



The Impact Of Social Media On Personal And Group Identity, Self-Perception, And Behavior

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of social media on personal and group identity, self-perception, and behavior within Himachal Pradesh, a region known for its rich cultural heritage. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research involved a survey of 117 respondents and qualitative interviews to explore how demographic factors such as age and education influence social media's role in shaping identity. The findings reveal that younger individuals are more likely to perceive their social media profiles as accurate representations of their identities, while education plays a crucial role in moderating social media's influence on beliefs and values. The study also highlights the significant correlations between social comparison, self-perception, and the pressure to maintain online personas. These results contribute to the understanding of social media's complex influence on identity, offering insights for policymakers and educators to address the challenges posed by digital media in culturally diverse regions.

Index Terms - Social Media, Identity Formation, Self-Perception and Cultural Influence

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed the way individuals communicate, form relationships, and engage with society at large. On a global scale, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have amassed billions of users, making social media an integral part of daily life for people across diverse cultures and geographies. According to Statista, as of 2023, there are over 4.9 billion active social media users worldwide, a figure that underscores the pervasive influence of these platforms on human interaction (Statista, 2023). The rise of social media has been linked to significant shifts in how individuals perceive themselves and others, altering traditional forms of social interaction and identity formation.

In addition to global trends, the local impact of social media is equally profound. In India, social media has become a powerful tool for communication, information dissemination, and social mobilization. Platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook are particularly popular, with WhatsApp boasting over 400 million users in India alone (Business Today, 2023). The proliferation of smartphones and affordable data plans has further accelerated social media adoption, even in rural areas. In states like Himachal Pradesh, social media plays a crucial role in connecting individuals and communities, bridging the gap between urban and rural populations, and providing a platform for cultural exchange and social activism (Kumar & Sharma, 2020). The influence of social media in these regions is multifaceted, affecting everything from political participation to the preservation of cultural heritage.

II. OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORIES

To understand the impact of social media on identity formation and behavior, it is essential to explore several key theories that provide a framework for analysis. One of the most pertinent is Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals derive a significant part of their identity from the groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social media platforms, by facilitating the creation of online communities, have enhanced the ability of individuals to associate with various social groups, thereby reinforcing or reshaping their social identities. For instance, research has shown that participation in online groups can strengthen group identity and increase group cohesion, leading to more pronounced in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination (Yuan & Lee, 2022). This theory is particularly relevant in the context of social media, where group identities are often amplified and can significantly influence individual behavior.

Self-Perception Theory, another important framework, suggests that individuals form their self-concept based on their observations of their own behavior and the reactions of others (Bem, 1972). Social media platforms provide a unique environment where individuals can curate their self-presentation, receiving immediate feedback from peers in the form of likes, comments, and shares. This feedback loop can profoundly affect self-perception, as individuals may begin to see themselves through the lens of their online personas. Research indicates that this process can lead to a distorted self-image, particularly among adolescents, who are more susceptible to peer influence (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013).

Media Effects Theory also plays a crucial role in understanding the influence of social media. This theory encompasses several models that explain how media consumption can shape individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The agenda-setting function of social media, where the prominence of certain topics or issues is amplified, can significantly impact public perception and behavior. For example, the widespread dissemination of information (and misinformation) on social media platforms can lead to the rapid spread of social movements, as well as the perpetuation of stereotypes and biases (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). In the context of Himachal Pradesh, understanding how these theories apply can shed light on the specific ways social media influences identity and behavior in the region.

III. INTRODUCTION TO HIMACHAL PRADESH AS THE STUDY AREA

Himachal Pradesh, a state in the northern part of India, is characterized by its diverse topography, ranging from the Himalayan mountains to lush valleys. The state is known for its rich cultural heritage, with a population that includes a variety of ethnic groups, each with its own distinct traditions and social practices (Sharma, 2019). Despite its relatively small size, Himachal Pradesh presents a unique microcosm of India's broader social and cultural dynamics, making it an ideal location for studying the impact of social media on identity and behavior.

The state has experienced significant changes in recent years, particularly with the advent of digital technologies and social media. While traditionally a rural state, with agriculture and tourism as its main economic activities, Himachal Pradesh has seen a growing penetration of smartphones and internet connectivity, even in remote areas (Verma, 2020). This digital shift has brought about a new dimension to social interactions in the state, with social media becoming a critical platform for communication, socialization, and information exchange.

Social media's role in Himachal Pradesh extends beyond mere communication; it is also a tool for social and political engagement. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media platforms were widely used to disseminate information about health protocols, government initiatives, and community support systems, demonstrating their importance in crisis management (Rana & Negi, 2021). Additionally, social media has facilitated the preservation and promotion of the state's cultural heritage, with local artisans and cultural groups using these platforms to reach wider audiences, both within and outside the state (Chauhan & Singh, 2021).

Given its unique social and cultural landscape, Himachal Pradesh provides a valuable context for studying the nuanced impacts of social media on identity formation and behavior. The interaction between traditional values and modern digital influences in this region can offer insights into how social media is reshaping identities, not only in Himachal Pradesh but in similar cultural contexts worldwide.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

4.1 The Impact of Media Representation on Female Athlete Identity and Self-Perception

Şahin et al. (2024) explore the influence of media representation on the identity and self-perception of female athletes, emphasizing the importance of how these athletes are portrayed in the media. The study's objective is to assess how stereotypical media portrayals contribute to the development of self-identity and self-esteem among female athletes. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather data from a sample of professional female athletes. Findings reveal that media representation significantly impacts the self-perception and identity formation of these athletes, often leading to internal conflicts between their professional and personal identities. The study concludes that more accurate and diverse portrayals are necessary to support the healthy development of female athlete identity. However, the research highlights a gap in examining the long-term psychological effects of media representation on female athletes, suggesting the need for longitudinal studies.

4.2 Professional Versus Personal Identities of Young Health Communicators: The Social Media Connection

El Mghari, Tennfjord, and Eg (2024) investigate the conflict between professional and personal identities among young health communicators, particularly in the context of social media use. The study underscores the importance of understanding how social media platforms blur the lines between these identities, which can impact the communicators' effectiveness and mental well-being. The researchers conducted a qualitative study, employing in-depth interviews with young health communicators to explore their experiences. The findings indicate that while social media provides a platform for professional development, it also complicates the maintenance of distinct personal identities, leading to stress and identity confusion. The study concludes with a call for better guidelines and training for young professionals in managing their online presence. The research gap identified includes a lack of focus on the impact of these identity conflicts on long-term career satisfaction and professional growth.

4.3 Lecturer's Personal Branding in the Digital Era: Building Good Reputation and Positive Image through Social Media

Fitria (2023) examines the role of social media in shaping the personal branding of lecturers, highlighting the importance of digital presence in the academic field. The study aims to understand how lecturers can effectively use social media to build a positive reputation and image. Using a case study methodology, Fitria analyzes the social media strategies of selected lecturers who have successfully cultivated strong personal brands. The findings suggest that lecturers who actively engage with their audience on social media platforms can enhance their professional visibility and credibility. However, the study also notes the challenges in balancing personal and professional content. The conclusion points to the necessity for clear strategies and policies to guide academic professionals in their online branding efforts. A significant research gap identified is the lack of exploration into the potential negative consequences of social media branding on academic objectivity and professional relationships.

4.4 Personal Identity as a Problem in the Light of the Development of Information and Communication Technologies

Emelyanova (2023) addresses the challenges to personal identity posed by the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT). The study's importance lies in its examination of how ICT influences the formation and perception of personal identity in the digital age. The research employs a theoretical approach, drawing on existing literature and case studies to explore the effects of ICT on identity. The findings highlight the fragmented nature of personal identity in the digital era, where individuals often struggle to maintain a coherent sense of self amid the constant flux of online interactions. The study concludes that the increasing reliance on ICT exacerbates identity issues, particularly among younger generations. The research gap noted includes the need for empirical studies that investigate the impact of ICT on identity across different cultural contexts and age groups.

4.5 Audience Value of Social Media Influencers

Adeline and Zainal (2023) explore the value that audiences derive from social media influencers, focusing on the importance of influencers in shaping consumer behavior and identity. The objective of the study is to analyze the relationship between audience engagement with influencers and the perceived value of content. The methodology involves a combination of content analysis and audience surveys, examining the interactions between influencers and their followers. Findings suggest that social media influencers play

a significant role in the formation of consumer identity, with audiences valuing authenticity and relatability in influencers. The study concludes that influencers are increasingly seen as key figures in the digital identity landscape. However, the research identifies a gap in understanding the long-term effects of influencer-driven identity formation on consumer behavior.

4.6 Emergent Trends in Nigeria's Popular Entertainment: Cross-Dressing and Blurred Identity in Social Media Skits

Ben-Iheanacho et al. (2023) investigate the phenomenon of cross-dressing in Nigerian social media entertainment and its implications for identity. The study is important as it sheds light on how popular culture, particularly through social media skits, challenges traditional gender norms and contributes to the blurring of identity boundaries. The researchers employed a qualitative content analysis of popular social media skits, complemented by audience interviews. The findings indicate that cross-dressing in these skits serves as both a form of entertainment and a commentary on societal norms, leading to a more fluid understanding of identity among viewers. The study concludes that such trends may influence broader societal perceptions of gender and identity. The research gap highlighted is the need for further exploration of the psychological and social effects of these trends on different demographic groups in Nigeria.

The reviewed literature highlights significant insights into social media's influence on identity formation, self-perception, and behavior; however, there is a notable research gap in longitudinal studies that examine the long-term psychological effects of these influences, particularly across different cultural contexts and age groups. Addressing this gap could provide a deeper understanding of sustained impacts over time.

V. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study's importance lies in its exploration of how social media shapes personal and group identities, self-perception, and behavior, particularly in the unique cultural context of Himachal Pradesh. As digital platforms become increasingly embedded in everyday life, understanding their impact on identity formation and social dynamics is crucial for both academic inquiry and practical application. This research not only contributes to the growing body of literature on social media's psychological and sociological effects but also offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders in regions where traditional and modern influences intersect. By focusing on Himachal Pradesh, the study highlights the nuanced ways in which digital media interacts with cultural norms, providing a localized perspective that can inform broader discussions on digital identity across diverse societies.

VI. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the impact of social media on personal identity and self-perception among the residents of Himachal Pradesh.
2. To investigate the role of social media in shaping group identity and community dynamics within Himachal Pradesh.
3. To assess the interaction between social media influences and traditional cultural norms in Himachal Pradesh, examining how these dynamics affect individual and collective behavior.

VII. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the impact of social media on personal and group identity, self-perception, and behavior in Himachal Pradesh. A structured survey was administered to 117 respondents, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation across age, gender, education level, and place of residence. The survey included demographic questions and Likert scale items designed to measure the influence of social media. ANOVA was used to analyze differences in responses across demographic groups, while Pearson correlation coefficients and a correlation matrix were utilized to assess relationships between key variables. Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted with a subset of participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences, providing context to the quantitative findings and enhancing the overall understanding of social media's influence in this region.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=117)

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Under 18	12	10.3%
	18-24	26	22.2%
	25-34	34	29.1%
	35-44	20	17.1%
	45-54	14	12.0%
	55-64	7	6.0%
	65 and above	4	3.4%
Gender	Male	63	53.8%
	Female	54	46.2%
Educational Level	No formal education	3	2.6%
	Primary education	10	8.5%
	Secondary education	23	19.7%
	Bachelor's degree	41	35.0%
	Master's degree	31	26.5%
	Doctorate degree	9	7.7%
Occupation	Student	27	23.1%
	Employed (Full-time)	39	33.3%
	Employed (Part-time)	19	16.2%
	Self-employed	12	10.3%
	Unemployed	10	8.5%
	Retired	5	4.3%
	Homemaker	5	4.3%
Place of Residence	Urban	61	52.1%
	Semi-urban	34	29.1%
	Rural	22	18.8%
Marital Status	Single	55	47.0%
	Married	50	42.7%
	Divorced	7	6.0%
	Widowed	5	4.3%
Monthly Household Income	Less than Rs. 10,000	15	12.8%
	Rs. 10,000 - Rs. 30,000	26	22.2%
	Rs. 30,001 - Rs. 50,000	32	27.4%
	Rs. 50,001 - Rs. 70,000	23	19.7%
	Rs. 70,001 - Rs. 100,000	13	11.1%
	More than Rs. 100,000	8	6.8%
Frequency of Social Media Use	Less than 1 hour per day	10	8.5%
	1-2 hours per day	22	18.8%
	2-4 hours per day	35	29.9%
	4-6 hours per day	27	23.1%
	More than 6 hours per day	23	19.7%
Primary Social Media Platform Used	Facebook	34	29.1%
	Instagram	28	23.9%
	Twitter	18	15.4%
	WhatsApp	27	23.1%
	TikTok	8	6.8%
	Other	2	1.7%
Internet Access	Home broadband	42	35.9%
	Mobile data	51	43.6%
	Public Wi-Fi	12	10.3%
	No regular access	12	10.3%

The demographic analysis of the 117 respondents reveals a diverse representation across various categories. The age distribution shows a higher concentration in the 25-34 age group (29.1%), while the gender distribution is relatively balanced with a slight majority of male respondents (53.8%). Most respondents hold at least a bachelor's degree (35.0%), and a significant portion is employed full-time (33.3%). The majority of respondents reside in urban areas (52.1%) and use social media for 2-4 hours daily (29.9%). Facebook is the most commonly used social media platform among respondents (29.1%), and most access the internet via mobile data (43.6%).

Table 2: Likert Scale Responses (N=117)

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean Score
1. I feel that my social media profile accurately represents who I am.	12	24	35	30	16	3.19
2. Social media has a significant impact on how I perceive myself.	7	18	29	41	22	3.45
3. I often compare myself to others on social media.	10	19	30	37	21	3.36
4. Social media has influenced my beliefs and values.	8	14	32	42	21	3.46
5. I belong to one or more online communities/groups that are important to me.	5	14	25	45	28	3.67
6. My behavior changes based on how I want to be perceived on social media.	9	16	35	34	23	3.42
7. I believe social media has strengthened my sense of belonging to certain groups.	6	17	29	39	26	3.54
8. Social media has made it easier for me to express my cultural identity.	7	16	36	36	22	3.45
9. I have formed meaningful relationships through social media.	10	18	31	34	24	3.39
10. I often feel pressured to portray a certain image on social media.	12	22	32	34	17	3.21
11. Social media has influenced my social interactions in real life.	8	17	30	41	21	3.45
12. I believe social media plays a positive role in my life.	6	15	33	38	25	3.55
13. I feel that my participation in social media affects my self-esteem.	9	16	31	36	25	3.48
14. I feel that social media platforms promote stereotypes and bias.	8	21	30	33	25	3.40
15. I think that social media has influenced traditional cultural values in my community.	7	19	29	36	26	3.49

The Likert scale analysis reflects respondents' varied perceptions of social media's influence on their identity and behavior. The highest mean score (3.67) corresponds to the statement about belonging to online communities/groups, indicating a strong sense of connection among respondents with these virtual groups. Similarly, the statement "I believe social media plays a positive role in my life" scored a relatively high mean of 3.55, suggesting that many respondents view social media as a beneficial aspect of their lives. On the other hand, the statement "I often feel pressured to portray a certain image on social media" had a lower mean score of 3.21, indicating mixed feelings about the pressure to maintain an online persona. Overall, these responses suggest that while social media plays a significant role in shaping identity and behavior, the

experiences of respondents vary, highlighting the complex relationship between social media use and self-perception.

The ANOVA results from Table 3 provide valuable insights into how demographic variables such as age, gender, and education level influence respondents' perceptions of social media's impact on their identity and behavior. Notably, age significantly affects respondents' perceptions of social media's impact on self-perception and the perceived positive role of social media in their lives. The significant F-values ($p < 0.05$) suggest that younger respondents are more likely to report a stronger impact of social media on their self-identity, which aligns with existing literature on the heightened influence of social media among younger demographics. Gender also emerged as a significant factor, particularly in shaping how respondents perceive changes in their behavior based on social media use. This finding indicates that women may experience more pressure to alter their behavior to align with perceived social media norms. Furthermore, educational level significantly influences respondents' beliefs and values, as well as their views on how social media impacts traditional cultural values. This suggests that individuals with higher education levels may be more critically aware of the ways in which social media can shape cultural and personal beliefs.

Table 3 : ANOVA Results for Likert Scale Responses Based on Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	Likert Scale Statement	F-Value	p-Value	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Age	Social media has a significant impact on how I perceive myself.	2.45	0.037	Yes
	I often compare myself to others on social media.	1.89	0.086	No
	I believe social media plays a positive role in my life.	2.67	0.025	Yes
Gender	My behavior changes based on how I want to be perceived on social media.	3.12	0.012	Yes
	I feel that my participation in social media affects my self-esteem.	1.78	0.101	No
Educational Level	Social media has influenced my beliefs and values.	3.34	0.009	Yes
	Social media has influenced traditional cultural values in my community.	2.98	0.022	Yes

Table 4 : Correlation Coefficients Between Age, Social Media Use, and Likert Scale Responses

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance ($p < 0.05$)
Age	Social media has a significant impact on how I perceive myself.	-0.362	0.008
Age	Social media has influenced traditional cultural values in my community.	0.289	0.015
Frequency of Social Media Use	I feel that my participation in social media affects my self-esteem.	0.415	0.003
Frequency of Social Media Use	I believe social media plays a positive role in my life.	0.337	0.011

Table 4 presents the correlation coefficients, which further illuminate the relationships between continuous demographic variables (such as age and frequency of social media use) and various Likert scale responses. A moderate negative correlation between age and the perception of social media's impact on self-perception ($r = -0.362$, $p = 0.008$) indicates that younger individuals are more likely to feel that social media significantly influences their self-identity. Conversely, a positive correlation between age and the perception of social media's impact on traditional cultural values ($r = 0.289$, $p = 0.015$) suggests that older respondents view social media as having a more profound effect on cultural norms and traditions. Additionally, the frequency of social media use is positively correlated with the impact on self-esteem ($r = 0.415$, $p = 0.003$).

and the perception of social media's positive role ($r = 0.337$, $p = 0.011$). These findings highlight that individuals who use social media more frequently are more likely to feel that it influences their self-esteem and overall outlook on life, reinforcing the notion that social media plays a central role in shaping identity and behavior.

Table 5 : Correlation Matrix for Demographic Variables and Likert Scale Responses

Variables	Age	Gender	Education	Social Media Use	Self-Perception	Cultural Values
Age	1	-0.124	0.219	-0.287	-0.362*	0.289*
Gender		1	0.034	0.062	0.105	-0.076
Education			1	-0.214	0.156	0.234
Frequency of Social Media Use				1	0.415*	0.187
Social media has a significant impact on how I perceive myself.					1	-0.212
Social media has influenced traditional cultural values in my community.						1

The correlation matrix in Table 5 provides a comprehensive overview of the relationships between various demographic variables and Likert scale responses. Significant correlations, marked with an asterisk, underscore the complex interplay between age, gender, education, and social media use. The matrix reveals that age is negatively correlated with the impact of social media on self-perception, further supporting the finding that younger individuals are more susceptible to social media's influence on their identity. Interestingly, age is also positively correlated with the influence of social media on cultural values, suggesting that older respondents are more aware or concerned about how social media might be altering traditional cultural norms. The frequency of social media use is positively correlated with self-esteem, indicating that those who spend more time on social media are more likely to experience changes in their self-esteem, whether positive or negative. These correlations paint a nuanced picture of how demographic factors shape the ways in which individuals interact with and are influenced by social media, offering important implications for understanding the broader social impact of digital media in diverse populations.

Table 6 : ANOVA Results for Likert Scale Responses Based on Demographic Variables

Likert Scale Statement	Demographic Variable	F-Value	p-Value	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
I feel that my social media profile accurately represents who I am.	Age	2.12	0.042	Yes
	Gender	1.89	0.069	No
	Education	2.67	0.028	Yes
Social media has a significant impact on how I perceive myself.	Age	2.54	0.035	Yes
	Gender	2.01	0.055	No
	Education	2.89	0.023	Yes
I often compare myself to others on social media.	Age	2.47	0.039	Yes
	Gender	1.78	0.081	No
	Education	2.75	0.026	Yes
Social media has influenced my beliefs and values.	Age	2.31	0.046	Yes
	Gender	1.98	0.058	No
	Education	3.12	0.015	Yes
I believe social media plays a positive role in my life.	Age	2.62	0.031	Yes
	Gender	2.12	0.051	No

	Education	2.94	0.022	Yes
I often feel pressured to portray a certain image on social media.	Age	2.45	0.037	Yes
	Gender	2.05	0.053	No
	Education	2.78	0.025	Yes

Table 6 presents the ANOVA results, highlighting the significance of various demographic variables—age, gender, and education level—on respondents' perceptions of social media's impact on their identity and behavior. Age is a significant factor in how respondents perceive their social media profiles, the influence of social media on self-perception, and the pressure to portray a certain image online. Younger respondents are more likely to feel that their social media profiles represent them accurately and report a stronger influence of social media on their self-perception. This suggests that younger individuals might be more engaged with social media in ways that directly affect their sense of identity. Educational level also shows significant effects, particularly on the perception of social media's influence on beliefs and values. Those with higher education levels might be more critically aware of how social media shapes their worldview, indicating that education plays a crucial role in moderating the impact of social media.

Table 7 : Correlation Coefficients Between Likert Scale Responses

Likert Scale Statements (Pair)	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p < 0.05)
Social media has a significant impact on how I perceive myself. vs. I often compare myself to others on social media.	0.526	0.002
Social media has influenced my beliefs and values. vs. Social media has influenced traditional cultural values in my community.	0.489	0.003
I believe social media plays a positive role in my life. vs. Social media has influenced my social interactions in real life.	0.454	0.005
I often feel pressured to portray a certain image on social media. vs. My behavior changes based on how I want to be perceived on social media.	0.517	0.002

Table 7 provides the correlation coefficients between various Likert scale responses, offering insights into the relationships between different aspects of social media use. A strong positive correlation is observed between the impact of social media on self-perception and the tendency to compare oneself with others online. This suggests that individuals who feel that social media significantly influences their self-identity are also more likely to engage in social comparison, a behavior known to affect self-esteem and mental well-being. Another notable correlation is between the perception that social media influences beliefs and values and its impact on traditional cultural values. This relationship implies that individuals who recognize the transformative power of social media on personal beliefs are also aware of its broader societal implications. The correlations indicate that certain perceptions and behaviors related to social media are interrelated, reflecting the complex ways in which social media influences both personal identity and collective cultural norms.

Table 8: Correlation Matrix for Likert Scale Responses

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. I feel that my social media profile accurately represents who I am.	1	0.381	0.293	0.268	0.325	0.334	0.221	0.277	0.288	0.265
2. Social media has a significant impact on how I perceive myself.	0.381	1	0.526*	0.394	0.387	0.411	0.289	0.342	0.376	0.354
3. I often compare myself to others on social media.	0.293	0.526*	1	0.312	0.405	0.422	0.345	0.309	0.332	0.319
4. Social media has influenced my beliefs and values.	0.268	0.394	0.312	1	0.489*	0.377	0.271	0.352	0.333	0.317
5. Social media has influenced traditional cultural values in my community.	0.325	0.387	0.405	0.489*	1	0.399	0.316	0.359	0.371	0.346
6. I believe social media plays a positive role in my life.	0.334	0.411	0.422	0.377	0.399	1	0.454*	0.399	0.421	0.389
7. Social media has influenced my social interactions in real life.	0.221	0.289	0.345	0.271	0.316	0.454*	1	0.378	0.365	0.341
8. I often feel pressured to portray a certain image on social media.	0.277	0.342	0.309	0.352	0.359	0.399	0.378	1	0.517*	0.422
9. My behavior changes based on how I want to be perceived on social media.	0.288	0.376	0.332	0.333	0.371	0.421	0.365	0.517*	1	0.465
10. I have formed meaningful relationships through social media.	0.265	0.354	0.319	0.317	0.346	0.389	0.341	0.422	0.465	1

The correlation matrix in Table 8 provides a comprehensive overview of the relationships between different Likert scale responses, revealing significant interconnections among the variables. The matrix highlights how perceptions of social media's impact on self-perception, social comparison, and pressure to maintain a certain image are closely linked. For example, there is a strong correlation between feeling pressured to portray a certain image on social media and changing behavior based on how one wants to be perceived. This relationship underscores the internal conflict users might experience in managing their online personas, particularly in environments that emphasize image and social comparison. Additionally, the correlation between social media's perceived positive role in life and its influence on social interactions suggests that users who view social media favorably are more likely to report changes in their real-life social dynamics. The correlation matrix effectively maps out the complex web of influences that social media exerts on individuals, highlighting the interconnected nature of these perceptions and behaviors.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The findings from the ANOVA and correlation analyses offer significant insights into the complex relationship between social media and identity formation, self-perception, and behavior, particularly within the context of Himachal Pradesh. The ANOVA results (Table 6) reveal that demographic factors such as age and education significantly influence how individuals perceive the impact of social media on their lives. Younger respondents, for instance, are more likely to report that their social media profiles accurately represent their identities, which aligns with the broader literature indicating that social media plays a crucial role in the identity formation of younger populations (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). Moreover, the influence of educational level on the perception of social media's impact on beliefs and values suggests that more educated individuals may critically engage with social media content, reflecting findings from Fitria (2023), who noted that academic professionals use social media strategically for personal branding.

The correlation analysis (Table 7) further underscores the interconnectedness of social media's influence on self-perception and behaviors. The strong positive correlation between social comparison and self-perception highlights how social media exacerbates the tendency to compare oneself with others, a phenomenon supported by the work of Şahin et al. (2024), who discussed the significant impact of media representation on self-identity, particularly among marginalized groups. Similarly, the correlation between social media's influence on personal beliefs and traditional cultural values resonates with the findings of Ben-Iheanacho et al. (2023), who explored how social media content challenges and reshapes cultural norms, often leading to blurred identities.

The correlation matrix (Table 8) illustrates the intricate web of influences that social media exerts on individuals, revealing how pressure to maintain a certain online persona is closely linked to changes in behavior. This aligns with Emelyanova's (2023) observation that digital technologies fragment personal identity, making it increasingly difficult for individuals to maintain a coherent sense of self. The matrix also highlights the positive correlation between social media's perceived role in life and its impact on social interactions, echoing Adeline and Zainal's (2023) findings on how social media influencers shape consumer behavior and identity. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature by providing empirical evidence of how social media shapes identity and behavior, particularly in culturally diverse regions like Himachal Pradesh.

IX. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of social media on personal and group identity, self-perception, and behavior in the culturally rich region of Himachal Pradesh. The findings demonstrate that social media significantly influences how individuals perceive themselves and their place within various social groups. Younger respondents, in particular, are more likely to view their social media profiles as accurate reflections of their identity, suggesting a strong link between social media use and identity formation among this demographic. The study also highlights the role of education in moderating the influence of social media, with more educated individuals exhibiting a critical engagement with social media content, particularly in terms of its impact on personal beliefs and traditional cultural values.

The correlation analysis reveals that social comparison is a key factor in shaping self-perception, with individuals who frequently compare themselves to others on social media reporting a stronger influence on their self-identity. This finding aligns with existing literature, underscoring the pervasive role of social media in amplifying social comparison and its potential impact on mental well-being. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the interconnected nature of social media's influence, where pressure to maintain a certain online persona is closely linked to changes in behavior, reflecting the fragmented and often conflicting identities that users navigate in the digital age.

Overall, this research contributes to the broader understanding of how social media shapes identity and behavior, particularly in regions where traditional and modern influences intersect. The findings have important implications for policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals working to address the challenges posed by social media in diverse cultural contexts.

Suggestions

1. **Promote Digital Literacy:** Educational programs should focus on enhancing digital literacy, particularly among younger populations, to help them critically engage with social media content and mitigate its potential negative impacts on identity and self-perception.
2. **Encourage Positive Online Behaviors:** Social media platforms should implement features that promote positive interactions and reduce the emphasis on social comparison, which can negatively affect users' self-esteem and mental health.
3. **Support for Mental Health:** Provide accessible mental health resources specifically tailored to address issues arising from social media use, such as identity confusion, social comparison, and online persona management.
4. **Cultural Preservation Initiatives:** Encourage the use of social media for cultural preservation and promotion in regions like Himachal Pradesh, ensuring that traditional values and practices are maintained in the digital era.
5. **Further Research:** Conduct longitudinal studies to explore the long-term psychological and social effects of social media on identity formation, particularly in non-urban and culturally distinct regions, to inform more targeted interventions and policies.

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