young adults should be aware of the impact of social network sites on the health and wellbeing. Higher education institutions should organize social media awareness campaigns to educate young people about the potential negative effects of social media on their health. Improving labour productivity is a central focus of the Vision 2040 initiative in the Sultanate of Oman. Therefore, it is important to prioritize the effective use of social media platforms, as time spent on these platforms could

be redirected towards enhancing productivity (Muthuraman, et al., 2023). This study also contributes to our understanding of the importance of usage of social network sites for the positive impact more than the negative and behaviour impact. The study suggests that there is a need for moral support from the parents, teachers and the government in educating the young people on the ill impact of the usage of the social network sites on the long run. Young adults in the Sultanate should at least be aware of these potential adverse outcomes of using social media and try to regulate their use such that normal functioning is maintained. Parents, teachers can probably help in the self-assessment of use habit and provide early signs for the development of technology addiction (Turel & Serenko, 2012).

Limitation and Future Research

The present study has a few limitations. The first limitation is that this research employed convenience sampling to accomplish the research objectives. The limitations associated with the convenience sampling are applicable for this study. The sample size is yet another limitation to this study, the sample size is not enough to represent all the young adults who are in the university level. Maybe in future there is a possibility of going intensive research in a specific to gender and age.

Conclusion

The evidence suggests that social networking sites use correlates with mental illness and well-being; however, whether this effect is beneficial or detrimental depends at least partly on the quality of social factors in the social networking sites environment. Understanding these relationships will lead to better utilization of social networking sites in their potential to positively influence mental health (Seabrook, et al, 2016). The strategic direction outlined in Oman Vision 2040 emphasizes the importance of raising community awareness about health. It specifically recommends fostering a clear understanding of mental health issues that may arise from excessive use of social media platforms. The study will assist the youth population of Oman in addressing a critical issue in using the social network sites and finding a balance between utilizing social media and mitigating its potential harms. Additionally, it will educate them on responsible usage of social networking sites.

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