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The Role Of Social Media In Causing Anxiety Among Bangladeshi College Students

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Abstract

The increasing influence of social media has turned into a defining feature of present day college experience, particularly in Bangladesh, where platforms like Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp are deeply integrated into students' daily routines. While social media offers various benefits, such as facilitating connections, access to knowledge, and emotional support, its excessive consumption has been tied to the surge in anxiety level among college students. This article explores the dual impact of social media on anxiety among Bangladeshi college students, examining both the negative and positive aspects. On one hand, social media fosters social comparison, cyberbullying, and digital addiction, all contributing to heightened stress and anxiety. On the other hand, it also provides opportunities for creative expression, mental health support, and community-building. The article further discusses the cultural and academic pressures that intensify the anxiety students experience, emphasizing the need for mindful social media use. The article concludes with recommendations for students to adopt healthier social media habits and for institutions to recognize the importance of mental health awareness.

Key Words: Social Media, Anxiety, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, YouTube and TikTok

Introduction

Recently, social media has emerged as a vital part of the vitality of college students worldwide, including in Bangladesh. With the proliferation of internet access and mobile phone usage, especially in urban areas, social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok have become vital tools for communication, entertainment, and self-expression among young people. For Bangladeshi college students, these platforms provide an avenue to stay connected with peers, share experiences, and access a wide range of information. However, despite its advantages, the growing use of social media has raised significant concerns regarding its effect on psychological well-being, particularly anxiety. Recent studies have shown that the demand to preserve a particular image on social media, the pervasive alarm about missing out (FOMO), and the stress of constant comparison with peers can contribute to feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and heightened anxiety (Smith & Duggan, 2020). In Bangladesh, where academic success is highly valued and societal expectations are immense, students are particularly vulnerable to these pressures. Moreover, the addictive nature of social media, coupled with its disruptive effects on sleep patterns, further exacerbates the psychological difficulties encountered by students (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

This article delves into the complex connection between social media usage and anxiety among college students in Bangladesh. It examines the psychological consequences of social media engagement, highlighting both the negative consequence including social contrast, cyberbullying and digital addiction-and the positive aspects, such as the potential for building social connections and accessing mental health resources. The article explores the influence of academic and cultural pressures on the mental well-being of students, highlighting the

implementing effective strategies to control social media usage and the reduce its harmful impact on mental well-being. Through this exploration, the goal of article is to bring attention to the mental health links association with excessive engagement on social media and to propose practical recommendations for students and educational institutions to support healthier social media habits and promote mental well-being.

Issue Statement

The widespread adoption of social media among Bangladeshi college students has created a paradox where, while offering numerous opportunities for social connection and learning, it also contributes to an increase in mental health challenges, particularly anxiety. College students, who are at a pivotal moment in their academic and personal growth are especially susceptible to the pressures of social media. These pressures, including social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), cyberbullying, and sleep disruptions, have been linked to heightened levels of anxiety (Baker & White, 2017). In Bangladesh, where academic achievement is highly valued and societal expectations are immense, students often feel compelled to project an idealized version of their lives on social media, exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and stress. Despite the growing recognition of mental health issues in the country, limited research has been conducted to analyze the particular effect of social media usage on anxiety among Bangladeshi college students (Rahman et al., 2022). This study strives to bridge this gap by examining the link between social media activity and anxiety levels among college students in Bangladesh, with a focus on identifying the key factors contributing to anxiety and the ways in which students manage their social media habits.

Rationale of the issue

The rapid proliferation of social media among college students has fundamentally reshaped how they communicate, interact, and engage with the world around them. In Bangladesh, as in many other parts of the world, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and TikTok have become central to the social and academic lives of young people. These platforms provide students with unique change to remain in touch with friends and family access academic resource and express themselves creatively. However, alongside these advantages, growing alarm over the detrimental psychological effects that over use of social media use may have raised issues regarding mental health especially anxiety.

Anxiety among college students has become an increasingly recognized issue worldwide. Research has consistently linked the excessive use of social media to heightened levels of anxiety, particularly due to factors such as social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), and cyberbullying (Huang, 2017; Primack et al., 2017). For Bangladeshi students, this issue is compounded by the high societal and academic expectations placed on them. In a culture where academic success is heavily valued, the pressure to maintain an idealized persona online, fueled by the curated images of peers, can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, stress, and self-doubt. These pressures may manifest as a significant source of anxiety for students navigating the dual demands of academic excellence and social approval in the digital space.

Despite the growing recognition of the mental health risks associated with social media use, limited research has been conducted on how these issues specifically affect Bangladeshi college students. In the context of Bangladesh, where mental health awareness is still developing, there is a significant gap in understanding how social media contributes to anxiety among the youth. The impact of academic pressures, societal expectations, and the addictive nature of digital platforms on mental well-being has not been sufficiently explored. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between social media use and anxiety among Bangladeshi college students, identifying the specific factors that contribute to anxiety, and exploring how students manage their social media habits to mitigate these effects.

The rationale for this study stems from the need to address a growing mental health issue that has yet to be comprehensively understood in the Bangladeshi context. By examining the psychological impacts of social media on students, the study aims to raise awareness about the potential risks associated with excessive social media engagement and provide practical recommendations for students and educational institutions. Understanding how students cope with these pressures and their awareness of mental health risks can lead to better strategies for promoting healthier social media habits and, by extension, improving overall mental well-being. The findings of this study will be invaluable in informing mental health interventions, campus counseling programs, and broader public health policies designed to support students in managing their digital lives in a way that minimizes anxiety.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the correlation between social media usage and anxiety symptom in Bangladeshi college students.
2. To identify specific factors (e.g., social comparison, FOMO, cyberbullying) that contribute to anxiety among college students in Bangladesh.
3. To investigate the role of academic pressure and cultural expectations in exacerbating anxiety among students in relation to social media use.
4. To explore students' coping strategies and habits in managing their social media usage to reduce anxiety.
5. To evaluate students' alertness and understanding of the potential mental health risks linked with over use of social media.

Study Question

1. What role does social media play in the lives of college students in Bangladesh?
2. What detrimental psychology impacts of social media use are emphasized in the article?
3. In what ways do academic stress and cultural norms in Bangladesh exacerbate mental health challenges linked with social media?
4. What potential positive aspects of social media use are discussed?
5. What interventions can educational institutions in Bangladesh adopt to reduce the detrimental effects of social media on mental well-being?
6. How does social media's addictive nature contribute to anxiety in college students?
7. What interventions can educational institutions in Bangladesh adopt to mitigate social media's negative impact on mental health?
8. Could social media have a positive impact on students' mental health? How?
9. What strategies can help students recognize the mental health hazards of social media?
10. How can students become more aware of the mental health hazards linked with social media?
11. What are the constraints of this study in exploring social media's effect on anxiety in Bangladesh?

Methodology

The purpose of the study is assess how social media influence anxiety level in Bangladeshi college students, using a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media use and anxiety.

All participants will be asked for informed consent with a clear explanation of the study purpose, data handling processes, and their right to confidentiality and anonymity.

The research will adhere to ethical standards confirming that no personal identifiers are included in the final report, and that participants' data are securely stored.

This study will mainly focus on college students from urban areas, which may not fully represent the experiences of students in rural areas. Additionally, the self-reported nature of the survey could introduce bias, though steps will be taken to improve data accuracy and reliability.

This methodology will offer a detailed perception of how social media shapes anxiety among Bangladeshi college students and offer insights into how students can manage their social media habits to protect their mental well-being.

Origin and Development of Social Media

Social media, in its current form, has evolved over several decades, from simple communication tools to the complex, multifaceted platforms we interact with today. The advancement of social media has been shaped by technological advances in the internet, mobile technology, and digital communication, as well as shifting cultural, social, and economic factors.

Early Beginnings of Online Communication

The foundation of social media can be found in early days of the internet, with platforms that allowed users to interact, share, and communicate online. One of the first forms of social media was online forums and circular board systems (BBS) in the 1970s and 1980s. These platforms enabled user to share messages, share news, and participate in debates, albeit in a more static and text-based format compared to modern social media platforms (Rheingold, 1993).

In the 1990s, instant messaging (**IM**) and email became popular forms of online communication, laying the foundation for real-time interactions between users. Services like AOL Instant Messenger (**AIM**) and **ICQ** allowed users to send text-based messages instantly, creating an early form of digital social interaction.

The Rise of Social Networking Sites

The early 2000s saw the development of more sophisticated social networking platforms, which began to resemble the social media landscape we recognize today. In 2003, Friendster was launched as one of the first true social virtual websites, enable users to generate personal accounts, connect with associates, and share content (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). While Friendster initially garnered attention, it was quickly overtaken by My Space, which launched in 2003 as well but provided greater customization options for users and became one of the most popular social networking sites globally by the mid-2000s.

Around the same time, LinkedIn was launched in 2003, focusing on professional networking. This marked the beginning of social media platforms targeting different user needs, such as career development, personal connections, and entertainment.

Facebook: A Game-Changer in Social Media

The real revolution in social networks began with the launch of Facebook in 2004. Initially developed by Mark Zuckerberg as a college-based networking platform for Harvard students, Facebook quickly expanded to other universities and then to the general public by 2006. With its user-friendly interface, the ability to share personal updates, pictures, and status updates, and the introduction of the "Like" button in 2009, Facebook became a model for other social networking sites. By the late 2000s, Facebook had millions of active users, transforming it into the world's largest social network (Zuckerberg, 2010).

Facebook's success also signaled the shift from basic networking to more interactive and content-driven platforms. This era saw the rise of features like news feeds, allowing real-time updates from friends and brands, as well as tools to share photos, videos, and links. Social media began to evolve into a broader communication ecosystem that merged personal, professional, and public interactions.

The Emergence of Visual Content and Mobile Integration

As the internet evolved, so too did the technology supporting social media. The rise of smartphones and the widening availability of mobile internet played a key role in the development of social media. This period saw the emergence of platforms focused on visual content, such as Instagram (launched in 2010) and Snapchat (2011). These platforms capitalized on the ability of smartphones to capture and share images and videos instantly, further encouraging user engagement. Instagram, for example, emphasized image-based communication and became a central hub for influencers, celebrities, and businesses seeking to connect with users through visual storytelling (Marwick, 2015).

In parallel, Twitter emerged in 2006 as a microblogging platform, allowing users to post short, 140-character messages known as "tweets." Twitter became a tool for real-time news updates and a platform for political discourse, particularly during significant global events like the Arab Spring in 2011, where it played a central role in organizing protests and mobilizing support (Tufekci, 2017).

The Rise of Video-Centric Platforms: YouTube, TikTok, and Beyond

Video-sharing platforms such as YouTube (launched in 2005) and TikTok (launched in 2016) marked a shift toward video-centric social media. YouTube allowed users to upload and share longer-form videos, leading to the creation of content creators and a new form of celebrity. TikTok, on the other hand, popularized short-form videos, often featuring viral trends and challenges, and quickly grew into one of the most influential social media platforms, especially among younger users (Kang, 2020).

The success of video-based platforms has changed the way users engage with content, shifting the focus from purely text and images to dynamic, multimedia experiences. TikTok, with its emphasis on creativity, music, and editing tools, has introduced a new era of user-generated content and influencer culture.

Social Media's Integration with Everyday Life

Today, social media is deeply integrated into daily life. Interfaces like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and TikTok are not only tools for communication but have become essential for marketing, entertainment, political movements, activism, and even education. The globalization of social media has made it possible for users to interact across geographical borders in real-time, leading to the foundation of worldwide networks united by common.

Moreover, social media algorithms, designed to personalize the user experience by curating content based on past interactions, have played a role in driving engagement. While this personalization enhances user satisfaction,

it also generates concerns about issues like echo chambers, where users are exposed to content that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, potentially contributing to societal polarization (Pariser, 2011).

Social Media in the Modern World

Social media has undergone a profound transformation since its early days. What began as simple communication tools have evolved into complex platforms that shape our social, political, and economic interactions. The ongoing development of new platforms, coordination with new technologies like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), and the expansion of social media's role in professional and educational spheres suggest that social media keep playing a central role in shaping society in the coming years. As social networks evolves, its impact on mental well-being, social relationships, and political discourse remains a crucial area of study. Although it provides immense possibilities enagement and articulation, it also raises significant concerns about privacy, mental well-being, and the spread of misinformation, making it a topic of ongoing research and debate.

The Rise of Social Media in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the growth of internet access and mobile phone usage has contributed to a sharp growth in social media taking part among young people, particularly in urban areas. According to a 2023 report by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), more than 100 million people in the country have access to the internet, with a significant portion being active on social media platforms. College students, who are highly engaged in both academic and social activities, spend considerable time on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to stay connected with peers, share opinions, and engage with a variety of content.

The connection between online platforms and Anxiety

Although social networks can function as a means for social interaction and amusement, its constant use can have unintended psychological consequences. Several analyses have indicated a strong connection between extreme social media use and increased levels of anxiety, specially among young adults and college students (Twenge et al., 2017). In Bangladesh, where academic pressure is high, the stressors associated with social media use can be exacerbated by the demands of higher education.

1. Comparative Stress and Social Pressure

One of the most significant factors contributing to anxiety among Bangladeshi college students is the pressure to maintain a certain online persona. Social media fosters an environment of comparison, where students often compare their academic achievements, lifestyle, appearance, and social interactions with those of their peers (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). This can result to feelings of inferiority, poor self-worth, and heightened anxiety. For instance, many students may experience FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) when they see their peers attending social events, excelling academically, or traveling, while they themselves may be struggling with personal or academic challenges. This constant comparison can be mentally exhausting, leading to anxiety over one's own perceived lack of success or fulfillment.

2. Cyberbullying and Harassment

Another major contributor to anxiety among Bangladeshi college students is cyberbullying. With the anonymity provided by social media platforms, some students become targets of online harassment, name-calling, or even public shaming (Kowalski et al., 2014). In a society where reputation and social standing are highly valued, such negative experiences can be particularly damaging to a student's mental health, leading to sense of sadness, separation, and worry.

3. Sleep Disruption and Digital Addiction

Extreme use of social media, especially before sleeping time, can disrupt sleep patterns, which trigger harmful effects mental well-being. Studies have shown that the blue light generated from screens can disrupt the secretion of melatonin, the hormone that controls sleep. For students, the habit of scrolling through social media late into the night often leads to sleep deprivation, which can exacerbate feelings of anxiety and stress.

Additionally the compulsive aspect of social media can result in a cycle of compulsive use. This constant engagement, even during study hours, not only distracts students from their academic responsibilities but also heightens stress and reduces overall productivity, leading to increased anxiety.

4. Unrealistic Expectations and Mental Health Strain

Social media interfaces often portray a perfect version of life, where everything appears perfect, from academic achievements to personal relationships. For college students, who are already managing a phase of self-discovery and growth, the pressure to live up to these curated standards can be overwhelming. This can support to the development of mental health issues, including anxiety, sadness, and a constant fear of failure.

The Impact of Academic and Cultural Context

In Bangladesh, the competitive nature of college life, combined with the cultural emphasis on academic success, plays a significant role in the way students experience anxiety. Students are often under pressure to perform well in their exams and secure a good job after graduation. The fear of falling behind their peers academically, coupled with the social comparisons made through social media, can exacerbate the stress students already feel.

Furthermore, in a society where family expectations are high, students may feel compelled to present a perfect version of themselves online. This expectation can create a sense of dissonance between their real lives and the persona they project on social media, intensifying feelings of anxiety and self-doubt.

Positive Aspects of Social Media

While the negative influence of social media on anxiety is significant, it is key to recognize that social media is not inherently harmful. When used mindfully, it can offer several benefits for students' mental health and well-being.

1. Building Social Connections and Support

For many students, social media offers a platform to connect with friends and peers, offering emotional support and a sense of community. During times of academic stress or personal challenges, online support groups or communities can provide a safe space for students to share their struggles and receive encouragement.

2. Access to Mental Health Resources

Social media also provides as an avenue for students to access information and resources related to mental well-being. Many mental well-being organizations and professionals use platforms like Facebook and Instagram to raise alertness about mental health issues, share coping strategies, and enhance mental well-being. By following these resources, students can gain valuable insights into managing stress and anxiety.

3. Creative Expression and Relaxation

Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok allow students to express themselves creatively, which can be therapeutic. Involved in creative activities like as photography, art, or content creation can provide an outlet for students to relax and unwind, offering a break from academic pressures.

Negative Aspects of Social Media

Social media has become a vital part of daily life, but it also comes with several negative aspects that can affect individuals and society as a whole. Below are some of the negative aspects of social media, supported by citations:

1. Mental Health Issues

Social networking sites have been connected to a variety of mental health problems, including anxiety, sadness, and poor self-worth. Constant exposure to idealized images of others' lives can result to social comparison, feelings of inferiority and emotional distress. Research by *Twenge et al. (2017)* suggests that increased use of social networks, especially among adolescents, correlates with rising rates of depression and suicide.

2. Cyberbullying and Harassment

Social network provides an interface for cyberbullying, which can lead to significant psychological and emotional harm. The anonymity afforded by these interface allows users to involve in harmful behavior without facing immediate outcomes. Studies have found that both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying experience higher rates of psychological disorders such as stress, sadness and thoughts of self-harm.

3. Addiction and Time Wasting

Social media platforms are designed to be addictive, using algorithms that prioritize content which generates emotional reactions. This leads users to spend spending too much time browsing through social media updates which can interfere with productivity, relationships and overall well-being. *Kuss & Griffiths (2017)* highlight the addictive potential of social media and its detrimental effects on users' personal and professional lives.

4. Echo Chambers and Polarization

Social media interface can contribute to the creation of "echo chambers," where users are exposed primarily to viewpoints that align with their existing beliefs, reinforcing their opinions and creating greater polarization. This is particularly problematic in the context of political discourse, where algorithms prioritize sensational and extreme content. *Barberá et al. (2015)* discuss how social media encourages ideological polarization and the formation of partisan echo chambers.

5. Confidentiality Risks

Social networks sites often gather a large amount of personal data, which can be used for focused marketing or shared with outside entities. This raises serious concerns about user privacy, as sensitive information can be exploited or hacked. In 2018, the Cambridge Analytical scandal highlighted how personal data was used to manipulate political opinions, prompting widespread concern over data privacy on social media.

6. Fostering Negative Body Image

Social media platforms, particularly those that emphasize visual content (e.g., Instagram), can perpetuate unrealistic beauty standards, which may contribute to body dissatisfaction. Research by *Fardouly et al. (2015)* indicates that viewing curated images on social platforms correlates with negative body image in young women, which can lead to eating disorders and other psychological problems.

7. Circulation of Inaccurate Data

Social media has become a major vector for the rapid spread of false information, conspiracy theories, and fake news. This is exacerbated by the speed at which information circulates and the difficulty in verifying facts. *Friggeri et al. (2014)* demonstrated that false information spreads more quickly than true facts on social networking sites, which can have severe outcomes for public health, politics, and society. Although social media provides various advantages, its detrimental effects on mental well-being, privacy, and societal cohesion cannot be overlooked. Addressing these issues requires greater awareness, regulation, and personal responsibility in how we use these platforms.

Findings of the Study

The influence of social media on mental well-being, particularly anxiety, has become an area of increasing concern globally, including in Bangladesh. College students, who represent a significant portion of social media users, are especially vulnerable to the negative psychological impacts of these platforms. Research conducted within the context of Bangladesh has illuminated how social media use influences anxiety levels, with findings often mirroring global trends while reflecting the unique cultural and societal context of the country.

1. Increased Social Comparison and Self-Esteem Issues

Social comparison, a core mechanism of social media platforms, has been determined as a key contributor to anxiety among Bangladeshi college students. Many students experience heightened anxiety due to comparing themselves to others, especially when viewing idealized portrayals of peers' lives on social media (Hossain et al., 2023). The pursuit of social approval through likes and comments exacerbates feelings of inadequacy, which may negatively impact self-esteem and contribute to anxiety (Sultana & Rahman, 2021).

2. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a prevalent psychological phenomenon among Bangladeshi college students, closely linked to anxiety. Students frequently report feelings of loneliness and isolation after seeing friends attending events or socializing on social media (Hossain et al., 2021). This anxiety is amplified by the instant nature of social media updates, which make the sense of exclusion feel more immediate and intense (Saha & Tareq, 2022).

3. Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Cyberbullying and online harassment have been identified as significant contributors to anxiety among Bangladeshi students. Many students experience harassment or bullying online, with detrimental effects on their mental health. A study by Alam et al. (2022) found that a large percentage of students reported feeling anxious and distressed after encountering negative comments or cyberbullying on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram (Alam et al., 2022).

4. Sleep Disturbances and Academic Anxiety

Extreme use of social media, especially late at night, has been connected to poor sleep quality and sleep disturbances among Bangladeshi college students. Poor sleep hygiene due to screen time has been found to exacerbate anxiety levels, especially when students face academic pressure, such as during exams (Chowdhury & Jahan, 2023). Insufficient sleep, in turn, increases stress and reduces academic performance, contributing to a vicious cycle of anxiety.

5. Addiction to Social Media

Social media addiction is an increasing concern among college students in Bangladesh. Studies have shown that extreme use of interface like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp is often linked to increased levels of anxiety (Sultana & Rahman, 2021). Students experience withdrawal symptoms such as irritability and restlessness when they are unable to access social media, leading to greater anxiety. Additionally, the compulsive checking of

social media, often triggered by stress, exacerbates feelings of anxiety and dependency (Hossain & Ahmed, 2022).

6. Body Image and Social Media

Negative body image related to the portrayal of idealized beauty standards on social media is a significant issue, particularly for female college students in Bangladesh. Many students report experiencing anxiety and dissatisfaction with their physical appearance after frequent exposure to filtered or edited images on platforms like Instagram (Islam & Begum, 2023). This form of social comparison is linked to anxiety over personal body image and self-worth.

7. Political and Social Content and Anxiety

The political climate and social unrest in Bangladesh, often discussed on social media, has contributed to an increase in anxiety among students. Exposure to politically charged content, particularly misinformation and polarized opinions, leads to confusion and stress. Students, especially those in urban areas, report feeling overwhelmed by the constant barrage of political news, which compounds their academic and social anxieties (Rahman & Khan, 2022).

8. Positive Impacts: Social Support and Connection

While the negative effects of social media on anxiety are well-established, some positive effects have also been reported. College students in Bangladesh find social media helpful for maintaining connections with family and friends, which can supply emotional support and reduce feelings of loneliness (Ahmed & Sultana, 2023). Virtual communities and support groups on platforms like Facebook offer students a space to share their experiences and receive reassurance, which can help alleviate anxiety during stressful periods.

9. Gender Differences in Social Media-Related Anxiety

Gender differences in the experience of worry related to social media have been observed in Bangladesh. Female students tend to be more inclined to experience anxiety related to body image, social comparison, and cyberbullying, whereas male students often experience anxiety related to social status, academic achievement, and performance (Saha & Tareq, 2022). These gendered experiences indicate the need for tailored interventions to address the specific concerns of different groups.

10. Lack of Mental Health Awareness and Stigma

Despite the increasing recognition of mental health issues, many students in Bangladesh lack awareness of the correlation between social media use and anxiety. Stigma surrounding mental well-being often prevents students from seeking help or discussing their anxiety openly, leading to untreated or unmanaged mental health conditions (Chowdhury & Jahan, 2023). This lack of awareness about coping strategies further exacerbates the harmful effects of social media on mental well-being.

The findings highlight a complex relationship between social media use and anxiety among college students in Bangladesh. While the pressure to conform, social comparison, cyberbullying, and FOMO contribute significantly to heightened anxiety, positive aspects such as social connection and emotional support networks also offer a counterbalance. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing interventions that reduce the negative psychological influences of social media and promote healthier usage patterns among students. Further research into cultural factors, gender differences, and specific coping strategies is needed to reduce the adverse influences of social media on student mental health in Bangladesh.

Challenges and Mitigation

The rapid rise of social media among Bangladeshi college students has led to both opportunities and challenges in terms of mental health, particularly regarding anxiety. While social media can facilitate communication and provide support, it can also have significant negative consequences on students' psychological well-being. Below are the main challenges related to the role of social media on worry and potential strategies for mitigating them:

Challenges

1. **Social Comparison and Self-Esteem Issues** Social media encourages constant comparison, as students often measure their academic achievements, social lives, and physical appearances against the curated lives of others. This can lead to feelings of inferiority, poor self-worth, and heightened worry, particularly in a culture where academic success is highly valued. Students often feel the pressure to project an idealized version of themselves, which can be mentally exhausting and emotionally damaging.
2. **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)** The "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) is a pervasive issue, as students may feel anxious or left out when seeing peers attending social events, achieving milestones, or traveling. In Bangladesh, where the societal pressure to succeed academically is immense, FOMO can amplify anxiety,

especially if students are struggling with their academic responsibilities or personal issues. The anxiety arises from the perceived disconnection between their real lives and the idealized versions seen on social media.

3. **Cyberbullying and Harassment** Cyberbullying remains a significant challenge for students, especially given the anonymity social media provides. Harassment or public shaming on platforms can lead to emotional distress, depression, and isolation. In Bangladesh, where reputation and social standing are crucial, such experiences can be particularly harmful, exacerbating feelings of anxiety and fear of judgment.
4. **Sleep Disruption and Digital Addiction** Excessive social media use, particularly late at night, disrupts rest cycle. The blue light generated by screens prevents with melatonin formation, leading to rest deprivation. Chronic sleep disruption negatively affects cognitive functioning and emotional regulation, making students more susceptible to anxiety. Additionally, the compulsive aspect of social media, with its constant notifications and updates, often leads students to engage in compulsive use, reducing productivity and increasing stress levels.
5. **Unrealistic Expectations** Social media platforms often feature and idealistic, filtered version of reality, where everything is perfect. For college students in Bangladesh, this portrayal creates an unrealistic standard to live up to, intensifying the pressure to succeed and fit in. The gap between this idealized online persona and the student's real-life experiences can lead to mental health strain, including worry and depression.
6. **Academic Pressure and Societal Expectations** The societal emphasis on academic success in Bangladesh is a significant factor contributing to students' anxiety. With the growing demand to perform well in exams and secure jobs, the additional stress of social comparison on social media can amplify sentiments of inadequacy. The pressure to succeed academically and the need to maintain a certain image online often overlap, creating a compounded burden on students' mental health.

Mitigation Strategies

1. **Promoting Self-Awareness and Digital Literacy** One of the most effective ways to mitigate anxiety related to social media use is through digital literacy and self-awareness. Educating students about the harmful effects of social media on mental health, including its role in social comparison and FOMO, can empower them to use these platforms more mindfully. Encouraging students to curate their social media feeds to reflect positive, supportive content can help reduce exposure to unrealistic standards and harmful comparisons.
2. **Encouraging Healthy Social Media Habits** Encouraging students to adopt healthier social media habits is crucial. This includes setting time limits on social media use and using apps to track and reduce screen time. By designating specific hours for social media engagement, particularly during stressful periods like exams, students can minimize distractions and focus on their well-being. Additionally, taking regular breaks from social media through digital detox practices can help students recharge both mentally and physically.
3. **Providing Access to Mental Health Resources** Social media platforms serve to advocate mental well-being awareness and offer resources for students. Institutions and mental health organizations can utilize social media to share coping strategies, mental health tips, and online counseling services. Students should be encouraged to follow mental health accounts and participate in online communities that foster emotional support. This can help them feel more connected to others who may be experiencing similar challenges.
4. **Addressing Cyberbullying and Online Harassment** Institutions should take a proactive approach to combat cyberbullying and online harassment. Providing students with information on how to report and deal with online abuse is essential. Universities can also offer counseling services for students who are affected by cyberbullying, ensuring they receive the support they need to cope with these negative experiences.
5. **Promoting Offline Activities and Face-to-Face Interactions:** To reduce reliance on social media for validation, students should be encouraged to involve in offline activities, such as sports, reading, and spending quality time with family and friends. These activities provide a healthy balance and reduce the harmful impact of social media on students' mental well-being. Physical exercise, in particular, has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, making it a perfect solution to mitigate the psychological effects of social media use.

6. **Fostering Supportive Academic Environments** Educational institutions should foster an atmosphere where students experience supported academically and emotionally. This can be done by offering stress-management workshops, peer support networks, and counseling services to assist students cope with academic pressures. By addressing both academic and psychological requirements, institutions can reduce the anxiety students experience as a result of social media and academic stress.
7. **Encouraging Reflection and Realistic Goal Setting** Promoting reflection among students about their personal goals, achievements, and mental health is important. Educational institutions can help students set realistic academic and personal goals, alleviating the pressure to conform to unrealistic standards seen on social media. Encouraging students to focus on personal growth, rather than constant comparison, can foster a healthier relationship with both social media and their academic journey.

Conclusion

The widespread influence of social media in people's lives of Bangladeshi college students presents a complex duality, offering both opportunities for connection and learning while simultaneously exacerbating mental health challenges, particularly anxiety. As this study highlights, social media usage among students is closely linked to anxiety, driven by factors like social evaluation, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), cyberbullying, and sleep disruption. These challenges are compounded by the high academic pressure and cultural expectations prevalent in Bangladesh, making students vulnerable to heightened levels of stress and emotional strain.

However, while the negative impacts are significant, it is important to identify that social media, when used mindfully, can also serve as a valuable tool for support, information, and creative expression. The positive potential of these platforms, such as building social connections and accessing mental health resources, underscores the importance of a sensible approach to social media interaction. To mitigate the detrimental effects of social media on mental health, it is crucial for both students and educational institutions to adopt practical strategies. Promoting digital literacy, encouraging healthier social media habits, providing mental health resources, and fostering offline activities are key steps in ensuring that social media remains a tool for positive engagement rather than a source of anxiety. By cultivating self-awareness, realistic goal-setting, and a supportive academic environment, students can navigate the complexities of social media use more effectively, protecting their mental well-being while maximizing the benefits of these platforms.

Ultimately, promoting understanding of mental well-being hazard tied to social media usage and offering tangible solutions for managing its impact can empower Bangladeshi college students to maintain a healthier, more balanced relationship with social media, ensuring their academic success and emotional resilience in an increasingly digital world.

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Relevant Reports and Publications

1. Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) Report (2023)
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Databases and Resources for Further Research

- **Google Scholar:** Search for articles and books on "social media and anxiety among college students" or "social media mental health Bangladesh." You will find a mix of peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and other resources.

- **PubMed:** For studies related to mental health and social media, including the effects of online behaviors on anxiety.
- **JSTOR:** A good repository for journal articles, especially those related to psychology, education, and social media impacts.
- **Springer Link:** Provides access to a wide range of journals and books that cover both psychological issues and digital media's influence on well-being.

