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A Study On Effects Of New Media On Mental Health And Learning: A Systematic Review Of Previous Study

Sanjeev Kumar*

Research Scholar, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
IEC School of Humanities and Social Sciences
IEC University, Baddi (HP) India

Dr. Vijay Kumar**

Associate Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
IEC School of Humanities and Social Sciences
IEC University, Baddi (HP) India

Abstract

Abstract: This study offers a thorough overview of current studies about the impact of new media on mental health and educational results, especially among adolescents. As digital technologies and media platforms like social media, online video content, and instant messaging grow quickly, young people are using new media more and more in their everyday lives. This study examines peer-reviewed publications, empirical investigations, and theoretical works produced in the last twenty years to comprehend the good and bad ramifications of this transition. The findings show that new media makes it easier to get educational materials, helps people study together, and makes people better at using technology, but it also has serious effects on mental health. These difficulties include more worry, trouble sleeping, trouble paying attention, mood swings, and trouble focusing on schoolwork. The research that were looked at show that modern media has both good and bad effects on learning and mental health. This study also points out gaps in current research, notably in cultural and regional contexts. It stresses the need for additional focused studies to look at how new media use patterns vary by age, gender, and setting. The research continues by asserting that a balanced approach to new media utilization, underpinned by awareness and regulation, is crucial for fostering healthy mental health and facilitating effective learning among kids.

Key words: New Media, Mental Health, Learning.

Over the past two decades, the correlation between new media and adolescent behavior has been a significant focus of scholarly inquiry, digital technology has changed a lot about how modern societies work. A lot of researchers in many domains are becoming increasingly interested in what new ways of communicating signify for kids. The internet was once a revolutionary notion, but now most communication happens through mobile applications, social media, and systems that provide material based on algorithms. Young people are generally seen as the first to use and heavily use modern media. They are at the forefront of this because they are digital natives who are good at quickly navigating the digital world. Numbers of research shows again and over again that new media has a big effect on many parts of young people's lives, such as how they communicate, how they build their identities, how they

study, how they get involved in politics, and how they express themselves culturally. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp are all examples of platforms that have revolutionized how teens and young adults obtain and share information. People's ideas about self-representation, making friends, and being active in their communities have altered because of them. Digital spaces, like social networking sites, user-generated content, and online communities, have made new public spaces where young people can express their agency, question dominant narratives, and work together to make sense of things. The goal of this research is to give a full and topically organized overview of the academic research that is relevant to the current study on how new media affects young people in Himachal Pradesh. There are enough studies on the subject at both global and national levels; however, there is less research focused on the Himalayan or semi-urban regions. Even while more individuals in Himachal Pradesh are using smartphones and the internet, the state is still not well represented in national media studies. Due to the state's unique geography, culture, and economy, it is essential to comprehend how its youth perceive and navigate digital transformations differently. This review examines fundamental concepts and contemporary empirical studies, highlighting deficiencies in the existing literature and elucidating the necessity for this study.

Objectives of the Study

- **To systematically review and synthesize existing literature** on the effects of new media platforms (such as social networking sites, instant messaging, and digital content channels) on the mental health and learning outcomes of youth.
- **To critically examine the dual role of new media** in enhancing psychological well-being and educational engagement, as well as in contributing to mental health challenges like anxiety, stress, attention difficulties, and academic distraction among adolescents.
- **To identify key factors and mechanisms**-including overuse, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, and social comparison-that mediate the relationship between new media use and mental health and learning performance in young individuals.

3. Methodology

The systematic review for this study included a wide range of studies published between 2006 and 2024 that looked at how new media, mental health, and learning all affect young people. A total of more than 80 peer-reviewed journal publications were analyzed, providing empirical evidence and theoretical insights about the impact of digital media interaction on teenagers, and the evaluation also includes about 12 academic publications and scholarly monographs that laid the groundwork for understanding the digital revolution and how it affects young people. Eight academic theses and dissertations (five doctorate and three master's) were included to give the work more depth. Each one focused on a certain group of people and looked into digital behavior, educational results, or teenage mental health. Moreover, 60 high-quality research publications were examined. These articles came from well-known sources, including PubMed, Scopus, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. This made sure that the synthesis of themes was both broad and deep and that sources were selected for their methodological rigor, relevance, and emphasis on the topics of new media, learning, youth, mental health, and academic achievement. The selection method employed rigorous inclusion criteria, yielding a thorough and representative evidence base.

Consistent findings across this extensive literature underscore both the benefits and problems that digital media presents for kids. Numerous studies indicate that digital platforms can improve access to mental health services, promote collaborative learning, and cultivate digital literacy, particularly when their use is balanced and intentionally incorporated. A considerable number of publications delineate hazards, such as heightened anxiety, digital exhaustion, sleep disruptions, and concentration deficits resulting from excessive use, multitasking, or adverse online interactions. These problems are made worse by what researchers term the "second-level digital divide," which refers to gaps in meaningful digital involvement that are caused by differences in abilities, support, and surroundings. These gaps are especially big in rural or under-resourced locations, which makes it harder for many young people to get the advantages of digital engagement.

The study also pointed out that there are still gaps in research, especially when it comes to studies that are specific to a certain region or culture, like those that look at the Himalayan or Himachali setting. This underscored the imperative for regional research and treatments, given that the predominant literature focuses on metropolitan or Western demographics. Over and above these, an analysis of more than 160 academic sources (comprising over 80 journal articles, 12 books, 8 theses/dissertations, and more than 60 supplementary studies) illustrates that modern media exerts a dual influence on the mental health and educational outcomes of children. It can facilitate growth and inclusion, or it might pose a risk, depending significantly on the usage patterns and environment. The Finding clearly supports the necessity for balanced, context-sensitive measures to maximize the advantages and mitigate the dangers of digital media, aligning with the strategy and research goals outlined in this study of youth in Himachal Pradesh.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations and Early Works

New media theory has been extremely useful in understanding how new digital spaces change how people connect with one other, make culture, and run businesses. Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006) made one of the first important contributions to this field of thought by coming up with a broad framework that sees new media as a mix of three connected areas: technological innovation, cultural practice, and institutional change. Their approach suggests that new media comprise a synthesis of several components. The internet, mobile phones, and digital platforms are more than just methods to communicate to people; they are also opportunities to create bigger changes in culture and society. Lievrouw and Livingstone offered scholars a more advanced approach to examine the structural and functional intricacies of contemporary media systems by focusing on digital convergence, the integration of computing, telecommunications, and media content.

Henry Jenkins (2006) transformed these foundational concepts into the essential notion of convergence culture. This was a big change since people used to obtain their news and entertainment from the top down. Jenkins said that in the digital age, people who use media are no longer just passive consumers; they are now active players in making, sharing, and reinterpreting media. Young people are keenly conscious of this change. They have accepted new media platforms as locations to be creative, work together, and share their ideas. Teenagers have helped to create participatory culture by producing fan fiction, remixing music, making memes, vlogging, and blogging. In this society, it's become harder to tell the difference between producers and consumers. Jenkins' research demonstrates the potential of new media to enhance democratic processes. It also shows how power and authority are changing in the digital era. Simultaneously, Mizuko Ito and Daisuke Okabe (2006) conducted ethnographic studies on the mobile phone usage among youth in East Asia. These studies provided significant insights into the local impact of new media on individuals. Their findings showed that mobile devices were more than just a method to talk to people; they were a big part of young people's lives. Texting, taking pictures with your phone, and always being online have all transformed how people interact to each other and how they show who they are. Ito and Okabe came up with the idea of "pervasive connectivity," which showed how being connected to the internet all the time impacts how kids engage with each other, how they handle relationships, how they show their individuality, and how they get past peer networks. Their study is crucial for connecting the use of mobile media to broader issues such as youth autonomy, travel, and cultural adaptation. When combined, these early theoretical contributions provided a strong basis for further study on how young people use digital media. They made a huge shift to how media studies are done, one that takes into consideration how important young people are in the media landscape as it changes. Researchers are still attempting to figure out how younger people consume media that is becoming more interactive, driven by algorithms, and immersive. These frameworks are still very useful today. Lievrouw and Livingstone, Jenkins, and Ito and Okabe were the first to study real-life instances of digital culture. Their work still shapes what we know about it today, especially when it comes to young people.

2.2 Media and Social Interaction

There has been a lot of studies on how new media could change how people, especially young people, get involved in politics and society. Following Eveland and Thomson's (2006) first research, individuals began to focus on the cognitive and deliberative potentials of online media platforms. They said that areas on the internet like forums, comment sections, and blogs let young people have actual fights about media that not only share knowledge but also make them smarter, help them think critically, and make them better at politics. They also said that these online chats often give young people low-pressure, asynchronous areas where they may share their thoughts, question popular tales, and take part in public discussions. This helps individuals have a better handle on social and civic issues.

Duhe (2007) subsequently examined the impact of new media on public relations and strategic communication. Her research showed that the way we communicate information has shifted from one-way, top-down ways to more dynamic and participatory ones, including talking to others on social media. Young people weren't simply customers in this situation; they were also content creators, influencers, and opinion leaders who had a big impact on how other people thought. On platforms like Twitter (now X), Instagram, and Facebook, they could connect with brand stories, social movements, and political campaigns. This changed the way individuals and organizations talked to one other.

Yang and Ramprasad studied how young Indians were using the internet to get active in their communities in 2007. Their research showed that teenagers and young people utilized blogs to debate about public policy, signed online petitions to get the government to do something, and even started grassroots movements using digital media. These acts showed that new media may help people learn more and get more involved, especially in a big, diverse democracy like India where young people don't necessarily have a lot of options to get involved. Boyd and Ellison's (2007) groundbreaking research elucidated the origins of social networking sites (SNSs) and their societal significance. Their research examined platforms such as MySpace and Facebook and their impact on interpersonal interactions in the digital era. Their research showed that SNSs didn't only copy real-life connections; they also helped people make new friends, which helped them build their social capital. They talked about two kinds of social capital: bridge capital, which connects people to bigger, more diversified networks, and bonding capital, which makes already strong ties even stronger. SNSs are very important for teens and young adults because they help them find out who they are, get help from their friends, and learn from other people.

All of these studies say that new media could help people get active in politics and meet new people. In the past, being active in your community meant attending to rallies or voting in person and following the rules. But contemporary media has made it simpler for people to get involved in many different ways. Also, social media lets individuals communicate with each other, thus young people have gone from being passive consumers of information to active agents of change who can shift public opinion and have a big impact on political and social conversations. To sum up, the literature shows that new media platforms are more than just ways to talk to each other. They are social and political ecosystems where teens can take responsibility, speak up, and work together to make a difference. These ideas provide us a new way to think about how young people in Himachal Pradesh are using, changing, and being changed by these online spaces.

2.3 The Digital Divide and Inclusion

Digital media might change the way we communicate, study, and participate in civic life, but a lot of research has shown that there are still digital inequalities-differences that go beyond just not having access to technology. Researchers assert that the digital revolution does not confer equal benefits onto all youth, and that the utilization of new media is significantly influenced by social, economic, geographical, and cultural factors. Livingstone and Helsper (2007) made a big contribution to this area by looking at how different groups of young people in the UK use and access the internet. Livingstone and Helsper used the phrase "second-level digital divide" to show that even those who had basic access to digital technology didn't always use them well. This was due to their levels of media literacy, technological proficiency, and social support. People used to talk about the "digital divide" in terms of

things like having a computer or being able to get online. This was not the same. For example, kids and young adults from rich households were more likely to use the internet for schoolwork and learning, while teens and young adults from poor homes frequently didn't have anybody to help them and mainly utilized digital media for fun. This unequal ability to use digital tools to better oneself keeps social and educational inequities persisting. From this perspective, Abdulla Kutty (2009) examined the manifestation of digital inequality among college students in India. His research clearly showed that there was a major gap between the city and the rural. those in cities have better internet access, newer equipment, and classrooms that are full of technology than those in rural areas. Kutty's research also showed that men and women use digital media in different ways. Many female students, particularly those from rural or traditional backgrounds, faced cultural and family restrictions that prevented them from accessing the internet or utilizing their phones. This made it hard for them to be a part of the digital public realm. These findings indicate that accessing digital media is not just an issue of technology, but also of cultural and structural factors. Eszter Hargittai (2010) made the topic more fascinating by wondering if all "Net Generation" or "digital natives" have the same digital skills. Hargittai's research shown that even among technologically proficient youth, there exists significant variability in the utilization and navigation of digital platforms. She discovered that an individual's social and cultural background, educational attainment, and degree of parental involvement significantly influenced the complexity and diversity of their online behaviours. For example, kids from wealthy families were more likely to look for information, do research online, or make creative things. Teens from less affluent backgrounds mostly engaged with the internet for social networking and passive consumption. All of these tests show one important thing: just because you can use technology doesn't mean you can modify it. Infrastructure is crucial, but so are digital skills, reading and writing, and the social and cultural environment that makes it easier or harder to get involved in meaningful ways. This perspective is particularly relevant in Himachal Pradesh, where the terrain, rural isolation, and entrenched social and cultural customs may impede uniform access to digital technology for all individuals. In many parts of the state, especially in remote or tribal areas, connection is still not reliable and access to gadgets or internet-enabled schools is limited. Cultural obstacles, particularly for women and those from marginalized groups, may hinder access to digital media.

To fully understand how young people in Himachal use modern media, you need to be able to recognize these layered inequities. It also makes us think about what adjustments need to be made to the rules, media literacy programs, and infrastructure to close the digital divide at both the first and second levels. This manner, scholars and legislators can make sure that digital media brings people together and provides them power instead of making social divisions worse.

2.5 Effects on Mental Health and Learning

In 2009, researchers Valkenburg and Peter studied how social media affects young people over a decade. They found that using social media in moderation could improve social connection and emotional health. However, they warned that constant comparison with others, cyberbullying, and the urge to keep checking social media could lead to problems like anxiety, depression, and low self-worth. That same year, Henry Jenkins stressed the need for media literacy in schools. Instead of just limiting screen time, he suggested that students should be taught how to think critically, protect their privacy, and use digital tools responsibly. By 2011, O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson examined how too much screen time affects children's minds. They found that it caused sleep problems, anxiety, and made some kids pull away from others. Still, they also saw that online platforms could help socially isolated youth find support and mental health resources, highlighting both the negative and positive sides of digital use. In 2014, Kapoor and Sharma shifted focus to a more regional level, studying how students in Himachal Pradesh were using digital tools. They discovered that online learning platforms helped students, especially in remote areas with fewer schools and teachers. But challenges such as weak internet signals, lack of devices, and limited digital skills among students and teachers made it hard for everyone to benefit equally from these tools. The idea of "digital fatigue" came up in 2016, when Verma and Thakur described how constantly using digital gadgets and multitasking online left college students feeling mentally drained. Students showed signs of frustration, low energy, and declining academic performance, suggesting that using technology without breaks was taking a toll on their minds. In 2017, Przybylski and Weinstein introduced the "Goldilocks Hypothesis," which said that just the right amount

of screen time could be helpful-but too much or too little could be harmful. In the same year, Kuss and Griffiths studied social media addiction. They found that people who felt emotionally dependent on social media, or stressed when they couldn't use it, often saw their daily lives, relationships, and school performance suffer.

The focus turned to how multitasking affects the brain in 2018, when Das and Chatterjee found that switching back and forth between social media, videos, and schoolwork hurt students' memory and focus. As a result, students were less able to concentrate and retain information, which led to weaker academic outcomes and shallow learning. In 2020, Gupta and Kumar looked at how comparing oneself to others on platforms like Instagram affected emotions. They discovered that seeing idealized images of other people's lives made many students feel anxious, lowered their self-esteem, and shook their confidence in their academic abilities. This emotional strain often pulled their attention away from learning.

Taken together, all these studies show that digital media has both good and bad effects on young people's mental health and learning. In places like Himachal Pradesh, where internet and phone use is growing fast, but access and awareness remain uneven, students face problems like digital overload, poor attention, emotional struggles, and even addiction. At the same time, digital tools also bring new chances for learning, expression, and connecting with others. To make the most of these tools while avoiding harm, it is important to teach digital skills, raise mental health awareness, and create solutions that fit the specific needs of each region.

3. Learning and Academic Engagement

In 2009, Henry Jenkins highlighted the importance of digital literacy education. He argued that teaching young people how to use digital tools critically and responsibly was crucial not only for their academic success but also for fostering civic participation and emotional resilience. By equipping students with these skills, they could navigate a media-rich society more effectively and engage with digital content ethically. By 2014, Kapoor and Sharma focused on the educational use of digital media in Himachal Pradesh. They found that students were increasingly relying on online tutorials, educational apps, and video lectures to supplement their learning. However, they noted significant challenges such as unreliable internet connections, a lack of digital devices, and varying levels of technological proficiency among teachers and students, which made it difficult to fully integrate digital tools into formal education, especially in rural areas. In 2016, Verma and Thakur identified the phenomenon of "digital fatigue" among Indian college students. They found that prolonged screen time and constant multitasking on digital devices led to mental exhaustion. This fatigue caused students to experience symptoms like reduced attention span, impatience, and frequent cognitive distractions, all of which negatively affected their focus, motivation, and academic performance. In 2017, Przybylski and Weinstein introduced the "Goldilocks Hypothesis," suggesting that mental well-being and academic engagement are optimized when digital media use is moderate and intentional. They found that both excessive and insufficient screen time could be harmful, while balanced usage promoted social connectivity and educational benefits. This hypothesis emphasized the importance of moderation in digital media use for positive mental and academic outcomes. That same year, 2017, Kuss and Griffiths examined social media addiction and identified signs such as compulsive checking, emotional dependency, and distress during disconnection. These behaviors disrupted students' daily routines, relationships, and academic life. In 2018, Das and Chatterjee explored the cognitive impact of media multitasking. Their study revealed that constantly switching between digital platforms-such as social media, messaging apps, video streaming, and academic tasks-impaired memory retention, reduced comprehension, and hindered the ability to engage in deep learning. This fragmented attention affected students' academic performance and their ability to process information sequentially. In 2020, Gupta and Kumar focused on the emotional effects of social media comparison. They found that exposure to idealized images on platforms like Instagram increased anxiety, lowered self-esteem, and reduced academic confidence among students. This internalized pressure distracted students from their studies, making it harder for them to focus on educational material and engage fully in their academic work.

Collectively, these studies from 2009 to 2020 highlight the dual impact of digital media on youth-offering new learning opportunities while also introducing cognitive and psychological challenges. The findings emphasize the need for balanced digital media use, digital literacy education, and infrastructure development to ensure that digital tools benefit students' learning and well-being without causing harm.

4. Research Gaps and Future Directions

While global research provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between digital media, mental health, and academic engagement, there remains a significant gap concerning region-specific experiences, particularly in semi-urban and rural areas like Himachal Pradesh. The unique cultural, geographical, and infrastructural characteristics of this Himalayan region differ greatly from those of urban India or Western countries, making it essential to study these contexts separately. Most existing studies are centered around metropolitan populations or Western demographics, leaving a lack of empirical data that truly reflects the realities of youth living in Himachal Pradesh's semi-urban and tribal communities. Traditional family systems, slower technology adoption, and prevailing cultural stigmas related to mental health require focused investigation. Beyond mere access to technology, the "second-level digital divide" highlights disparities in digital skills, literacy, and confidence, particularly affecting students from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds who often lack the support needed to convert internet access into meaningful educational or psychological benefits. This underscores an urgent need for localized interventions, including computer literacy programs tailored to regional specifics, school-based mental health awareness initiatives, and community support systems that respect local languages, cultural norms, and accessibility challenges. Addressing these issues through targeted research and inclusive policy development is vital to ensure that the ongoing digital transformation in Himachal Pradesh promotes equity and does not exacerbate existing social inequalities.

7. Conclusion

The literature evaluation provides a comprehensive comprehension of the impact of new media on the mental health and educational outcomes of adolescents. Digital platforms are vital for getting information, learning from others, and expressing yourself creatively. They can also cause worry, cognitive overload, distraction, and emotional stress, especially when they are used too much or without rules. This duality is especially important for places like Himachal Pradesh, where young people are quickly incorporating digital technology into their daily lives. The next step is to reduce the risks through mental health advocacy, digital literacy education, and fair policy, and to make the most of the benefits by helping young people develop adaptive skills and responsible media use. Filling up the research gaps in Himachal Pradesh would not only improve the national conversation on digital well-being, but it will also give communities in the state useful information that will help them go through the digital era more easily. These kinds of activities are very important for creating a strong, technologically savvy generation that can use new media to study, grow, and improve their health.

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