

# Digital Resilience: Coping With The Dual Impact Of Social Media On Generation Z

Aishwarya Tomar\* And Sudhanshu Jayswal\*\*

\*Research Scholar, Centre For Journalism And Mass Communication, Hnb Garhwal University, Uttarakhand

\*\*Director, Centre For Journalism And Mass Communication, Hnb Garhwal University, Uttarakhand

---

## Abstract

This study examines the dual impact of social media on Generation Z, encompassing both positive and negative effects, while also exploring coping strategies employed by this demographic. The previous research was used to identify the positive and negative effects of social media on Generation Z. The findings of the study reveal that while social media facilitates connectivity, self-expression, and access to information, it also exposes Generation Z to mental health challenges, cyberbullying, and unrealistic beauty standards. Coping strategies identified includes digital detox, mindfulness techniques, and fostering offline connections. Implications for policy and practice underscore the need for comprehensive digital literacy programs, mental health support services, and regulatory measures to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on youth. By integrating these strategies, policymakers and practitioners can foster a healthier digital environment conducive to the well-being and resilience of Generation Z.

**Keywords:** Social media use, positive effect and negative effect of social media, Generation Z, Overall well-being

---

Date of Submission: 21-03-2024

Date of Acceptance: 01-04-2024

---

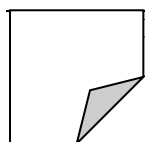
## I. Introduction

In today's digital age, Generation Z, also known as Gen Z, refers to the generation born after 1997. They are considered "digital natives" as they have grown up with technology and are familiar with social media platforms from an early age. Social media, on the other hand, encompasses various online platforms that allow individuals to create and share content, interact with others, and engage in virtual communities to express themselves and connect with people around the world. The influence of social media on Generation Z is profound, shaping their perceptions, behaviours, and relationships in ways that previous generations could not have imagined.

### Understanding Generation Z

In order to understand the relationship between Generation Z and social media, it is essential to gain a deeper understanding of generation Z's values, behaviours, and attitudes. Generation Z is a generation characterised by their ability to navigate the digital landscape with ease and their reliance on technology for communication, information, and entertainment. This reliance on technology has not only shaped their interactions and worldview but has also influenced their expectations and standards for content consumption. Generation Z values authenticity and transparency, seeking genuine connections and relatable content from the influencers and brands they choose to follow (Närvänen, Kirvesmies, and Kahri, 2020). Their exposure to a wide array of perspectives and lifestyles on social media has contributed to their open-mindedness and desire for inclusivity (Azizi, and Anam, 2023).

Moreover, the digital age has given rise to an era of information overload, presenting Generation Z with an abundance of knowledge and diverse viewpoints (Sharma, Kaushal, and Joshi, 2023). This access to information has fuelled their desire for social change and their inclination to advocate for causes they believe in. It has also heightened their awareness of global issues and contributed to their desire to make a positive impact on the world. Understanding the nuances of Generation Z's values and beliefs provides insight into how social media has become deeply intertwined with their identity and aspirations. As we continue to explore the complexities of this relationship, it becomes apparent that Generation Z's interaction with social media is not just a form of online engagement, but a fundamental aspect of their personal and social development (Olipas, 2022).



### ***Exploring the Definition of Social Media***

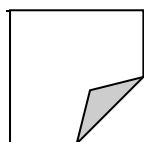
Before delving into the relationship between Generation Z and social media, it is important to have a clear understanding of what social media actually entails. Social media refers to online platforms and websites that enable users to create, share, and interact with content in a virtual community (Duong, 2020). These platforms allow users to connect with others, express themselves, and consume various forms of media such as text, images, and videos. Social media platforms include popular sites like Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, and TikTok, as well as other niche communities and forums. Understanding the relationship between social media use and well-being is crucial in today's digital age. Social media has permeated nearly every aspect of our lives, particularly for Generation Z, who have grown up in a world where social media is the norm and an integral part of their everyday lives. Generation Z, often referred to as Gen Z or Zoomers, is the demographic cohort following Millennials. Generation Z is typically characterized as those born between 1997 to 2010, making them the second youngest generation in today's society. Generation Z has been raised in a digital world, where technology and social media are deeply ingrained in their daily lives. Understanding the relationship between social media use and well-being is crucial in today's digital age, especially for Generation Z, as this generation is the first to have grown up immersed in technology and social media from a young age. Prior studies have shown mixed findings regarding the relationship between social media use and well-being among college students, including Generation Z individuals. Understanding this relationship is crucial because social media plays a significant role in the lives of Generation Z's individuals, influencing their behaviours, attitudes, and overall well-being. Being the first generation to be raised with constant access to social media. Considering that social media use is pervasive among Generation Z, and how social media use can impact the well-being of Generation Z individuals, the Digital Native.

### ***The Connection between Social Media and Generation Z***

Generation Z is the first generation to have grown up with constant access to social media, making it an integral part of their lives. This generation has become highly dependent on social media platforms for communication, entertainment, and self-expression. This dependency on social media can have both positive and negative effects on their well-being. Understanding how social media use impacts the well-being of Generation Z is significant for several reasons. Firstly, social media use has been linked to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem among these individuals. This is particularly important as studies have shown that Generation Z's individuals are more susceptible to these mental health issues compared to previous generations. Secondly, social media use can also impact the social and emotional development of Generation Z's individuals. It can shape their self-identity, perceptions of others, and social interactions. Moreover, social media can influence their attitudes and behaviours, including their views on body image, relationships, and societal issues. Understanding the relationship between social media use and well-being is crucial in order to develop effective strategies for promoting the positive effects of social media and minimizing the negative consequences on the well-being of Generation Z individuals. Their lives are heavily influenced by social media platforms, which plays a significant role in shaping their behaviours, attitudes, and overall well-being. Therefore, it is quintessence to understand the impact of social media use on the overall well-being of Generation Z in order to develop appropriate interventions, policies, and support systems that can maximize the benefits and minimize the risks associated with social media use.

### ***Positive Impact Of Social Media On Generation Z's Well-Being***

In exploring the positive effects of social media on Generation Z, it is imperative to acknowledge both its drawbacks and benefits. While social media can indeed pose challenges to the well-being of young individuals, it also offers significant advantages that contribute to their growth and development. Firstly, social media fosters connectivity and support among Generation Z (Imjai et al., 2024), enabling them to find solidarity and empathy within online communities, particularly on topics like mental health and societal issues. Secondly, it democratizes access to information and resources, empowering young people with knowledge and opportunities for self-education on crucial matters such as diversity, inclusion, and social justice (Hand, 2005). Thirdly, social media platforms serve as a hub for creativity and self-expression, allowing young creators to showcase their talents and engage in cultural discourse authentically (Duffy, 2015). Lastly, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for advocacy and activism, amplifying youth voices and driving positive change on various social and environmental fronts (O'Byrne, 2019). By recognizing the multifaceted impact of social media on Generation Z, we can develop comprehensive approaches that prioritize their well-being while harnessing the potential benefits of digital connectivity and expression. It is through this understanding and balance that we can create a supportive environment for Generation Z to thrive in the digital age.



### **Negative Impact Of Social Media On Generation Z's Well-Being**

While social media may have its positive aspects, it also poses negative effects on the overall well-being of Generation Z. Research suggests that excessive social media use can lead to the feelings of loneliness, increased anxiety and depression, and decreased self-esteem. Additionally, social media can contribute to a distorted view of reality, as individuals often present an idealized version of their lives through carefully curated posts (Wang, 2023). These highly curated posts can lead to feelings of inadequacy and comparison among Generation Z, impacting their overall well-being (Wang, 2023). **Mental Health Struggles:** Generation Z faces significant mental health challenges exacerbated by their constant exposure to curated depictions of others' lives on social media (Gkotsis et. al., 2017). The pressure to maintain an online presence often leads to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Studies consistently link excessive social media use to these mental health issues, underscoring the urgent need to address the emotional well-being of young individuals (Carbonell and Panova, 2017). **Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:** The pervasive nature of social media platforms exposes Generation Z to increased risks of cyberbullying and online harassment. The anonymity and wide reach of social media make it distressingly easy for individuals to become targets of abuse, fostering feelings of isolation, depression, and diminished self-esteem among youth (Giumetti and Kowalski, 2022). The deleterious effects of online harassment on mental health cannot be underestimated. **Unattainable Beauty Standards and Self-image:** Social media platforms often promote unattainable beauty standards and unrealistic lifestyle ideals, fostering harmful social comparisons and distorting self-perception among young users. These unrealistic expectations significantly impact the self-esteem and self-worth of Generation Z, fuelling concerns about body image and perpetuating feelings of inadequacy (Kassai, 2020).

By acknowledging these adverse effects of social media on Generation Z, it is clear that while social platforms offer benefits, their detrimental impact on the mental well-being of young individuals demands thoughtful consideration and proactive intervention.

From the review, it is evident that social media has both positive and negative impacts on the overall well-being of Generation Z. While it provides opportunities for self-expression, community building, and creative outlets, excessive use of social media can lead to negative effects on mental health and well-being. Overall, it is essential for Generation Z to strike a balance in their social media use, ensuring that they prioritize their mental health and well-being by practicing self-care, setting boundaries, and engaging in offline activities to maintain a healthy overall well-being. In conclusion, social media has a complex impact on the overall well-being of Generation Z. While it offers opportunities for self-expression and community building, excessive use of social media can negatively impact mental health and well-being.

One crucial area of consideration is the correlation between social media use and mental health outcomes. While numerous studies have indicated a link between excessive social media use and negative psychological effects, the mechanisms underlying these associations warrant further exploration. Researchers have suggested that the relationship between social media use and mental well-being may be mediated by factors such as social comparison, fear of missing out, and online harassment.

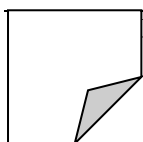
Furthermore, the role of digital literacy and media literacy in shaping Generation Z's experiences on social media cannot be overlooked. Educating young individuals about critical consumption of online content, the identification of misinformation, and the cultivation of healthy digital habits can potentially mitigate the adverse effects of social media on their well-being. In addressing the impact of social media on Generation Z's well-being, it is imperative to consider the dynamic nature of technology and its influence on social dynamics. As social media platforms continue to evolve, so too must the understanding of their effects on the younger generation. It is crucial for researchers, educators, and policymakers to remain attuned to these developments and adapt strategies to support the positive use of social media while safeguarding the mental and emotional well-being of Generation Z.

### **Strategies For Promoting Positive Social Media Use Among Generation Z**

As the impact of social media on Generation Z's well-being continues to unfold, ongoing research efforts will be pivotal in informing strategies that promote a healthy relationship with technology and social media, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being of this demographic.

### **Implementing Comprehensive Digital Well-being Programs**

To address the multifaceted impact of social media on Generation Z, it is crucial to implement comprehensive digital well-being programs in educational institutions and communities. These programs can encompass media literacy education, digital citizenship training, and mental health awareness initiatives. By integrating these components into curricula and extracurricular activities, young individuals can develop the critical skills and awareness necessary to navigate social media in a constructive and informed manner.



### ***Fostering Supportive Digital Communities***

Creating and nurturing supportive digital communities can significantly enhance the well-being of Generation Z. Online platforms that prioritize positive interactions, empathy, and inclusivity can serve as vital spaces for young individuals to connect, seek support, and engage in meaningful discussions. Encouraging the development of these virtual communities can provide a counterbalance to the potentially negative aspects of social media and offer valuable sources of emotional support and validation.

### ***Collaborative Efforts with Technology Companies***

Collaborating with technology companies and social media platforms is essential for promoting responsible and ethical online environments. Encouraging these entities to implement features that prioritize user well-being, such as customizable content filters, mental health resources, and transparent privacy settings, can help mitigate potential harms associated with excessive social media use. By engaging in dialogue and collaboration with technology companies, educators, researchers, and policymakers can contribute to the development of platforms that prioritize the positive well-being of their users.

### ***Empowering Critical Thinking and Positive Engagement***

Empowering young individuals to approach social media with critical thinking and positive engagement is essential for mitigating its negative effects. Educators and mentors can facilitate discussions and activities that encourage Generation Z to critically evaluate online content, engage in respectful discourse, and utilize social media as a tool for creativity, learning, and positive social change. By emphasizing the value of active and purposeful engagement on social media, young individuals can harness its potential for personal and collective growth.

### ***Research-Informed Policy Development***

Informed by ongoing research efforts, policymakers must develop evidence-based policies that address the intersection of social media and well-being for Generation Z. This involves considering factors such as data privacy, online safety, and mental health support within the digital landscape. By integrating research findings into policy development, regulatory frameworks can be established to promote the responsible use of social media and protect the well-being of young users.

In conclusion, the impact of social media on the well-being of Generation Z is a multifaceted issue that requires a concerted and holistic approach. By implementing strategies that encompass education, community building, collaboration, empowerment, and policy development, stakeholders can work towards fostering a positive and supportive digital environment for Generation Z to thrive and flourish. As we continue to navigate the complexities of social media, it is essential to prioritize the well-being of young individuals and empower them to engage with technology in ways that contribute to their overall positive development and flourishing.

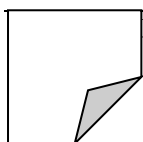
In addition, the addictive nature of social media, characterized by endless scrolling and constant engagement, raises concerns about its impact on mental health. The potential disruption of sleep patterns due to late-night usage and the continuous need for validation through likes and comments can contribute to feelings of restlessness, inadequacy, and a constant need for external affirmation.

As researchers delve deeper into these aspects, it becomes evident that the relationship between social media and the well-being of Generation Z is multifaceted and influenced by a myriad of interconnected factors. Understanding these complexities is crucial in formulating targeted interventions and support systems to mitigate the potential negative effects of social media while harnessing its positive aspects for the well-being of this generation.

Research has documented the multifaceted role of social media in the daily lives of Generation Z, encompassing both positive and negative impacts on their well-being. Primack et al. (2019) found that social media use among adolescents is associated with both positive outcomes such as increased social support and negative outcomes including cyberbullying and social isolation. Moreover, the study by Halston et al., (2019) highlighted that excessive use of social media is linked to higher levels of anxiety and depression among Generation Z. Therefore, while social media provides a platform for connection and self-expression, it also presents challenges that can impact the mental and emotional well-being of this demographic.

## **II. Implications For Policy And Practice**

Understanding the implications of social media on the well-being of Generation Z is crucial for informing policy and practice. There are several recommendations and guidelines that can be put in place to support young individuals in navigating the digital landscape while prioritizing their mental health and overall well-being.



#### **A. Recommendations for Educators and Parents**

1. Digital Literacy Education: Educators should incorporate digital literacy education into school curriculums to equip students with the necessary skills to critically evaluate and responsibly engage with social media content.
2. Mental Health Awareness: Parents and educators should proactively promote mental health awareness among young individuals and provide them with resources for seeking support when needed.
3. Emotional Support: Encouraging open and supportive communication between educators, parents, and students can create an environment where young individuals feel comfortable discussing their experiences with social media and its impact on their mental well-being.

#### **B. Guidelines for Social Media Platforms**

1. Mental Health Support Services: Social media platforms should integrate accessible mental health support resources within their interfaces to provide immediate assistance to users in need.
2. Addressing Cyberbullying: Implementing comprehensive measures to address cyberbullying, including reporting mechanisms and support for victims, is crucial for creating a safer online environment.
3. Promoting Digital Detox: Platforms can encourage and facilitate digital detox practices by providing tools for users to manage their screen time and take breaks from social media.

#### **C. Integration of Digital Literacy in Educational Curriculum**

Educational institutions should integrate digital literacy and critical thinking skills into their curriculum to empower students with the ability to navigate social media responsibly while recognizing the potential impact on their well-being.

#### **D. Importance of Mental Health Support Services**

Recognizing the importance of mental health support services within the context of social media is essential for promoting a positive and supportive digital environment for Generation Z.

By implementing these recommendations and guidelines, stakeholders can work collaboratively to support young individuals in effectively managing their social media usage and fostering a healthy relationship with digital platforms.

### **III. Conclusion**

#### ***Balancing Social Media Usage and Well-being of Generation Z***

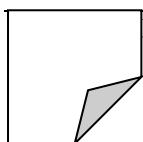
In conclusion, social media can have both positive and negative impacts on Generation Z's overall well-being. It is essential to understand and address these impacts in order to promote healthy digital behaviours and protect the mental health of this generation. Restrictions and monitoring of social media usage by parents can positively impact the mental health of adolescents (Bohler et al., 2023). By promoting digital literacy and critical thinking skills, individuals can become better equipped to identify false or misleading information on social media platforms. This will ultimately contribute to a healthier and more balanced relationship between social media and overall well-being for Generation Z.

It is important to consider the content and context of social media use, as some forms of use may have positive effects on mental health outcomes while others may have negative effects (Wheaton et al., 2021). To minimize the negative impact, it is important for parents, educators, and society as a whole to take proactive measures in promoting healthy social media usage and supporting the development of critical thinking skills in young people. Overall, promoting a balanced approach to social media usage and prioritizing mental health and well-being is crucial for the overall well-being of Generation Z in the digital age.

Additionally, focusing on creating awareness of the risks associated with social media use and providing education and support for healthy online behaviours is essential to protecting the mental health and well-being of Generation Z in the digital age. By promoting digital literacy and critical thinking skills, individuals can become better equipped to identify false or misleading information on social media platforms. It is important to consider the potential negative effects of excessive social media use on mental health, such as increased rates of depression and anxiety. Overall, the impact of social media on the well-being of Generation Z can be both positive and negative (Primack et al., 2019).

The impact of social media on the overall well-being of Generation Z is a crucial topic that necessitates further research and understanding. Further research is needed to fully understand the nuanced relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes among young people, taking into account cultural factors and individual experiences. The impact of social media on the overall well-being of Generation Z is a complex and multifaceted issue and further research is needed to fully understand the effects and implications of social media on mental health and well-being among young people.

In conclusion, it is crucial to consider the individual experiences and cultural factors that may influence the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial to promote



responsible and mindful social media usage among Generation Z to ensure their overall well-being in the digital age and to maximize the potential benefits.

□ **Conflict of Interest statement**

*The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest*

□ **Funding statement**

*This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors*

**References:**

- [1] Azizi, A. F., & Anam, N. (2023). The Changing Face Of Western Youth Culture: A Comprehensive Exploration Of The Dynamic Trends, Transformations, And Societal Shifts Shaping The Identity, Values, And Expressions Of Today's Young Generation. *Journal Ecuall: Education, Culture, Linguistic And Literature Fakultas Sastra Universitas Bakti Indonesia*, 1(2), 40-45.
- [2] Bohler, F., Peters, G. W., & Aggarwal, N. D. (2023). Tiktok And Its Role In Racism Within Rural Communities.
- [3] Carbonell, X., & Panova, T. (2017). A Critical Consideration Of Social Networking Sites' Addiction Potential. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 25(1), 48-57.
- [4] Duffy, B. E., & Hund, E. (2015). "Having It All" On Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity And Self-Branding Among Fashion Bloggers. *Social Media+ Society*, 1(2), 2056305115604337.
- [5] Duong, C. T. P. (2020). Social Media. A Literature Review. *Journal Of Media Research-Revista De Studii Media*, 13(38), 112-126.
- [6] Giumetti, G. W., & Kowalski, R. M. (2022). Cyberbullying Via Social Media And Well-Being. *Current Opinion In Psychology*, 45, 101314.
- [7] Gkotsis, G., Oellrich, A., Velupillai, S., Liakata, M., Hubbard, T. J., Dobson, R. J., & Dutta, R. (2017). Characterisation Of Mental Health Conditions In Social Media Using Informed Deep Learning. *Scientific Reports*, 7(1), 1-11.
- [8] Halston, A., Iwamoto, D., Junker, M., & Chun, H. (2019). Social Media And Loneliness. *International Journal Of Psychological Studies*, 11(3), 27-38.
- [9] Hand, M. (2005). The People's Network: Self-Education And Empowerment In The Public Library. *Information, Community & Society*, 8(3), 368-393.
- [10] Imjai, N., Aujirapongpan, S., Jutidharabongse, J., & Usman, B. (2024). Impacts Of Digital Connectivity On Thailand's Generation Z Undergraduates' Social Skills And Emotional Intelligence. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, 16(1), Ep487.
- [11] Kassai, S. S. (2020). The Effect Of Social Media On Women's Body Image, Self-Dissatisfaction, And Mental Health (Doctoral Dissertation, Alliant International University).
- [12] Närvänen, E., Kirvesmies, T., & Kahri, E. (2020). Parasocial Relationships Of Generation Z Consumers With Social Media Influencers. *Influencer Marketing*.
- [13] O'byme, W. I. (2019). Educate, Empower, Advocate: Amplifying Marginalized Voices In A Digital Society. *Contemporary Issues In Technology And Teacher Education*, 19(4), 640-669.
- [14] Olipas, C. N. P. (2022). The Gen Z's Learning Experiences And Its Relationship To Social Media Use. *Online Submission*, 8(1), 1291-1299.
- [15] Primack, B. A., Karim, S. A., Shensa, A., Bowman, N., Knight, J., & Sidani, J. E. (2019). Positive And Negative Experiences On Social Media And Perceived Social Isolation. *American Journal Of Health Promotion*, 33(6), 859-868
- [16] Sharma, M., Kaushal, D., & Joshi, S. (2023). Adverse Effect Of Social Media On Generation Z User's Behavior: Government Information Support As A Moderating Variable. *Journal Of Retailing And Consumer Services*, 72, 103256.
- [17] Wang, J. (2023). The Impact Of Social Media On Body Image Perception And Eating Disorders. *Journal Of Innovations In Medical Research*, 2(9), 36-40.
- [18] Wheaton, M. G., Prikhidko, A., & Messner, G. R. (2021). Is Fear Of Covid-19 Contagious? The Effects Of Emotion Contagion And Social Media Use On Anxiety In Response To The Coronavirus Pandemic. *Frontiers In Psychology*, 11, 567379.

