

## **Media, Society, and Mental Health: Assessing the Impact of Digital Platforms on Mental Health Perceptions, Well-Being, and Awareness**

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### **Abstract**

In recent years, digital platforms have become an important part of everyday life, influencing how people think, feel, and interact with others. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X play a major role in shaping conversations around mental health. This study focuses on understanding how these platforms affect people's perceptions of mental health, their emotional well-being, and their awareness of psychological issues. It also examines whether digital media encourages help-seeking behavior and helps in reducing stigma.

The study is based on primary data collected from 102 respondents using a structured questionnaire. A convenience sampling method was adopted for data collection. In addition, secondary data from journals and research articles were reviewed to support the analysis. Statistical techniques such as correlation, percentage analysis, and descriptive analysis were applied using MS Excel and SPSS.

The results indicate that the impact of digital media depends more on the type of content viewed rather than the amount of time spent online. Positive and informative mental health content tends to improve awareness and encourage supportive attitudes, while sensationalized or misleading content may contribute to stress and anxiety. Overall, the study suggests that digital platforms have the potential to promote mental health awareness, but responsible and ethical communication is essential to ensure constructive outcomes.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **The Growing Influence of Digital Media in Everyday Life**

In today's world, digital media is a big part of everyday life. Many people spend hours each day on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X. These platforms are not just used for entertainment—they shape how we think, how we see others, and even how we see ourselves. One important area where this influence is clearly visible is mental health.

### **Positive Role of Digital Platforms in Mental Health Awareness**

In recent years, conversations about mental health have become more open online. People share their personal stories about anxiety, depression, stress, and other struggles. This has helped reduce stigma and made many individuals feel less alone. Social media can spread awareness quickly and connect people to supportive communities. For someone who feels isolated, reading or watching someone else's experience can be comforting and encouraging.

### **Negative Effects of Digital Media on Mental Well-Being**

However, digital platforms also have a negative side. Constant comparison with others, pressure to look perfect, cyberbullying, and exposure to unrealistic lifestyles can harm self-esteem and emotional well-being. Sometimes, incorrect or misleading information about mental health spreads online, which can create confusion. Spending too much time online may also increase stress, anxiety, or feelings of loneliness.

### **Need for Research and Balanced Understanding of Media's Impact on Mental Health**

Because of these mixed effects, it is important to carefully study how digital platforms influence people's understanding of mental health and their overall well-being. This research paper aims to explore both the positive and negative impacts of digital media on mental health awareness and perceptions. By understanding this relationship better, we can find ways to use digital platforms in a healthier and more responsible way.

## **Objectives**

- To examine how media usage patterns influence perceptions of mental health representation.
- To assess the impact of social media on mental well-being.
- To explore the role of media in help-seeking behaviors, stigma reduction, and the promotion of ethical mental health awareness.

## **Scope of the Study**

This study explores the influence of digital media on mental health, examining how various platforms shape public perceptions, awareness, and understanding of psychological well-being. It assesses the impact of media exposure on individual emotional health, particularly in relation to self-esteem, stress levels, and overall well-being. Special attention is given to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, which play a significant role in representing and influencing conversations around mental health. By analyzing the content, engagement patterns, and user interactions on these platforms, the study aims to understand how digital environments contribute to both positive awareness and potential psychological challenges.

## **Review of Literature**

- 1. Bandura (1977)** in his Social Learning Theory explained that individuals learn behaviors and attitudes by observing others. In the digital era, this theory becomes highly relevant because people constantly observe mental health discussions, coping stories, and emotional expressions on social media. Such repeated exposure can gradually influence how users understand mental illness and help-seeking behavior.
- 2. Gerbner (1998)**, through Cultivation Theory, argued that continuous media exposure shapes an individual's perception of reality. When mental health is repeatedly portrayed in a particular way—either supportive or stigmatizing—users may begin to accept those portrayals as normal or typical representations of reality.
- 3. Twenge (2017)** found that increased screen time and social media use among adolescents were associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms and loneliness. Her study suggested that excessive online engagement may reduce face-to-face interaction, thereby affecting emotional well-being.
- 4. Karim et al. (2020)** conducted a systematic review and reported a consistent relationship between excessive social networking site use and symptoms of anxiety and depression. However, the authors also noted that the relationship is complex and influenced by individual vulnerability and usage patterns.

**5. Orben and Przybylski (2019)** argued that although social media is often blamed for declining mental health, the overall statistical effect is relatively small. They emphasized that the type of engagement and personal context play a more significant role than the mere duration of use.

**6. Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020)** reviewed literature focusing on adolescents and found that problematic social media use was linked to anxiety, depression, and psychological distress. At the same time, supportive online interactions were shown to provide emotional comfort and peer connection.

**7. Best, Manktelow, and Taylor (2014)** highlighted that online platforms can create opportunities for social support, especially for young people who feel isolated. Their review suggested that positive online communication may strengthen self-esteem and reduce feelings of loneliness.

**8. Vogel et al. (2014)** examined the impact of social comparison on social networking sites and found that frequent comparison with others' curated online lives can negatively affect self-esteem and mood. This supports the idea that content type strongly influences emotional outcomes.

**9.** Reports from the **World Health Organization (2022)** emphasize that stigma and misinformation remain major barriers in mental health awareness globally. However, digital platforms also offer opportunities for large-scale awareness campaigns and open public discussions that were previously limited.

**10. Naslund et al. (2016)** discussed how social media can be used as a tool for mental health promotion. Their study suggested that online peer support communities can encourage help-seeking behavior and reduce feelings of isolation when managed responsibly.

### **Research Methodology**

Sampling Method	Convenient Sampling Method
Sampling Size	102
Data Collection Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Primary Source: Structured Questionnaire</li> <li>● Secondary Source: Research Papers, Articles and Journals</li> </ul>
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Correlation</li> <li>● Descriptive Analysis</li> <li>● Percentage Analysis</li> </ul>
Tools Used	MS Excel, SPSS

**Analysis and Interpretation**

**Examine How Media Usage Patterns Influence Perceptions of Mental Health Representation.**

Correlations						
		How many hours per day do you spend on digital media?	Media portrays mental health issues accurately.	Media often sensationalizes mental health issues.	Exposure to media content has increased my awareness of mental health.	Media representation influences my attitude toward people with mental health issues.
How many hours per day do you spend on digital media?	Pearson Correlation	1	.013	.057	.134	.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.895	.572	.179	.348
	N	102	102	102	102	102
Media portrays mental health issues accurately.	Pearson Correlation	.013	1	.693**	.556**	.639**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.895		.000	.000	.000
	N	102	102	102	102	102
Media often sensationalizes mental health issues.	Pearson Correlation	.057	.693**	1	.605**	.602**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.572	.000		.000	.000
	N	102	102	102	102	102
Exposure to media content has increased my awareness of mental health.	Pearson Correlation	.134	.556**	.605**	1	.585**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.179	.000	.000		.000
	N	102	102	102	102	102
Media representation influences my attitude toward people with mental health issues.	Pearson Correlation	.094	.639**	.602**	.585**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.348	.000	.000	.000	
	N	102	102	102	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis (N = 102) shows that time spent on digital media is not significantly related to awareness or attitudes toward mental health ( $r = .013$  to  $.134$ ,  $p > .05$ ). However, media portrayal of mental health issues has strong positive and significant relationships with awareness ( $r = .556$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and attitudes toward people with mental health issues ( $r = .639$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, media denationalization is significantly correlated with awareness ( $r = .605$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and attitudes ( $r = .602$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Awareness and attitudes are also strongly correlated ( $r = .585$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that increased awareness is associated with changes in attitudes.

**Assess the Impact of Social Media on Mental Well-Being.**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Media content affects my emotional well-being.	102	1	5	3.13	1.059
Social media comparison affects my self-esteem.	102	1	5	3.11	1.134
I feel anxious or stressed after consuming certain media content.	102	1	5	3.04	1.116
Positive mental health content on media motivates me to take care of my mental well-being.	102	1	5	3.58	.999
Valid N (listwise)	102				

Descriptive results further show that respondents moderately agree that media affects their emotional well-being ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 1.059$ ), social media comparison affects self-esteem ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 1.134$ ), and certain media content causes anxiety or stress ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.116$ ). Positive mental health content has the highest mean ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = .999$ ), suggesting that it more strongly motivates individuals to take care of their mental well-being. Overall, media portrayal has a stronger influence than time spent on media, with positive content showing the most constructive impact.

**Explore the Role of Media in Help-Seeking Behaviors, Stigma Reduction, and the Promotion of Ethical Mental Health Awareness.**

**Table 1: Perceptions of Media and Mental Health (%)**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Media encourages open discussion about mental health	11.8%	8.8%	45.1%	28.4%	5.9%
Media reduces stigma associated with mental illness	8.8%	15.7%	48.0%	22.5%	4.9%
Media should be more responsible while portraying mental health issues	10.8%	8.8%	34.3%	30.4%	15.7%
Ethical media communication can improve long-term mental health awareness	6.9%	9.8%	37.3%	36.3%	9.8%

**Table 2: Media Influence and Impact (%)**

A. Media encouraged seeking professional or social support		B. Type of media content that impacts mental health the most	
Response	Percentage	Media Type	Percentage
Yes	46.1%	News	11.8%
No	9.8%	Social Media	32.4%
Not Sure	44.1%	Movies/Series	14.7%
		Influencer Content	11.8%
		All of the Above	29.4%

Most respondents show neutral to moderately positive perceptions of media’s role in mental health. Around 45.1% are neutral about media encouraging open discussion, and 48.0% are neutral about stigma reduction. However, 46.1% agree that media should be more responsible, and the same percentage (46.1%) believe ethical media communication can improve long-term awareness.

Regarding influence, 46.1% say media encouraged them to seek professional or social support, while 44.1% are unsure. Social media (32.4%) is seen as having the greatest impact on mental health, followed by all media types combined (29.4%). Overall, respondents recognize media’s influence but believe it needs greater responsibility.

## **Findings**

The findings show that media usage patterns influence perceptions of mental health mainly through the type of content shared, not the amount of time spent on media. Time spent on digital media is not strongly related to awareness or attitudes. However, the way mental health is portrayed, including sensationalized content, has a strong impact on people's awareness and attitudes. This means that content quality matters more than quantity.

The results also show that social media has a moderate effect on mental well-being. Many respondents feel that media affects their emotions, self-esteem, and sometimes causes stress or anxiety. At the same time, positive mental health content has a stronger and more helpful impact, encouraging people to take better care of their mental health.

Finally, media plays a role in help-seeking and stigma reduction, but its impact is mixed. Many respondents are neutral about whether media reduces stigma or encourages open discussion. However, nearly half believe media should be more responsible and say it has encouraged them to seek help. Overall, media can support awareness and help-seeking, but it needs to present mental health issues more responsibly and ethically.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, media shapes perceptions of mental health more through how issues are portrayed than through the amount of time spent on it. Positive and responsible content can improve awareness, attitudes, and mental well-being, while sensationalized or negative content may cause stress. Social media influences emotions and self-esteem, and media can encourage help-seeking and reduce stigma if presented ethically. Overall, responsible media communication is key to promoting mental health awareness and support.

## **Suggestion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that digital platforms should approach mental health content with greater responsibility and sensitivity. Instead of sensationalizing issues, creators and media organizations should focus on presenting accurate, balanced, and empathetic information that reflects real experiences. Collaborating with mental health professionals can help reduce misinformation and promote evidence-based awareness. At the same time, encouraging positive and recovery-oriented narratives may motivate individuals to seek support and adopt healthy coping strategies. Users should also be guided toward mindful and balanced social media usage, while educational institutions and

policymakers can contribute by promoting media literacy and ethical guidelines for representing mental health issues.

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