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The Effect of Social Media on Young Consumers' Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

As social media is an important part of Generation Z, it is imperative to conduct a study collecting both qualitative and survey data about the experiences of using social media in relation to Gen Zs' mental health. Awareness of the potential negative impacts of social media will encourage young people to make better decisions in their social media use. Studying the impacts of social media on consumers' mental health will help businesses and organizations develop better and more ethical marketing strategies in the future. Lastly, the insights from this research will stimulate public policy makers to develop better regulations of social media marketing.

I examine the experiences and thoughts about social media from a variety of perspectives. I found out the notion of "boredom" has been repeatedly mentioned and articulated by the subjects. In addition, I also found out that there are discrepancies between subjects' perceived and actual social media usage. Finally, subjects mentioned various types of social media content that could cause negative emotions and the coping practices that might alleviate the perceived negative influences from social media.

This study offers insights about the relationships between social media usage and psychological well-being among young adults. Excessive social media usage often arises due to perceived boredom, and likely leads to negative emotions, including negative social comparisons and increased anxiety. Understanding consumer behavior regarding negative emotions associated with social media is useful for exploring consumer-business relationships. Emotions are an important aspect of shaping marketing practices, as positive emotions are more likely to get consumers' approval.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As an aspiring social media marketer, I know that social media can have a positive impact on business. Social media plays a role in how a business communicates with its customer base. It can also be a tool for social listening and monitoring. Many businesses use social media for advertising and promotion.

Positive Effect of Social Media

Research in the US and other developed countries has shown that social media has a positive impact on consumer behavior. A study conducted among 18–35-year-olds in three developed countries, France, the United Kingdom and the United States, examines "how individual and national differences influence the relationship between social media and brand relationships" (Hudson et al., 2016). By conducting a study, the researchers concluded that "social media use was positively related with brand relationship quality" and that "engaging customers via social media is associated with higher consumer-brand relationships" (Hudson et al., 2016). Research has shown that social media contributes to improving consumer-brand relationship quality in highly anthropomorphized brands. Anthropomorphic brands are brands that use human-like characteristics such as emotions, images and voice, to attract customers. Companies use a variety of social media strategies to attract customers, including nostalgia-driven ads and relatability. Nostalgia is an individual's longing for past experiences or memories.

In this way, marketers can use popular songs from the past in advertising or scenes that remind one of childhood or home to create greater affinity for a product or service. A study examining the use of nostalgia as a tool to shape marketing practices has shown the different ways in which social media can be used to engage audiences. Social media can be successfully used to promote business and consumer relationships (Youn & Jin, 2017). Positive emotions associated with pleasant memories help to see the product from a certain perspective. Negative consumer emotions can impact marketing success. According to a study examining YouTube advertising and consumer emotions, "positive emotional appeals enhance the effectiveness of an advertisement, consumers' information processing ability and their recall" (Kujur & Singh, 2018). Emotions are increasingly used to shape marketing practices, as positive emotions are more likely to elicit desired action in consumers.

As a social media user myself, I am familiar with the convenience that social networks bring to life. They enable instant social connections with friends, both near and far. News, trends, creative and useful information give us the opportunity to keep in touch with the outside world without leaving the room. I first started using social media when I was 11 years old. At that young age, social media culture, including beauty standards, trends and social norms promoted in social media, have had a direct impact on my perception of the world. In my experience using social media, I have noticed how social media affects my mood and habits. I have repeatedly encountered content that affects my body image and self-confidence. My personal experience with social media and its impact on my daily life inspired me to conduct a study on the impact of social media on mental health. I use it about 9 hours a week. Social media such as Instagram and

TikTok are my main ways of communicating with my friends and family. The significant role social media plays in my life has made me interested in its impact on my mental health.

Social media platforms were created with the aim of enhancing social connections and interactions, both of which have potential to improve psychological well-being and happiness. The main arguments in favor of the positive impact of social media on mental health are that social media can reduce stress and fatalism. For example, a research study has found out that social media reduced stress among young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ngien & Jiang, 2022). The study suggests that getting information from social media sources during crises such as COVID-19 can reduce fatalism. Fatalism is the belief that circumstances are predetermined by fate or a higher power beyond one's control (Valenti & Faraci, 2022). The study suggests that reducing fatalism through social media ultimately aids in reducing stress and tension because social media can assist in keeping people connected, especially in crisis situations.

Neutral Effect of Social Media

Some studies suggest that social media has no impact on mental health. The UK Longitudinal Household Study suggests neutral effects of social media on mental health. A study examining the long-term relationship between social media use and mental health in UK adolescents aged 10–15 years, and the role of self-esteem and social connections as potential mediators, found little evidence to suggest a causal relationship between social media use and mental health problems two years later (Plackett, et al., 2022).

Negative Effect of Social Media

Nevertheless, many research studies suggest that social media may have negative effects on mental health, particularly on adolescents and young adults (Fumagalli et al., 2024), prompting the US Surgeon General's calls for greater scrutiny of social media platforms (Murthy, 2024). Extant research suggests social media use negatively impacts mental health through physical, social and psychological symptoms such as displacement of time, addiction, sedentary lifestyle, sleeping disorder, anxiety, unrealistic expectation, eating disorder, depression, stress, displacement of social relationships and social comparison (Bissell et al., 2024; Czeisler, 2013; Kraut et al., 1998).

There is a lot of research evidence to associate excessive social media use with negative psychological well-being. For example, social media use can cause various psychological disorders, such as depression, anxiety, insomnia and depression (Czeisler, 2013; Malaeb et al., 2021). Some studies suggest that social media often triggers fear of missing out because digital platforms provide easy access to an abundance of fear-of-missing-out (FOMO) inducing content, such as vivid reports of other people's "successes, beautiful families, and exciting vacations" (Chan et al., 2022).

In addition, some studies suggest that social media can lead to body dysmorphia and eating disorders, as people do excessive social comparison that gives rise to appearance anxiety, especially among women as they are more susceptible to developing eating disorders (Bissell & Chou, 2023). Eating disorders are a serious, life-threatening problem: "The cumulative lifetime risk by age 80 of anorexia nervosa (AN), bulimia nervosa (BN), and binge-eating disorder (BED) approximates 4.6%" (Schaumberg, et al., 2017). This study shows that the majority of posts

promoting eating disorders, particularly Anorexia and Bulimia, "were sent by girls (90%) who were ≤ 19 years old (77%)" (Cavazos-Rehg, et al., 2019). Groups of eating disorders were followed by children as young as 9 years old: "For instance, a 25-country European Kids Online survey found that 10% of children aged 9 to 16 had seen pro-ED sites online" (Cavazos-Rehg, et al., 2019). Sites that promote and glamorize eating disorders pose a direct threat to their users. Research has shown that "individuals who frequented pro-eating disorder sites had higher levels of body dissatisfaction and eating disturbance than a control group" (Harper, et al., 2008). Despite the restrictions taken by social media to regulate the phenomenon, new content continues to appear on the network regularly. Self-doubt and comparison caused by social media lead to eating disorders, as body image problems are "central aspects of eating disorders" (Fogelkvist et al., 2020).

Advertising and promotion of products and services for changing physical appearance and diet are common on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. A study conducted on social media bloggers found that "body size and appearance-homophily had a significant influence on parasocial interaction, advertisement recognition, and product purchase interest" (Pur, Rahayu, & Fatchurrohman., 2024). Research has shown that consumers are more receptive to social media advertising, especially that which relates to body images, when there are similarities between the source and recipient of the message in terms of appearance.

According to Reboot, a foundation that promotes critical thinking through surveys and opinion polls as well as supporting and conducting research, a survey conducted in 2021 showed that more than 50% of Americans reported their social media use intensified their feelings of anxiety and depression. Participants ranged from 18 to 78, with a modal age of 35 (Reboot,

2021). Some studies suggest that social networks create attachment, especially among impressionable users, and can negatively affect their lives, especially among people with little self-control over social media use (Zahrai, et al., 2022).

Excessive use of social networks can cause fatigue, as well as such a phenomenon as "boredom." According to one study "boredom is an interaction of both an unpleasant emotional experience and low arousal" (Vogel-Walcutt, et al., 2012). Subjects often use social media to avoid boredom, and the unpleasant emotions associated with it. The study found that "the analysis of our survey data from 286 university students confirms proneness to boredom is positively related to both information and communication overload and social media fatigue" (Whelan, et al., 2020).

Social media bullying, also known as internet bullying, is also one of the negative aspects of social media. Cyber-aggression, cyberbullying, and cyber-grooming is an issue that social media sites have been facing for a long time. "Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices such as cell phones, computers, and tablets" (Lu, et al., 2020). The majority of social media users are young adults and teenagers. A study of public school students found that "In a 2018 statistical report, during the 2015-16 school year, approximately 12% of public schools reported that students had experienced cyberbullying on and off campus at least once a week, and 7% of public schools reported that the school environment was affected by cyberbullying" (Lu, et al., 2020). Social media bullying can have serious mental health consequences, particularly for young people. In some reported cases, bullying has led to self-harm, suicidal tendencies, and suicide.

Having lived in Eastern Europe for most of my life, I was very familiar with the “death games” spread on social media among people in Eastern Europe such as the “blue whale challenge” and others. The “Blue Whale Challenge” is a dangerous “game” popular among 13 to 20 years old that began in Eastern Europe after 2010 and gained popularity in 2016 (Adeane). It involves a series of life-threatening tasks imposed by a “curator” to “players,” who must fulfill the whole list, and it ends with the suicide of the player (Lupariello, et al., 2019). One of the victims was in the 19th Army of the National Guard of Ukraine, near the Anti-Terrorist Operation zone, who committed suicide as a result of participating in the challenge (TCH, 2017). This is one of the clearest examples of how social networks can negatively influence individual cases and groups.

Impact on Consumer Experience

Research shows that social media has a direct impact on consumer behavior. Today's consumers regularly use social media to both consume content and interact with businesses and other consumers, participate in discussions, share knowledge with other consumers, and facilitate the activities of other consumers. A study conducted on the relationship between social skills and social media use with consumer behavior among people across the autism spectrum focuses on the role of social functioning on consumer behavior, exploring social media use as a mediating factor. The results of the study showed that "those who scored lower on our index of social functioning were less apt to use social media both in terms of commenting on others' posts and receiving comments on their own posts. Notably, however, these individuals were more apt to report being jealous of the experiences of others depicted on social media" (Levin, et al., 2023).

As this study shows, social media has a direct impact on users who interact with social media passively as well as actively.

Seed interactions, however, showed a higher level of social comparison. Seed interactions are a marketing strategy that makes extensive use of influencers and word-of-mouth to spread awareness and generate conversation about a brand. Social media influences consumer behavior through the creation of a sense of community and social pressure. "When other members of a social media group engage with a particular brand, individuals are interested in acquiring knowledge of the brand and the corporation; thus, the members of that social group develop an attitude toward the brand" (Sumer & Parilti., 2023). As an example, in the last few years, one could observe massive trends in certain brands of water bottles that have been spotted on popular bloggers. Similar stories have also happened with fidget toys, low-rise jeans, and many other everyday products. Bloggers often advertise clothing and personal care products across a wide range of prices and quality. Trends like these can lead to social comparison, FOMO, and in some cases, body dysmorphia. Also, the opinion of influencers about a particular product influences demand from fans. The use of social media marketing to influence consumer behavior raises a number of ethical issues. "Because of the enormous rise in online social networking, ethical issues such as privacy breaches, fabrication, harassment and scariness are becoming more prevalent" (Sumer & Parilti., 2023).

Social media culture creates pressure not only about appearance, but also about belonging to certain groups or minorities. Consumers' personal information that they share on social media can create conditions for discrimination. "The data can be expropriated for new purposes, disclosed to further parties remote from the individual and their communities, and replicated

within new accumulations of data that are not merely remote from the individual, but also unknown to them, and that 'know' them not as human beings, but as database entries" (Williams, 2006). The data collected places people into certain groups, offering or withholding certain information from them. This creates grounds for discrimination, offering them conformation based on general group trends, limiting their ability to explore personally.

Research Contributions

As noted, previous research shows a link between social media and poor mental health among young people. Studies link the use of social media with depression, anxiety, insomnia, stress, eating disorders, and fear of missing out. This study seeks to bring together two fields of existing research: examining the impact of social media on mental health and examining social media impact on consumer behavior. Therefore, conducting research that collects qualitative and survey data is important to understand the impact of social media on the mental and physical health of young adult consumers who grew up in the age of social media marketing. I aim to explore how social media shapes consumer habits, as well as impacts mental wellbeing, including anxiety, stress and sleep disorders. Through a survey, I will assess the extent to which social media impacts mental health in the context of consumer experiences. Previous studies have looked at these areas separately. I want to combine them to gain a broader understanding of the relationship between social media and users' mental health. Based on these studies, I am inclined to believe that social media has a negative impact on consumers' mental health.

Previous studies, however, have neglected to compare the correlation between the amount of social media use and mental health. In this study, I examine how social media detox, which involves restricting social media use for 48 hours, affects the mental well-being of the consumer. Conducting a social media detox helps determine changes in consumer behavior over a short period of time.

This study therefore offers a nuanced perspective on how social media influences the mental health of young adult consumers, highlighting themes such as boredom, inaccurate mental accounting of social media usage, and negative emotions amid social media usage. The findings underscore the importance of considering the content and the context of social media interactions, therefore contributing to the theoretical frameworks of social media consumption and psychological outcomes. Lastly, the insights about Generation Z's social media practices and challenges in this study will provide a valuable resource for future research in social media marketing, consumer behavior, and mental health studies. Understanding the correlation between the amount of time consumers spend on social media and their mental health can contribute to identifying ways to improve the consumer experience.

Chapter 2

Methods

I conducted this research using a mixed method approach. The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of using social media among young people in relation to mental health, including anxiety and stress, as well as physical health such as sleeping disorders. There are three stages in this research.

Data Collection

After getting IRB approval on May 31, 2024, I started to recruit subjects for research. The total number of subjects is 47 participants. Data in Stage 1 was collected from 29 subjects. Data in Stage 2 was collected from 47 subjects including the original 29 subjects. Data in Stage 3 was collected among 28 subjects. Only 10 of the originally recruited subjects in Stage 1 were able to successfully participate in Stages 3. An additional 18 subjects were invited to participate in Stage 3 after completion of Stage 1. All 47 subjects recruited to participate in Stage 1 and Stage 3 participated in Stage 2 only once.

Stage 1

Stage 1 consists of qualitative interviews. The subjects were interviewed to probe their thoughts about their social media use using an interview guide. The interviews varied in length, from 20-60 minutes. 29 interviews have been conducted, 17 females and 12 males. The subjects' age range is from 18 to 25 years old. The complete recordings of the subjects' responses to the

interview questions were transcribed into text for analysis. Each respondent was coded with an R number in the first stage. Random code numbers assigned to each Stage 1 subject ranged from R01 to R44. The number of numbers exceeds the number of subjects, since each participant who agreed to participate in the experiment received a number regardless of their further participation. Subjects participating in all three stages retained the same numerical code throughout the study.

First, I contacted the subjects about their preference to be interviewed, in person on Berks campus or over Zoom. During the interview, I asked questions about the subject's experience with social media using an interview guide. The questions include social media usage (e.g., time, apps, topics to follow, checking frequency), changes in social media usage over time, emotional responses, social comparison, incidences of cyber bullying, discrimination, social media's impact on their life, and so on. The interview guide in its entirety appears in Appendix 1. Subjects also took screenshots of the screen time information and emailed/text-messaged it to me (e.g., for iOS, go to Settings/Screen Time/See All App & Website Activity, then an image of the daily average, entertainment, productivity and finance, social, and total screen time appeared). The interviews were video and audio recorded via Zoom so that the subjects' verbatim responses could be transcribed.

Stage 2

The subject answered a 10-minute online survey with a list of questions about social media and its effects on mental health, which included questions about social media usage, mental well-being, subjective well-being, fear of missing out, anxiety, demographics, and so on.

The survey link was sent via the Zoom chat function. If the Stage 1 interview was conducted in person, the survey link was emailed to the subject. Stage 2 survey in its entirety in Appendix 2. Subjects who participated in both Stage 1 and Stage 3 participated in Stage 2 only once.

Stage 3

Stage 3 investigates the effectiveness of social media detox among young adults. 28 subjects were recruited to participate in a quasi-field experiment in which they were to refrain from using social media for 48 hours, including 10 subjects from Stage 1.

Before the detox, the subjects answered an online survey about their experience with social media and its relations with psychological well-being (same as Stage 2 survey). Then, the participants were given instructions about detox intervention. The subject took 48 hours (about 2 days) without using social media, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and WeChat.

At the end of 48 hours, I reminded the subjects to email/text-message the screenshot of their screen time information. After receiving their screenshot images, they received a link for the Stage 3 survey. 28 subjects successfully completed the Stage 3 detox intervention. The subjects' age range is 18-25 years old, 17 females and 12 males. All 9 subjects who participated in Stage 1 and Stage 3 and 18 subjects invited after Stage 1 participated in this survey. Apart from answering questions identical to survey Stage 2, the subjects were also asked to answer reflection questions about detox treatment and the (lack of) social media effects on mental health. The questions did not include any identifying or confidential information.

Chapter 3

Data Analysis

Stage 1 Emergent Themes

For Stage 1, I reviewed the transcripts and generated codes through an “open-coding approach.” These codes were then consolidated into a comprehensive list of common codes. Lastly, these codes were grouped into higher-level concepts (themes) that represented subjects’ thoughts about the relationships between social media use and their psychological well-being, using a variety of theoretical perspectives, namely psychological, physical and social impacts. Notably, the concept of “boredom” emerged frequently in subjects’ narratives. In addition, this research identified discrepancies between subjects’ perceived and actual social media usage. Finally, the subjects also highlighted various types of social media content that could evoke negative emotions.

Subject Profiles

I conducted Stage 1 interviews from June to November 2024.

Table 1. Stage 1 Subject Profile

ID	Name	Gender	Race	English Proficiency	Age	College	Working Status
2	Don	Male	White	Native	20	PSU	Part-time
3	Michael	Male	White	Fluent	20	PSU	Part-time
4	Doris	Female	Black (African)	Fluent	19	PSU	Unemployed
5	North	Male	Asian	Native	20	PSU	Part-time
6	Alice	Female	Hispanic (Mexican)	Native	21	PSU	Unemployed
7	Cora	Female	White	Native	19	PSU	Full-time
8	Lora	Female	Mixed Vietnamese (Asian) /White	Native	20	Non-PSU	Part-time
9	Julie	Female	White	Fluent	20	Non-PSU	Part-time
10	Bianca	Female	White	Native	23	.	Full-time
11	Lily	Female	Hispanic (Dominican)	English as SL	20	PSU	Part-time
12	Alicia	Female	Hispanic	ESL	21	PSU	Unemployed
14	Ava	Female	Middle Eastern/North African	Fluent	25	PSU	Full-time
19	Bob	Male	Asian/white (mixed)	Native	20	PSU	Part-time
23	Lisa	Female	White	English as SL	24	.	Full-time
25	Tom	Male	Black	Native	19	PSU	Part-time
31	William	Male	Asian	ESL	21	PSU	Unemployed
32	Kiki	Female	Asian	Native	21	PSU	Full-time
33	Adelyn	Female	White	Native	25	.	Full-time
34	Matthew	Male	Asian/white	Native	23	.	Unemployed
35	Lexi	Female	Latino/indigines	Fluent	18	.	Part-time
36	Joan	Female	African American	Native	19	Work	Part-time
37	Jade	Female	Asian	Native	25	Work	Full-time
38	Evelyn	Female	White	Native	20	Work	Part-time
39	Calvin	Male	African American	Native	22	Non-PSU	Part-time
40	Nate	Male	White	Native	19	PSU	Part-time
41	David	Male	White	Native	24	Non-PSU	Full-time
42	Daisy	Female	Asian	ESL	19	PSU	Part-time
43	Bill	Male	White	Native	22	Non-PSU	Unemployed
44	Robin	Male	American Indian	Fluent	21	PSU	Part-time

Psychological Impact

Boredom

Social media often serves as a time filler for subjects seeking to alleviate their boredom), particularly in situations lacking novelty, meaning, autonomy, or challenge (Tam & Inzlicht,

2024). As people frequently associate a fulfilling life with diverse and engaging life experiences (Bargdill, 2000), those who are boredom prone are more likely to have mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, and lower life satisfaction (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

Using social media as a way to combat boredom was a recurring theme among subjects. They use social media as a distraction from the monotonous daily routine. According to interview data, young people seek out familiar or comforting content to distract themselves from the unsettling feeling of lack of stimulation or action. Boredom is the main reason for aimless social media scrolling for many participants. They define boredom as "nothing else to do" and a desire to "take a mental break" and "check out". An informant reported (R04):

"Usually when I'm bored or have nothing to do I just scroll through it (social media). And, I have particular people that I follow there. So, I like just to check if they've made a new video because it's just interesting."

Subjects frequently find themselves unconsciously checking their social media apps when experiencing boredom, such as eating, during non-working days, breaktime during work, before going to sleep. Social media is used as a kind of escape from the feeling of boredom, which some subjects define as "nothing to do." It fills the empty space "between classes" when the respondent is "not doing anything," as well as before bed (R40). An informant explained these excessive checking behaviors (R08):

"I'm bored. I have nothing to do. Usually in the morning right after I wake up and then right before bed. Because that's when you're doing nothing. You're just lying in your bed and there's nothing to do except do it (check social media)."

The urge to check social media occurs in the absence of other stimulants. This behavior often manifests itself as a habit, on an unconscious level.

Inaccurate Mental Accounting of Social Media Usage

Stage 1 findings also reveal that subjects often have inaccurate perceptions of their social media usage and its impact. On average, the subjects spend approximately 20 hours weekly on social media apps, with usage ranging from 1 to 21 hours. Some light (4-hour) users felt the need to limit their social media use due to perceived negative effects on productivity. Conversely, some heavy (21-hour) users did not consider their usage excessive and were indifferent to its impact. Medium (10-hour) users said that they were not dependent on social media, using the apps primarily to connect with family and significant others. Despite these varied perceptions, many subjects admitted that their sleep quality was compromised, as they often sacrifice sleep to complete assignments after spending excessive time on social media earlier in the day.

Negative Emotions Amid Social Media Usage

This study revealed that subjects frequently engaged in social comparisons with their peers, celebrities and influencers during their social media usage. This comparison process often elicited negative emotions of peer competition with others and even anxiety specific to social media. The subject, who had to take a break from studying for personal reasons, admitted that (R08):

“I actually do compare, like where I am at in life... because of all the treatment I've been through... I feel like I am behind in life because everyone else is like halfway through college, graduating college... but I'm not even through one semester or one year of college. So, I feel inferior and just like, worse.”

Their friends' activity on social media makes them compare their own successes with others. Comparing their personal lives with those who appear successful on social media serves as a constant reminder and worsens self-confidence.

Social media comparisons can affect mood. One subject admitted that the visible happiness of their acquaintances makes them feel worse in the case of an already present low mood. I will tell you about how social networks affect self-esteem, the subject admitted (R09):

“If people my age do stuff and then they just always be so happy and positive. And then when I don't have such a good day and then I compare myself to them and it just makes me feel worse.”

Self-perception is influenced not only by posts from acquaintances, but also by posts and statements from celebrities on social media (R02).

“I follow fitness influencers as a way to learn about new workouts and things like that...I feel like conflicting because it makes me doubt yourself.”

Several subjects reported experiencing cyberbullying, which included racial slurs, heated exchanges about race/ethnicity and health conditions (e.g., eating disorders), and personal attacks due to previous social media activities. While some subjects dismissed these microaggressions, others endured significant emotional stress and anxiety during these interactions, with one

individual describing contemplating suicide prior to the study. The subject received the necessary medical care at that time, and is currently working with professionals.

Physical Impact

Sleeping Disorder

Previous research has shown that sleep is essential for maintaining good mental health. Improving the amount of sleep has shown positive results in terms of improving mental health, burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation and more (Scott, et al., 2021). Checking social media right before bed is a daily routine for young consumers. This behavior often leads to a shortening of the time of healthy sleep.

Throughout the study, it became apparent that social media had a direct link to sleep quality among participants. Lack of sleep and poor-quality sleep can negatively affect the mental health of the subject. Research has found that social media often negatively impacts sleep quality. A number of subjects admitted that social media negatively interfered with their sleep, with many reporting finding themselves scrolling through social media instead of getting timely rest (R02):

“I always try to get a certain number of hours of sleep, so I'm not one to scroll before I get into bed. So, it affects my sleep quality in terms of like I'll have to stay up later to get my work done because I won't go to sleep unless I finish my work. So, it'll affect the amount of time that I sleep.”

Additionally, checking social media before bed can become a daily ritual. This habit can impact on the amount of sleep a subject gets on a day-to-day basis. In describing his daily routine, the respondent admitted (R23):

“...when I'm home I usually do some social medias just before sleep, just to feel alive...”

Some subjects admitted to trying to cut down on their social media use before bed. Many of them do so because they have had negative experiences with social media affecting their sleep. A respondent who has suffered from sleep deprivation in the past due to social media shared their experience (R02):

“...within an hour of going to bed, I will try to avoid my phone because I had a harder time falling asleep, like, right after I get off my phone.”

Avoiding social media use right before bed is one established strategy (R33):

“I really try to not get on social media right before going to sleep and right after I wake up.”

This strategy has shown positive results in improving the quantity and quality of sleep. Participants who practice avoiding social media use for a certain amount of time before bed report an improvement in the quantity of sleep.

Addiction

Social media addiction is a problem largely related to the fear of missing out (FOMO) and the constant desire to stay connected at all times of the day. Companies design social media in ways that keep consumers' attention. Previous research has shown that "Social media companies have designed their platforms in ways that render their platforms addictive.

Moreover, this is precisely what the attention-economy business model of social media companies strongly incentivizes them to do" (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021). Keeping consumers' attention is one of the ways to make money for social media and the companies that use it to promote their products and services. Social media addiction can take up a significant amount of time from your workday and free time. One of the subjects admitted (R07):

"My boyfriend has an addiction to sending me reels. Like today he sent me 100, yesterday he sent me 32. I've got like 200 and some reels to watch. And so that's what makes me really check it. Yeah, because if I don't watch it, then he gets upset. But also, I want to watch them."

In addition, social media algorithms often work to retain users' attention. Users continue to receive content that is specifically designed and selected according to their interests. Constant entertainment content makes it difficult to stop scrolling within reasonable limits. One respondent reported difficulty in stopping when using social media (R36):

"...especially with TikTok, that's the worst one. It is just the more videos you like, the more that they put those videos on your feed. So, it's just entertainment after entertainment, after entertainment, after entertainment. It's just non-stop entertainment. And that's why it's like, you know, you just keep going on because it's entertainment or if there's a bunch of that make you laugh, you're more likely to watch those, because entertainment."

The fear of missing out on interesting and exclusive content causes FOMO and a constant desire to check social media. The constant entertainment content makes it difficult for users to stop.

Social Impact

Social Relationships

Despite other factors related to social media that potentially negatively impact subjects' mental health, the quality of social relationships was not significantly negatively impacted. According to subjects, in most cases social media has a neutral or positive impact on social relationships. Social media can be used as an interchangeable alternative to text messaging. Answering a question about the influence of social media on social relations, "How does social media usage affect your relationships with your family and friends?" most participants admitted that social media has nothing to do with their social relationships. According to the respondent, controlled use of social media does not affect their social relationships such as friendships, professional or romantic relationships (R02):

"I like staying connected, but I also know when to put my phone down and focus on what really matters."

Social media helps maintain social relationships at a distance. It helps to have conversations and see news from the lives of loved ones at a distance, such as in another state or country. Several subjects who are international students or have relatives abroad say that social media helps them stay connected and feel part of a community by following the lives of their friends and relatives abroad. The respondent, who is an international student from Central Asia, admitted (R42):

"I'm far away from home. So, I feel like I need to use social media more, to connect with people from my country because sometimes we just get distant."

Despite the majority of neutral and positive reviews regarding social media and social relationships, some subjects had negative experiences regarding this. One of the subjects said that social media is a barrier to personal relationships. Distancing yourself from social media helps maintain face-to-face relationships (R05):

“I noticed that because I’m not on social media a lot, I have very positive social interactions when I’m with people would make me believe so because what I like hearing things from people themselves.”

The subject also admits that (R05):

“I try not to text them about everything there is to talk about because I want to hear it from them face to face and in person.”

Most subjects, however, had positive and neutral experiences with social media and its impact on various types of social relationships.

Coping Mechanisms

As social media usage is often considered as mindless and non-productive, subjects tried to limit their exposure to it by putting the phone out of easy reach during times they are working on tasks that require conscious efforts (e.g., working, studying, etc.), imposing a time limit on social media apps, turning off notifications, refraining from using social media before going to sleep so that they can attain a good sleep quality. Some subjects even purged their social media apps from their phones to avoid temptation altogether and only use text messages to communicate with others.

Nevertheless, only fewer than half of the Stage 1 subjects were successful in carrying out the detox intervention. Among those who completed the detox, they reported that they replaced the time they would have spent on social media with other activities, such as work, housework and chores, spending time with family and cooking, a variety of spiritual activities such as prayer and church service, as well as rest and outdoor time. Detox participants repeatedly reported a desire to change their social media behavior after detox, “After experiencing detox, I know that I don't need social media to socialize.”

Stage 2 Social Media Effects on Mental Health

The Stage 2 survey was developed and distributed through Qualtrics, and the data were exported into the IBM SPSS Statistics software for analysis. Stage 2 analysis was based on 47 completed responses.

Demographics

Of the total 47 young adult subjects who completed surveys, 51% were male, and their age ranged from 18 to 25 years old, with a mean age of 21.13 (SD = 1.74). As for the self-reported race/ethnicity, 49% were Caucasian, 13% were Asian, 13% were Hispanic or Latino, 11% were African American, and 14% were of mixed or other races/ethnicities. As for the highest degree of school the subjects have completed, 13% were high school graduates, 69% were college students, 4% graduated with an associate degree, 11% graduated with bachelor's degree. The social media usage ranged from 0.67 to 42.92 hours in a week, with a mean of 10.95

(SD =8.73) hours. As for the number of social media apps the subjects used, it ranged from 1 to 9, with a mean of 4.16 (SD = 1.76).

Measured Variables

Addictive social media usage (AddictiveSMUsage) was measured with a six-statement scale, adapted from Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) (Andreassen et al 2012). For example, one of the statements claimed, “I spent a lot of time thinking about social media or planned use of social media in the last year.”

Subjective well-being (SWB) was measured with a five-statement scale from The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, et al., 1985). For example, one of the statements is, “In most ways my life is close to my ideal.”

Mental Health (MentalHealth) was measured with a six-statement scale from Mental Health Inventory-5 (MHI-5) (Ten Have, et al., 2024). For example, one of the statements is, “How much of the time, during the last month, have you been a very nervous person?”

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) was measured with a five-statement fear of missing out scale (Przybylski et al, 2013). For example, one of the statements is, “I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me.”

Social Media Stress (SMStress) was measured with a five-statement social media stress scale (van der Schuur, Baumgartner, & Sumter., 2018). For example, one of the statements is, “Thinking about your social media usage, have you felt tensed or restless when you could not use social media?”

Social media-influenced body image consciousness (Bodyimage) was measured with a seven-statement scale from The Appearance-Related Social Media Consciousness Scale (Choukas-Bradley, et al., 2020). For example, one of the statements is, “I try to guess how people on social media will react to my physical appearance in my pictures.”

Social Comparison (SocialComparison) was measured with a five-statement social comparison orientation scale (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). For example, one of the statements is, “I often compare how my loved ones are doing with how others are doing.”

Materialism (Materialism) was measured with a five-statement scale from the shortened form of the material values scale. (Richins., 2004). For example, one of the statements is, “I often compare how my loved ones are doing with how others are doing.”

The number of hours in a week the subject spent on entertainment, social media, and productivity apps on his/her phone is measured with the “Entertainment,” “Social” and “Productivity” variables respectively. The number of “Entertainment,” “Social” and “Productivity” apps used by the subject in the last week is measured with “NumberEnter.” “NumberSocial” and “NumberProductivity.”

Correlations of Addictive Social Media Usage and Various Variables

To investigate the impact of addictive social media usage, I conducted correlation analysis among these variables: mental health, subjective well-being, fear of missing out, sleeping quality, social media stress, social media-influenced body image consciousness, social comparison, and materialism.

Table 2. Correlations of Addictive Social Media Usage and Various Variables

		Correlations														
		AddictiveSMUs age	SWB	MentalHealth	FOMO	SleepQuality	SMSStress	BodyImage	SocialCompari son	Materialism	Entertainment	Social	Productivity	NumberEnter	NumberSocial	NumberProduc tivity
AddictiveSMUsage	Pearson Correlation	1	-.229	-.330 [*]	.446 ^{**}	-.299 [*]	.636 ^{**}	.369 [*]	.439 ^{**}	.340 [*]	-.034	-.029	-.194	.140	.184	.304
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.121	.023	.002	.041	<.001	.011	.002	.020	.833	.852	.304	.421	.275	.252
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
SWB	Pearson Correlation	-.229	1	.565 ^{**}	-.086	.533 ^{**}	-.125	-.089	-.133	-.001	-.093	.185	-.034	.217	.476 ^{**}	.212
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.121		<.001	.565	<.001	.404	.554	.373	.997	.557	.236	.858	.211	.003	.430
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
MentalHealth	Pearson Correlation	-.330 [*]	.565 ^{**}	1	-.470 ^{**}	.427 ^{**}	-.477 ^{**}	-.474 ^{**}	-.161	-.051	.180	.145	-.009	.396 [*]	.138	.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	<.001		<.001	.003	<.001	<.001	.280	.736	.255	.355	.963	.019	.417	.741
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
FOMO	Pearson Correlation	.446 ^{**}	-.086	-.470 ^{**}	1	-.199	.440 ^{**}	.542 ^{**}	.341 [*]	-.009	-.049	.046	-.039	-.186	.291	.299
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.565	<.001		.180	.002	<.001	.019	.953	.757	.770	.839	.284	.081	.261
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
SleepQuality	Pearson Correlation	-.299 [*]	.533 ^{**}	.427 ^{**}	-.199	1	-.168	-.072	-.049	-.087	-.025	-.150	-.065	.133	.213	-.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	<.001	.003	.180		.259	.632	.746	.559	.875	.336	.732	.447	.205	.836
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
SMSStress	Pearson Correlation	.636 ^{**}	-.125	-.477 ^{**}	.440 ^{**}	-.168	1	.392 ^{**}	.190	.332 [*]	.022	.134	-.037	.110	.148	.013
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.404	<.001	.002	.259		.006	.201	.023	.891	.392	.847	.528	.383	.961
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
BodyImage	Pearson Correlation	.369 [*]	-.089	-.474 ^{**}	.542 ^{**}	-.072	.392 ^{**}	1	.364 [*]	.009	.049	-.021	.051	-.049	.387 [*]	.200
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.554	<.001	<.001	.632	.006		.012	.954	.757	.894	.789	.782	.018	.457
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
SocialComparison	Pearson Correlation	.439 ^{**}	-.133	-.161	.341 [*]	-.049	.190	.364 [*]	1	.175	-.028	-.194	.053	.108	.058	.407
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.373	.280	.019	.746	.201	.012		.239	.858	.212	.782	.535	.732	.118
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
Materialism	Pearson Correlation	.340 [*]	-.001	-.051	-.009	-.087	.332 [*]	.009	.175	1	.359 [*]	.302 [*]	.239	.368 [*]	-.085	.060
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	.997	.736	.953	.559	.023	.954	.239		.020	.049	.203	.030	.616	.826
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	47	42	43	30	35	37	16
Entertainment	Pearson Correlation	-.034	-.093	.180	-.049	-.025	.022	.049	-.028	.359 [*]	1	.319 [*]	-.122	.371 [*]	.002	-.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.833	.557	.255	.757	.875	.891	.757	.858	.020		.040	.530	.028	.993	.909
	N	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	29	35	37	16
Social	Pearson Correlation	-.029	.185	.145	.046	-.150	.134	-.021	-.194	.302 [*]	.319 [*]	1	.207	.133	.548 [*]	.142
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.852	.236	.355	.770	.336	.392	.894	.212	.049	.040		.272	.445	<.001	.601
	N	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	42	43	30	35	37	16
Productivity	Pearson Correlation	-.194	-.034	-.009	-.039	-.065	-.037	.051	.053	.239	-.122	.207	1	.293	.005	.060
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.304	.858	.963	.839	.732	.847	.789	.782	.203	.530	.272		.155	.981	.825
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	29	30	30	25	27	16
NumberEnter	Pearson Correlation	.140	.217	.396 [*]	-.186	.133	.110	-.049	.108	.368 [*]	.371 [*]	.133	.293	1	.190	.525 [*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.421	.211	.019	.284	.447	.528	.782	.535	.030	.028	.445	.155		.274	.037
	N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	25	35	35	16
NumberSocial	Pearson Correlation	.184	.476 ^{**}	.138	.291	.213	.148	.387 [*]	.058	-.085	.002	.548 ^{**}	.005	.190	1	.613 [*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.275	.003	.417	.081	.205	.383	.018	.732	.616	.993	<.001	.981	.274		.012
	N	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	27	35	37	16
NumberProductivity	Pearson Correlation	.304	.212	.090	.299	-.056	.013	.200	.407	.060	-.031	.142	.060	.525 [*]	.613 [*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.252	.430	.741	.261	.836	.961	.457	.118	.826	.909	.601	.825	.037	.012	
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

It was found that addictive social media usage has a statistically significant negative correlation with mental health ($r = -0.33$, $p = 0.023$), statistically significant positive correlation with fear of missing out ($r = 0.446$, $p = 0.002$), statistically significant negative correlation with sleeping quality ($r = -0.299$, $p = 0.041$), statistically significant positive correlation with social media stress ($r = 0.636$, $p < 0.001$), statistically significant positive correlation with negative social media-influenced body image consciousness ($r = 0.369$, $p = 0.011$), statistically significant positive correlation with social comparison ($r = 0.439$, $p = 0.002$), statistically significant positive correlation with materialism ($r = 0.34$, $p = 0.02$). Nevertheless, the construct of addictive social media usage does not have significant correlation with usage variables.

Stage 3 Effectiveness of Detox Intervention

Demographics

Of the total 28 young adult subjects who completed detox, 57% were male, and their age ranged from 19 to 25 years old, with a mean age of 21.21 (SD = 1.64). As for the self-reported race/ethnicity, 57% were Caucasian, 14% were Asian, 7% were Hispanic or Latino, 4% were African American, and 18% were of mixed or other races/ethnicities. As for the highest degree of school the subjects have completed, 14% were high school graduates, 75% were college students, 7% graduated with an associate degree, 4% graduated with bachelor's degree. The social media usage ranged from 2.38 to 42.92 hours in a week, with a mean of 12.82 (SD =9.19) hours. As for the number of social media apps the subjects used, it ranged from 1 to 9, with a mean of 4.07 (SD = 1.80).

During the 48-hour detox, subjects reported they did the following activities: reading (43%), meeting with friends (32%), meditating (15%), hiking (13%), art and crafts (13%), playing musical instruments (6%), and so on.

Paired Sample T-test

A paired sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the detox intervention. The total mean number of hours per week the subjects spent on their phones reduced from 28.02 (SD=16.96) to 13.46 (SD=14.99), and the mean for social media usage also reduced from 12.82 (SD=9.19) to 6.09 (SD=6.92) hours. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in subjective well-being between the pre-test (M=18.21, SD= 4.07) and

post-test ($M=19.21$, $SD=4.28$) conditions; $t(27) = 0.050$. Similarly, there is a statistically significant difference in sleep quality between the pre-test ($M=6.11$, $SD=1.40$) and post-test ($M=6.57$, $SD=1.26$) conditions; $t(27) = 0.045$. Lastly, there is also a statistically significant difference in social comparison between pre-test ($M=35.64$, $SD=6.06$) and post-test ($M=34.07$, $SD=5.48$); $t(27) = 0.076$.

Table 3. Paired Sample Test

		Paired Samples Test								Significance	
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df		One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper					
Pair 1	SWB - A2SWB	-1.00000	3.10316	.58644	-2.20328	.20328	-1.705	27		.050	.100
Pair 2	MentalHealth - A2MentalHealth	-.14286	3.69899	.69904	-1.57718	1.29146	-.204	27		.420	.840
Pair 3	FOMO - A2FOMO	-.57143	5.62684	1.06337	-2.75329	1.61043	-.537	27		.298	.595
Pair 4	SleepQuality - A2SleepQuality	-.46429	1.40059	.26469	-1.00738	.07880	-1.754	27		.045	.091
Pair 5	SMStress - A2SMStress	-.57143	3.60482	.68125	-1.96923	.82637	-.839	27		.204	.409
Pair 6	AddictiveSMUsage - A2AddictiveSMUsage	.28571	4.05387	.76611	-1.28621	1.85764	.373	27		.356	.712
Pair 7	BodyImage - A2BodyImage	.42857	13.08499	2.47283	-4.64526	5.50240	.173	27		.432	.864
Pair 8	SocialComparison - A2SocialComparison	1.57143	5.63342	1.06462	-.61298	3.75584	1.476	27		.076	.151
Pair 9	Materialism - A2Materialism	.50000	3.52241	.66567	-.86585	1.86585	.751	27		.230	.459

These findings suggest that social media detox, albeit a short one (48 hours), has a statistically significant positive effect on subjective well-being and sleep quality, and significantly decreases subjects' tendency to compare themselves with others.

Chapter 4

Conclusion and Future Research

Since social media is a large part of modern consumerism, its negative impact on mental health can also affect entrepreneurs who use social media for business purposes. To better understand consumer interactions with social media, I conducted a study on the effect of social media on mental health. My findings suggest that social media has a negative impact on mental health in at least three ways.

First, physical impact such as displacement of time, addiction, sedentary lifestyle, sleeping disorder. The results from this research showed that social media impacts people's mental health. The study found that consumers tend to use social media when they are bored. Social media provides a distraction from the daily grind and the lack of other stimulants. The desire to check social media occurs throughout the day and is often unconscious. Some reported difficulty in abstaining from social media during the day. Many consumers have admitted to the effect social media has on the quality of their sleep. Some also admitted to being addicted to checking social media throughout the day and before bed. Many subjects misperceived their social media use. Users often find it difficult to assess their social media engagement. Despite these different perceptions, excessive social media use negatively impacted sleep quality. Subjects preferred additional time on social media to healthy hours of sleep.

Second, social impact such as displacement of social relationships, social comparison, fear of missing out. Frequent mentions of sensitive and negative topics can affect the health of consumers. Many participants engaged in social comparisons with peers, celebrities, and

influencers, which led to feelings of anxiety and decreased self-confidence. Seeing others' success and happiness on social media often worsens subjects' moods. This especially impacted those who were already feeling sad or depressed. Some subjects experienced cyberbullying, which led to emotional stress and anxiety.

Third, psychological impacts such as anxiety, unrealistic expectation, eating disorder, depression, stress. Poor sleep quality, stress and social media comparisons are linked to poor mental health among consumers. During the study, several participants admitted that social media made them feel negative about their body size or shape. Consumers are often exposed to negative content on social media that can put them in a bad mood, making them feel sad or angry.

Social media has shown some positive effects on social relationships. Consumers who use social media have the opportunity to stay in touch with family and friends at a distance. On the other hand, social media increases the level of dissatisfaction with one's own life and achievements, through constant self-importance and FOMO.

This research offers valuable insights into the relationships between social media usage and psychological well-being among young adults. Excessive social media use, often driven by perceived boredom, is likely to result in negative emotions, including negative social comparisons and increased anxiety. Detox intervention appears to be effective in mitigating the negative mental health effects of excessive social media usage. In fact, subjects indicated that in lieu of social media, they engaged in a variety of mindful activities, such as reading, meeting with friends face-to-face, hiking, meditation, and crafting during the detox period. The data from the Stage 3 meeting showed a significant improvement in overall consumer well-being. During

the detox subjects were able to redirect to activities that were beneficial for mental health, instead of distracting themselves with social media.

Future research should investigate additional effective coping mechanisms that can alleviate the negative effects of excessive social media use. Future studies may be conducted with a larger sample. Also, subsequent studies may consider a different age group of participants. My study was conducted with consumers aged 18 to 25; future studies may be conducted with adolescents (10 to 19) or middle age (40 to 60) group. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could offer a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of social media usage on mental health. Understanding these dynamics will not only aid in developing ethical marketing strategies for organizations but also inform public policy to effectively regulate social media use.

Academe

The findings from this mixed-method study offer a nuanced perspective on how social media influences the mental health of young adults, highlighting themes such as boredom, inaccurate mental accounting of social media usage, and negative emotions amid social media usage. The findings underscore the importance of considering the content and the context of social media interactions, therefore contributing to the theoretical frameworks of social media consumption and psychological outcomes. Lastly, the insights about Generation Z's social media

practices and challenges in this study will provide a valuable resource for future research in social media marketing, consumer behavior, and mental health studies.

Non-academic Stakeholders

This research offers actionable insights into the impact of social media on young adults' mental health, highlighting the importance of developing interventions that mitigate the adverse effects of social media. Marketers can leverage these findings to develop more ethical and socially responsible marketing strategies that minimize negative emotional impacts on the audience. Businesses can develop tools that assist consumers in managing their social media usage more effectively, promoting a more balanced consumption of social media. Lastly, policymakers can use the insights from this research to inform regulations that protect young adults and children from the negative psychological impacts of social media.

Appendix 1

Stage 1 Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project about social media usage....

01 SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Check your phone, how much time per week do you spend on each category? What are the apps do you use in each category?

Categories	Hours per week	Apps (Take pictures, if possible)
Entertainment		
Social		
Productivity & finance		
Total Screen Time		
Phone model: _____		
Daily average (hours)		

02 RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

How do you describe your relationship with social media?

03 TYPICAL DAY

What does your typical day look like?

04 WEEKDAYS VS WEEKEND

How do you use your social media differently on weekdays vs. weekend?

05 WHO CONNECT

Who do you connect with via social media? (e.g., friends/family who live nearby/ far away)

06 WHO FOLLOW

Who do you follow on social media?

07 TOPICS FOLLOW

What topics do you follow on social media?

08 SOCIAL MEDIA USE OVER TIME

At what age did you start using social media? What apps? Are you getting more/less involved in social media over time?

09 CHECKING SOCIAL MEDIA

Do you find yourself unconsciously checking your social media or certain apps? Did this (or the urge to do this) happen throughout the day? What makes you do check social media regularly? What emotions seem to drive this behavior? What do you think about social media making you less focus on the tasks at hand?

10 ANXIETY

Do you experience anxiety when you don't have access to social media for a period of time? How much time do you think you can spend without checking your social media?

11 EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

What kinds of emotional responses do you have towards the content in your feed? What content tends to have a negative impact on your well-being? How often do you see this type of negative content?

12 NEGATIVE CONTENT

Describe the most memorable negative content on social media you saw in the past month. How did this negative content affect your self-image, self-confidence, eating habits, moods, and social relationships?

13 SOCIAL COMPARISON

Have you ever compared yourself to people on social media, your friends or celebrities?
How does it make you feel?

14 CYBER BULLIED

Have you been cyber bullied before? If so, describe the incident. How did you make you feel? How did you respond to it?

15 DISCRIMINATION

Have you experienced any discrimination on social media before? If so, describe the incident. How did you make you feel? How did you respond to it?

16 QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

Do you notice a link between your use of social media and the quality of your relationships? If so, please describe.

17 POSITIVE EFFECTS

Have you noticed any positive effects of daily use of social media?

18 AFFECT OTHER LIFE ASPECTS

Do you think you spend too little or too much time on social media? How does social media usage affect your school work, job, your relationships with your family and friends, sleep quality, buying behavior?

19 REDUCE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Would you like to reduce or increase the amount of time you spend using social media? Why? How would you like to achieve that goal?

Appendix 2

Stage 2 Survey

Q1 Omitted

Q2 Enter the ID number in the survey invitation email.

Q3 Here are some words and phrases that people use to identify various aspects of their lives. For each of the words or phrases, please choose the item that indicates how you feel about that particular aspect of your life.

	Very satisfied (5)	Satisfied (4)	Neither (3)	Dissatisfied (2)	Very Dissatisfied (1)
Life as a whole (1)	0	0	0	0	0
Health (2)	0	0	0	0	0
Emotional well-being (3)	0	0	0	0	0
Sleep quality (4)	0	0	0	0	0
Energy level (5)	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship with parents (6)	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship with friends (7)	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship with partner/boyfriend/girlfriend (8)	0	0	0	0	0

Q4 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
In most ways my life is close to my ideal. (1)	0	0	0	0	0
I am satisfied with my life. (2)	0	0	0	0	0
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing. (3)	0	0	0	0	0
The conditions of my life are excellent. (4)	0	0	0	0	0
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life. (5)	0	0	0	0	0

Q5 How much of the time, during the last month, have you...

	All of the time (1)	Most of the time (2)	A good bit of the time (3)	Some of the time (4)	A little of the time (5)	None of the time (6)
been a very nervous person? (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0
felt calm and peaceful? (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0
felt downhearted and blue? (3)	0	0	0	0	0	0
been a happy person? (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0
felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up? (5)	0	0	0	0	0	0

Q6 Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the scale provided, please indicate how true each statement is of your general experiences. Please answer according to what really reflects your experiences rather than what you think your experiences should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

	Not at all true of me (1)	Slightly true of me (2)	Moderately true of me (3)	Very true of me (4)	Extremely true of me (5)
I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me. (1)	0	0	0	0	0
I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me. (2)	0	0	0	0	0
I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to. (3)	0	0	0	0	0
It is important that I understand my friends' "in jokes". (4)	0	0	0	0	0
Sometimes, I wonder if I spend too much time keeping up with what is going on. (5)	0	0	0	0	0
It bothers me when I miss an opportunity to meet up with friends. (6)	0	0	0	0	0
When I have a good time it is important for me to share the details online (e.g. updating status). (7)	0	0	0	0	0
When I miss out on a planned get-together it bothers me. (8)	0	0	0	0	0
When I go on vacation, I continue to keep tabs on what my friends are doing. (9)	0	0	0	0	0

Q7 How would you rate the quality of your previous night's sleep?

- ☐ Very good (4)
 - ☐ Good (3)
 - ☐ Bad (2)
 - ☐ Very bad (1)
-

Q8 This morning, how much of a problem has it been for you to keep up enough enthusiasm to get things done?

- ☐ Not at all (4)
 - ☐ A little problem (3)
 - ☐ A big problem (2)
 - ☐ A very big problem (1)
-

Q9 Thinking about your social media usage, have you...

	Completely not true (1)	Not true (2)	A little bit true (3)	True (4)	Completely true (5)
felt tense or restless when you could not use social media? (1)	0	0	0	0	0
felt disappointed when you did not get an immediate response if you posted something on social media? (2)	0	0	0	0	0
continuously pondered about something that happened on social media? (3)	0	0	0	0	0
felt tense or restless when you knew you received aa social media message but could not look at it immediately? (4)	0	0	0	0	0
felt disappointed when you had not received a message on social media? (5)	0	0	0	0	0

Q10 Below you find some questions about your relationship to and use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and the like). Choose the response alternative for each question that best describes you.

How often during the last year have you. . .

	Very rarely (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Very often (5)
spent a lot of time thinking about social media or planned use of social media? (1)	0	0	0	0	0
felt an urge to use social media more and more? (2)	0	0	0	0	0
used social media to forget about personal problems? (3)	0	0	0	0	0
tried to cut down on the use of social media without success? (4)	0	0	0	0	0
became restless or troubled if you have been prohibited from using social media? (5)	0	0	0	0	0
used social media so much that it has had a negative impact on your job/studies? (6)	0	0	0	0	0

Q11 The next questions ask about your experience with social media. When we say “social media” for this scale, we are referring to photo-based social media sites and apps like (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and the like). We are NOT talking about dating websites or apps such as Tinder. Please read each statement and decide how frequently this happens for you.

	Never (1)	Almost Never (2)	Rarely (3)	Sometimes (4)	Often (5)	Almost Always (6)	Always (7)
When people take pictures of me, I think about how I will look if the pictures are posted on social media. (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I think about how specific parts of my body will look when people see my pictures on social media. (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Even when I’m alone, I imagine how my body would look in a social media picture. (3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
During the day, I spend time thinking about how attractive I might look when people see pictures of me on social media. (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I try to guess how people on social media will react to my physical appearance in my pictures. (5)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
My attractiveness in pictures is more important than anything else I do on social media. (6)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

When I go to social events, I care more about looking attractive in pictures people might post on social media than I care about having a fun time. (7)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
If an unattractive picture of me is posted on social media, I feel bad about myself. (8)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I look at pictures of myself on social media again and again. (9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I zoom into social media pictures to see what specific parts of my body look like. (10)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
If someone takes a picture of me that might be posted on social media, I ask to look at it first to make sure I look good. (11)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Before I post pictures on social media, I crop them or apply filters to make myself look better. (12)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
If someone takes a picture of me that might be posted on social media, I pose in a particular way so that I'll look as attractive as possible (13)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Q12 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
I often compare how my loved ones (boy or girlfriend, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing. (1)	0	0	0	0	0
I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things. (2)	0	0	0	0	0
If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how others have done. (3)	0	0	0	0	0
I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) with other people. (4)	0	0	0	0	0
I am not the type of person who compares often with others. (5)	0	0	0	0	0
I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life. (6)	0	0	0	0	0
I often like to talk with others about mutual opinions and experiences. (7)	0	0	0	0	0
I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face. (8)	0	0	0	0	0

I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do. (9)	0	0	0	0	0
If I want to learn more about something. I try to find out what others think about it. (10)	0	0	0	0	0
I never consider my situation in life relative to that of other people. (11)	0	0	0	0	0

Q13 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes. (1)	0	0	0	0	0
The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life. (2)	0	0	0	0	0
Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure. (3)	0	0	0	0	0
I like a lot of luxury in my life. (4)	0	0	0	0	0
My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have. (5)	0	0	0	0	0
I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things (6)	0	0	0	0	0

Q14 Please record your current age (years old).

Q15 What is your gender?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)

Q16 What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- ☐ High school graduate (1)
- ☐ Freshman in college (2)
- ☐ Sophomore in college (3)
- ☐ Junior in college (4)
- ☐ Senior in college (5)
- ☐ Graduated with a two-year associate degree (6)
- ☐ Graduated with a four-year bachelor degree (7)
- ☐ Others (8) _____

Q17 What is your major or your area of study?

Q18 What is the name of the university are you attending/graduated from?

Q19 What is your employment status?

- ☐ Full-time (1)
- ☐ Part-time (2)
- ☐ Contract or temporary (3)
- ☐ Retired (4)

- o Unemployed (5)
 - o Unable to work (6)
 - o Other (7) _____
-

Q20 What is your marital status?

- o Married (1)
 - o Living with partner (2)
 - o In relationship, not living together (3)
 - o Widowed (4)
 - o Divorced (5)
 - o Separated (6)
 - o Never married/Single (7)
-

Q21 What is your ethnic background?

- o White (1)
- o Black or African American (2)
- o American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- o Asian (4)
- o Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- o Hispanic or Latino (6)
- o Others, please specify (7) _____

Appendix 3

Stage 3 Reflection Questions on Survey

2Q14 What did you do instead of checking social media?

☐

Reading (1)

☐

Going for a hike (2)

☐

Art and craft (3)

☐

Play musical instrument (4)

☐

Meet with friends face to face (5)

☐

Mediating (6)

☐

Others, please specify (7) _____

2Q14b Did you look for activities to use your time (in the absence of social media) before the detox experience?

☐ No (1)

☐ Yes (2)

2Q15 How did the experience make you feel? How did those feelings change over the two detox days? (Maximum 200 words)

2Q16 What did you learn about your social media usage? (Maximum 200 words)

2Q17 How will you use social media differently from now onwards? (Maximum 200 words)

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