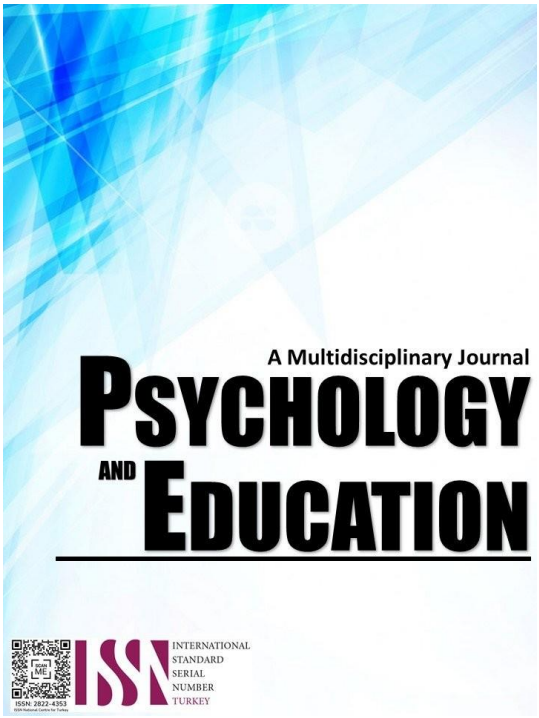
“BEYOND THE SCREEN”: GENERATION Z’S LIVED EXPERIENCES ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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Research Article

"Beyond the Screen": Generation Z's Lived Experiences on Social Media

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the lived experiences of Generation Z students regarding social media usage at Lebak Legislated National High School during the 2022-2023 academic year. Through semi-structured interviews with six participants—four junior high and two senior high school students—the research investigates the influences of social media, the challenges encountered, and the strategies employed to navigate these challenges. Findings reveal that while social media serves as a powerful tool for enhancing communication and learning, it also poses risks of addiction and distraction, negatively impacting academic performance. Participants expressed the need for greater awareness of the implications of social media use and highlighted the importance of responsible engagement to harness its educational potential. The study concludes that to mitigate the adverse effects of social media, students should prioritize academic activities and manage their online time effectively. Recommendations include fostering time management skills among students and encouraging parental supervision of social media usage to prevent illicit activities. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of Generation Z's relationship with social media, emphasizing the need for balanced and mindful engagement to promote positive academic and personal development.

Keywords: *Generation Z, influence, challenges, strategies*

Introduction

As the global economy expands and innovation accelerates, new opportunities and challenges emerge, particularly with the rise of social media platforms that Generation Z has eagerly embraced. Defined as those born in 2001 or later, Generation Z, often referred to as the "digital generation" (Reeves & Oh, 2008), is recognized as the most digitally savvy cohort, reshaping communication and social interaction. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2019), Generation Z spends an average of 2 hours and 55 minutes on social media dailysignificantly more than their Millennial predecessors. This trend is further highlighted in the "Digital 2021: Global Overview Report," which indicates a 1.5-fold increase in social media engagement over the past five years.

However, alongside these benefits, there are pressing concerns about the potential downsides of social media use among students. The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has noted that excessive social media use may disrupt students' study habits and negatively impact their academic performance. This issue is particularly relevant in the context of Lebak Legislated National High School, where many students find themselves increasingly distracted by digital devices, often spending nearly nine hours a day on technology, detracting from their educational pursuits.

The existing literature highlights a strong correlation between excessive social media use and poor academic outcomes, with studies showing that longer attention spans correlate with less time spent online. Despite this extensive research, there is a notable gap in understanding the lived experiences of Generation Z students, particularly in how they navigate the complexities of social media within their educational environment. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring these experiences through the lens of international, national, and local contexts, focusing specifically on students at Lebak Legislated National High School.

Research Questions

The main thrust of this study was to describe the Lived Experiences of Generation Z on the use of social media. It specifically aimed to respond to the following queries.

1. What are the social media influences on Generation Z students?
2. What are the challenges of Generation Z students' exposure to social media?
3. What are the strategies used by the Generation Z students to overcome the social media challenges?
4. Based on the findings, what learnings and development programs can be proposed to cope with the different problems experienced by Generation Z students?

Literature Review

Lived Experiences of Generation Z on the use of Social Media

Generation Z, often called the Post-Millennials or the Facebook Generation, emerged around the turn of the millennium. While scholars differ slightly on the precise birth years of this generation (Half, 2015; Schroer, 2008; White, 2017), they all agree that Generation Z has grown up in an era defined by the internet, social media, and smartphones. Living in a world where digital devices and social media are integral to daily life, this generation seamlessly transitions between the real and virtual worlds.

Schroer coined the term Generation Z in 2008, referring to those born after the year 2000. This generation is characterized by

technological savvy, multitasking abilities, social extroversion in digital spaces, impatience, interactivity, and a strong sense of stability. They also spend more time in educational settings than previous generations, like their parents and teachers from Generation X. Prensky's "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" metaphor from 2001 is one of the most popular ways to describe this distinction. However, birthdate alone does not determine generational identity; other factors, such as environment, access to resources, and internet usage, also play a role (Cruz & Díaz, 2016; Espaillat, 2017).

Another defining feature of Generation Z is that they are true natives of the digital age (Greenfield, 2008). Growing up in a world saturated with technology, this generation has developed distinct socialization patterns, information processing methods, and lifestyles that differ significantly from those of previous generations.

Generation Z plays a critical role in the process of globalization. Their thinking and behavior know no boundaries, as they are the most globally and culturally diverse generation, shaped by internationalism, gender equality, and climate change awareness (Sparks & Honey, 2015). This heightened global consciousness has led Generation Z to be more socially responsible and driven by a desire to enact positive change. They are more aware of global issues and are motivated to contribute to solutions in ways that no previous generation has been.

Although Generation Y (millennials) has been the primary focus of much research (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2012), studies on Generation Z are still emerging. It is crucial to recognize that Generation Z differs significantly from earlier generations in terms of personality traits and consumer behavior. Consequently, many organizations are adapting to cater to this new, diverse demographic.According to a Sparks & Honey study (2015), Generation Z will account for 40% of the global population by 2020, underscoring the importance of understanding this generation's unique characteristics. Organizations that wish to thrive in the future must grasp the significance of Generation Z's role in shaping society.

Generation Z forms its digital identities within the context of the online world, developing emotional connections to the internet (Beal, 2016). They actively participate in content creation in the digital space, making the virtual world an essential part of their lives (Hardey, 2011). Many studies now focus on generational differences, outlining the distinct traits of each generation.

A survey conducted in March 2020 revealed that Generation Z frequently uses social media as a primary source of news, with 61% of respondents reporting that they rely on it daily (Watson, 2020). Although some also use radio as a daily news source, Generation Z overwhelmingly prefers online news over printed media. Only 6% of respondents said they read newspapers daily, while 52% said they never read newspapers for news.

Social media and Generation Z

Although younger generations are often assumed to be more digitally savvy than their elders, how they engage with social and political issues is deeply influenced by their ability to critically assess information received through digital media. Generation Z, sometimes confused with Millennials, consists of Filipinos between the ages of 17 and 24. Like Generation Y, they primarily rely on the internet and social media for news and information. However, despite the constant flow of information they receive, many still lack strong opinions on critical national issues such as extrajudicial killings, the reinstatement of the death penalty, and the maritime dispute with China (Malasig, 2019).

Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) describe the "Net Generation" as being technologically adept, highly connected due to their accessibility to technology, immediate in their need for quick information processing, experiential in their preference for hands-on learning, and socially inclined, showing openness to diversity and a desire for social connections.

Reeves and Oh (2008) emphasized the unique characteristics of each generation, particularly focusing on the differences shaped by age. They reviewed recent studies and theories to highlight the distinctions and uniqueness of each generation beyond just fundamental generational differences.

Deng and Tavares (2013) noted that social media helps students develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to make informed decisions in their daily lives. Similarly, a study by Apeanti and Danso (2014) found that students believed their grades would improve if they could ask their professors questions in open social media forums. Additionally, Yunus and Salehi (2012) argued that social media use enhances students' vocabulary and writing skills.

Challenges Experienced by Generation Z on the use of Social Media

Sharma (2018) highlights both the benefits and drawbacks of social media usage. On the positive side, social media enables individuals to engage in the healthy exchange of ideas, fosters a calm and pleasant disposition, and encourages more efficient use of time. However, sociological studies also suggest a negative correlation between social media use and academic performance. For instance, Rosen et al. (2013) observed 263 students and found that, on average, they became distracted by digital media within six minutes of starting their tasks.

Similarly, Junco's (2012) study of 1,839 college students revealed that more time spent on Facebook correlated with lower academic performance. Jacobsen and Forste (2011) also argue that students are more drawn to the instant gratification of social media compared to academic activities like studying or attending classes.

Generation Z's Social Media Addiction

Research on social media addiction typically divides users into two categories: potential addicts and non-addicts, as determined by the Smartphone Addiction Scale (Kwon et al., 2013). In a study by Lee et al. (2014), 95 students were monitored using Smart Logger Software, which tracked their phone usage. The results indicated that students at risk for addiction spent significantly more time on apps, particularly those providing fleeting pleasures such as social media platforms.

Impact on Academic Performance

Al-Barashdi et al. (2015) found that excessive smartphone use, often synonymous with social media use, negatively impacts academic performance. Jeong et al. (2016) suggest that smartphone addiction can be predicted by social media usage, and Lepp et al. (2015) noted that multitasking on social media reduces the time allocated for academic responsibilities. Students with lower self-control are more susceptible to the negative effects of smartphone usage on academic performance, with male students and those in the humanities more likely to become addicted (Al-Barashdi et al., 2015). However, some research suggests that survey methods may have overestimated these correlations (Lee et al., 2017; Boase & Ling, 2013; Andrews et al., 2015).

Lack of Discipline and Social Media Influence

Social media interactions often lead to weaker interpersonal ties, which can negatively impact students' discipline in school. Malcolm (2015) suggests that while social media facilitates broader but weaker relationships, students lack the strong connections necessary for academic risk-taking and experimentation. This, coupled with issues like cyberbullying, sexting, and "Facebook depression," leads to increased vulnerability among students (Ramasubbu, 2016). Additionally, social media's portrayal of "cool" behavior may undermine students' focus on academic success (Rushkoff, 2014).

Reduced Attention Span and Sleep Deprivation

Fowler (2014) argues that social media fosters drama and misinterpretation of communication, which contributes to sleep deprivation among students who stay up texting or browsing online. Zickur (2016) and Baker & Cochran (2012) link excessive social media use to shorter attention spans and decreased academic performance. Junco (2011) found a significant negative correlation between Facebook usage and GPA, while Xu et al. (2015) linked excessive social media use with irregular sleep patterns, shorter sleep durations, and daytime fatigue. This sleep deprivation further diminishes academic focus and productivity. While social media provides opportunities for learning and engagement, its overuse among Generation Z has been associated with negative impacts on discipline, attention span, and academic performance, exacerbating issues such as addiction and sleep deprivation.

Coping Mechanisms of Generation Z

Willard (2015) argues that addressing student internet access requires a comprehensive strategy. Schools should implement clear guidelines that emphasize the importance of using the internet for educational purposes. This policy should be reinforced by the curriculum and professional standards at all levels. Additionally, teachers must adhere to strict guidelines, ensuring students use the internet only for well-planned, high-quality learning activities. It is also critical to educate students about online safety and ethical social media use. Effective technical monitoring, conducted by instructors, along with appropriate consequences—such as temporarily restricting internet access in school—can help control the influence of social media on student discipline.

As educational technology continues to advance, both teachers and students frequently access social media on smartphones, which introduces them to web tools relevant to education (Khaama Press, 2014). Social media usage in teaching and learning can motivate students by offering opportunities to conduct research, ask questions, revise effectively, and share knowledge (Choi & Kang, 2014). Students often use social networks to enhance their vocabulary, sharpen analytical skills, and improve their writing abilities by organizing thoughts and constructing well-formed paragraphs (Yunus et al., 2012).

The literature reviewed provides valuable insights into Generation Z's experiences with social media, highlighting both the challenges they face and the strategies they adopt. It becomes evident that social media can have a dual impact on students' academic performance. When used responsibly and effectively, social media can enhance academic progress. However, if misused, it can detract from overall performance and jeopardize students' future success.

Students should be encouraged to limit their use of social media and understand the difference between their online personas and real-life responsibilities. They need to recognize that the virtual world will not guarantee a prosperous future, while academic success can. This awareness can promote a more accountable and focused approach to their studies. To avoid distractions, students should strive to balance social media use with their academic responsibilities. They should aim to utilize social media primarily for learning purposes, such as gathering and sharing information, collaborating on projects, and seeking clarification from peers and teachers. By reducing social media use for entertainment or idle purposes, students can ensure their academic focus remains sharp.

Social media can be a powerful tool for education when used wisely. However, excessive use for non-academic purposes can significantly hinder students' academic performance. The key lies in using it intentionally and purposefully for learning and intellectual growth.

Methodology

Participant

The participants of the study were a total of six (6) students from Lebak Legislated National High School during the school year 2022-2023. This included four (4) Junior High School (JHS) students and two (2) Senior High School (SHS) students. Participants were purposively selected because they actively engaged with social media platforms, making them suitable for sharing insights into how these platforms influence their daily lives, communication habits, and learning behaviors.

Instrument

The study utilized a semi-structured interview guide questionnaire as the primary data collection tool to explore the lived experiences of Generation Z students in relation to social media. The interview was designed with three key sections to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the participants' backgrounds, their interactions with social media, and the challenges they faced. The researcher followed step by step procedure first, the gathering of demographic information to establish the participants' context. It included questions about the students' age, gender, ethnicity, and current year level. Understanding these factors was essential in framing their perspectives and experiences within their personal and social backgrounds. The second part of the interview focused on exploring the students' specific experiences with social media. This section delved into how they engage with various platforms, their motivations for using social media, the nature of their interactions, and the perceived impact of social media on their daily lives, including both academic and social aspects.

The final section of the interview addressed the obstacles and challenges the students encountered while using social media. This part aimed to uncover potential negative effects, such as distractions, cyberbullying, addiction, or any other barriers that hindered their social, emotional, or academic well-being during their engagement with social media. The interview comprised a total of five (5) carefully structured questions (see Appendix B) that guided the participants in reflecting on their personal experiences while allowing flexibility for in-depth responses. The interviews were conducted using a voice recorder to ensure accuracy and capture all details for subsequent analysis. This approach provided a rich and nuanced understanding of Generation Z students' interaction with social media, allowing the study to analyze their experiences holistically.

Procedure

The selection of participants for this study was conducted in collaboration with their class adviser, one of the researchers, and based on a set of criteria designed to ensure consistency in the participants' characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The process was carefully structured to guarantee the ethical involvement of students, and the integrity of the data collected. Initially, the class adviser, who was familiar with the students, assisted the researchers in identifying potential participants. These students were then vetted using specific criteria provided by the researchers to ensure that they possessed common characteristics essential to the study, such as active engagement with social media and belonging to the Generation Z demographic. This step was critical to maintaining the validity and reliability of the findings by selecting participants who best represented the study's focus.

Once the participants were identified, the researchers sent a formal letter of consent to the parents or legal guardians of the students. This letter outlined the purpose of the study, the nature of the interviews, and the participants' involvement, seeking their permission to include their children in the research. The informed consent process ensured that all participants were legally authorized to take part in the study and that their guardians were fully aware of the research's scope. Following the receipt of parental consent, the researchers submitted a formal request for approval to the Principal of Lebak Legislated National High School. This letter detailed the study's objectives, and the procedures involved, ensuring transparency and adherence to the school's guidelines for research involving students. The principal's approval was necessary to proceed with the interviews and observations of the selected participants.

After obtaining all necessary approvals, the researchers conducted a series of observations and semi-structured interviews with the participants. To maintain the accuracy and authenticity of the data, each interview was recorded and later transcribed verbatim. This careful transcription process ensured that the participants' responses were preserved exactly as spoken, without alteration or interpretation, thereby safeguarding the integrity of the data.This structured and ethical approach to participant selection and data collection ensured that the study adhered to research standards while providing a thorough exploration of the students' lived experiences with social media.

Data Analysis

The study employed Thematic Analysis, following the framework by Braun and Clarke (2006), to systematically analyze the qualitative data collected. The process began with the transcription of verbal data from the interviews, after which the researchers generated initial codes. These codes were created manually, with the aim of identifying as many potential codes and themes as possible from the data.

Once coding was complete, the researchers organized and collated the data that shared similar codes. This was done to systematically sort the data into potential themes. During this stage, researchers were encouraged to use visual aids, such as diagrams or tables, to help organize and group related codes. Themes were developed from subsets of codes—some codes contributed to forming major themes, others were used to create sub-themes, and some were excluded or marked as outliers due to their lack of relevance.

Following this, the researchers refined the initial themes. Some themes were broken down into smaller, more manageable components, while others were merged due to conceptual overlap. A thematic map was used to visualize the relationships between the themes and to assist with the refinement process. This map allowed the researchers to track how the different themes connected and contributed to the overarching narrative of the data. At the end of the refinement phase, the researchers produced a final thematic map and summarized the key points of each theme, along with relevant supporting data. This step was crucial for developing a coherent narrative that tied all the themes together. Each theme was analyzed in depth to illustrate its significance and how it fit into the broader context of the study. The overarching story, developed from the themes, provided a clear and structured interpretation of the data.

The final phase involved the completion of the analysis and the writing of the report. At this stage, the researchers made any final adjustments to the themes and ensured that the thematic map accurately reflected the data. Each theme was thoroughly described, and the final analysis was presented in the form of a comprehensive report, detailing the key findings and insights derived from the data.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers conducting this phenomenological study ensured that the research design, methodology, and results were explicit, valid, and trustworthy. Best practices for maintaining rigor and dependability were applied to ensure the integrity of the findings (Cope, 2014). To further support the reliability of the results, the researchers referred to Grundmeyer's citations (2012) and utilized the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability strategies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

To ensure credibility, the researchers mitigated potential threats through data triangulation. Thematic analysis, as one of the key methods employed, was carried out meticulously, ensuring alignment with established procedures. Supporting evidence, such as detailed coding and theme development, strengthened the findings of the study. The researchers also took great care in creating a conducive interview environment for the participants, ensuring they felt comfortable and free to share their experiences. The data were collected through comprehensive interviews, and the participants themselves validated the results, further ensuring that the findings were credible and reflected their lived experiences accurately.

To promote dependability, an audit trail was created, documenting the entire research process. This included detailing how data were collected, categorized, and analyzed, as well as outlining the judgments made during the investigation (Merriam, 1998). The researchers stored all raw data—transcripts, journals, interview recordings, and audio/video files—on Google Drive, ensuring easy access and safeguarding the integrity of the data. Furthermore, the researchers meticulously observed and documented participant behavior during interviews. Multiple recording devices were used to ensure that all necessary data were captured, providing redundancy to prevent any loss of information.

To minimize bias and ensure objectivity, the researchers conducted thorough data analyses. The results were subjected to peer review to eliminate prejudices and ensure that subjective interpretations did not influence the findings. Additionally, the researchers plan to present their findings at a research conference to gather feedback and confirm that the identified issues are consistent across Generation Z students of various ages. This peer engagement strengthens the confirmability of the study, demonstrating that the findings are grounded in the data rather than researcher bias.

In qualitative research, transferability corresponds to external validity, which refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be applied to other settings (Merriam, 1998). Although this study only involved six participants, its findings are transferable to other contexts. The experiences of Generation Z students, who have been exposed to social media since its inception, are relevant across different schools and educational environments. Given that the term "Generation Z" was first coined by Schroer in 2008 to describe individuals born after the year 2000, the insights from this study are applicable to a broader population of Generation Z students.

The researchers are accountable for the conduct and outcomes of the study, ensuring that all aspects—credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability—are upheld. Each component of the research process was carefully executed to maintain the highest standards of rigor, providing a trustworthy and transferable contribution to the understanding of Generation Z's engagement with social media.

Results and Discussion

This section presents an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the study's findings. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data collected, highlighting the key themes, patterns, and insights drawn from the participants' responses. The discussion is organized in a way that allows for a clear and systematic presentation of the results, aligning them with the research questions and objectives.

Relevant Themes on Experiences of Generation Z on Social Media

Through comprehensive procedural data analysis and interpretation, I articulate four (10) relevant articles. They were all synthesized from 23 formulated meanings and 16 initial themes and 8 clustered meanings.

The ten (10) relevant themes are the following. *The Influences of social media on Generation Z Students, Social Support and Personal Growth Social Support and Personal Growth, Maintaining Family Connections through Social Media, The Danger of social media*

exposure to Generation Z Students, Negative Impact on Studies and Mental Well-being, Challenges and Consequences of Insufficient Self-Management Skills, Negative Impact Academic Performance, and Sleep Patterns, The strategies used by the Generation Z students to overcome the social media challenge, Encouraging Exploration and Seeking Opportunities Beyond Social Media, and Finding Healthy Distractions and Setting Boundaries

Relevant Theme 1*: **The influences of social media on Generation Z students***

This theme focuses on the influences of social media on Generation Z students, which formulated nine emergent themes coded 001,002,003,004,005,006,007,008,009.

Participant 1 coded 001 has an emergent theme of being happy and comfortable in using social media, which refers to the positive emotional experience and sense of ease that individuals associate with their engagement on social media platforms. He recounted, *I feel enjoy ma'am kasi I find comfort in using social media and sometimes naboboast din yung self-confidence. [I think enjoyed, ma'am, because I find comfort in using social media and sometimes.]*. The second emergent theme, code 002, is a sense of belonging when using social media, experiencing positive emotions and a level of comfort in their online interactions. This theme highlights the importance of social media as a source of happiness, well-being, and positive experiences for individuals in their digital lives.

Participant 2 coded 003 has an emergent theme *of Social Learning*. This theme underscores the candidate's belief in the power of social interaction and engagement to gain knowledge. They prioritize communicating with their friends, recognizing that they can exchange ideas, perspectives, and information through these conversations. Additionally, the candidate leverages social media as a platform for learning, implying their understanding of the potential for acquiring knowledge through online communities, educational content, and discussions.

The theme of social learning highlights the student's appreciation for collaborative learning environments and the benefits of interacting with others in their educational pursuits. It indicates their inclination towards active participation, sharing and receiving insights, and tapping into collective wisdom for personal growth and learning.

Relevant Theme 2: ***Social Support and Personal Growth Social Support and Personal Growth***

As coded in 004, participant 2 has an emergent theme, *Social Support and Personal Growth. Social Support and Personal Growth*: This theme centers around the student's experience of gaining new friends online and the subsequent boost in their confidence. It highlights the candidate's recognition of the positive impact of social connections on their self-esteem and overall personal growth.

By emphasizing the value of online friendships, the students showcase their ability to build meaningful relationships in virtual spaces. This theme suggests that the candidate actively seeks out social support networks and understands the role of interpersonal connections in fostering self-confidence. It is evident in participant number 2 response, *Communicating with my friends than in my study gaining new knowledge through social media.*

The significance lies in the student's ability to leverage online platforms for personal development, demonstrating their adaptability to digital environments and willingness to explore different avenues for building social connections. This theme highlights their understanding of the importance of social support and its impact on their confidence and well-being. This emergent theme *of Emotional Well-being and Escapism* is also present in Participant 3, coded as 005. This theme centers around the student's experience of finding joy and solace in social media to temporarily escape from the challenges and difficulties of their everyday life. It highlights the candidate's recognition of the emotional benefits that social media can provide as an avenue for relaxation and rejuvenation.

The significance lies in the student's understanding of the importance of self-care and the role of social media in their emotional well-being. It suggests that they utilize social media intentionally to create a positive and uplifting experience, allowing them to detach from their stressors momentarily.This theme showcases the student's ability to recognize their own needs for mental respite and their capacity to seek out healthy ways to alleviate the pressures of daily life. However, it is vital to maintain a balanced perspective and ensure that reliance on social media for escapism does not hinder their ability to face and overcome real-world challenges. It is highlighted by the response of Participant 3, *The feeling of joy I experienced using social media is like I escape from the real and cruel world we live in. The joy of taking a break from all that drains my energy.*

Relevant Theme 3: ***Maintaining Family Connections through Social Media***

Another emergent theme coded 006 of Participant 3, *Maintaining Family Connections through Social Media.* This theme focuses on the student's recognition of the significance of social media in facilitating engagement with family members, particularly those they primarily communicate with through online platforms. It highlights their understanding of social media's role in bridging geographic distances and maintaining meaningful relationships. The student's emphasis on actively seeking activities that promote interaction and connection with their family members is significant. It reflects their commitment to nurturing family bonds despite physical separation or limited in-person contact.

This theme showcases the student's appreciation for the value of family and their ability to leverage social media to stay connected. It suggests their understanding of the importance of maintaining strong familial relationships and their willingness to adapt to digital tools to achieve this. As coded in 007 by Participant 4, an emergent theme *is Emotional Well-being and Stress Relief.* This theme revolves

around the student's experience of finding excitement, satisfaction, and stress relief through social media. It highlights social media's positive impact on their emotional well-being and its ability to serve as a coping mechanism for stress. The significance lies in the student's recognition of the emotional benefits of engaging with social media. They express enthusiasm and contentment, indicating that it positively affects their mood and mental state. Moreover, they emphasize its stress-relieving qualities, suggesting that social media provides them with a sense of relaxation and relief from daily pressures.

This theme showcases the student's understanding of the importance of self-care and their ability to utilize social media to manage stress. It implies their awareness of strategies for maintaining emotional well-being and their capacity to seek out activities that promote positive emotions. As recounted by Participant 4, coded 008 *Positive Impact of Social Media, t*his theme revolves around the candidate's observation and satisfaction with the kindness individuals display on social media. It highlights their appreciation for the positive interactions and the resulting positive emotions they experience. The significance lies in the student's recognition of the potential for social media to be a platform for kindness and positivity. They emphasize the goodness they witness in online interactions, indicating their belief in the positive impact social media can have on individuals and communities. This theme showcases the student's ability to perceive the positive aspects of social media and their inclination towards engaging with uplifting content and interactions. It reflects their value for kindness, empathy, and positive relationships, even within the virtual space.

Lastly, an emergent theme, *the Use of Social Media as a Time Filler* of Participant 5 presents that social media serve as a *time killer* when they have no specific tasks or activities to engage in. Evidence shown as stated by the participant, *It's like … pause for a while… you know it's a time killer. It's time killer if you have nothing to do or you're just bored.* The significance of this theme lies in the student's recognition of social media's role in providing entertainment and filling idle moments. They understand that it can utilize to alleviate boredom and provide a temporary diversion. This theme showcases the student's familiarity with using social media as a source of entertainment and engagement. It suggests their ability to adapt to different situations and find ways to occupy themselves with free time.

Relevant Theme 4*: **The Danger of social media exposure to Generation Z students***

This theme highlights the dangers associated with social media with the exposure of Generation Z students. It focuses on the potential adverse effects of social media on their mental health, privacy, and online safety. The table provides an overview of the risks and challenges that arise from this particular demographic group's use of social media platforms. As evident presented from table 2 has seven initial themes: *The Dual Nature of Social Media, the Negative Impact of Distractions on Academic Performance and Mental Well-being, Challenges and Consequences of Insufficient Self-Management Skills, the Negative Impact on Academic Productivity and Procrastination, Negative Impact on Academic Performance, and Sleep Patterns, Distraction and Time Mismanagement, Distraction and Disruption of Daily Routines.*

This theme focuses on the dangers of social media exposure to Generation Z students, which formulated six emergent themes coded 010-015. *"The Dual Nature of Social Media: Positive Socialization and Negative Impact on Productivity"* explores the contrasting effects of social media on individuals, highlighting both the positive and negative aspects. Positive socialization: Social media allows individuals to connect and socialize with a wide range of people. It enables users to engage in conversations, share experiences, and build relationships with others. This positive aspect of social media allows for increased social connectivity, exposure to diverse perspectives, and staying connected with friends and family, especially in today's digital age.

On the other hand, social media can also harm productivity. It is easy to become dependent on social media platforms and spends excessive time scrolling through feeds, engaging in online discussions, or consuming content. This dependency can decrease productivity, diverting attention and time from more important tasks or responsibilities, such as work or studies. The emergent theme highlights the two-sided nature of social media, acknowledging its potential for positive socialization and the negative consequences of excessive dependence on social media, particularly regarding productivity. It encourages individuals to strike a balance, using social media responsibly to maintain social connections while ensuring it does not hinder their productivity or overall well-being.

Relevant Theme 5: ***Negative Impact on Studies and Mental Well-being***

Theme coded 011 by Participant 1 also presents the *Negative Impact on Studies and Mental Well-being; this* theme focuses on the candidate's perception of social media as a source of distraction and anxiety, particularly concerning their academic pursuits. They highlight the hostile environment and its potential consequences on their ability to focus on their studies and maintain their mental well-being. The significance lies in the student's recognition of the detrimental effects of social media on their academic performance and mental state. They acknowledge that it serves as a distraction, diverting their attention away from their studies. Additionally, they express concern about the harmful environment prevalent on social media platforms, which may contribute to anxiety and stress.

This theme showcases the student's understanding of the potential drawbacks of excessive social media use, specifically its impact on their educational goals and mental well-being. It implies their ability to identify the negative aspects of social media and their capacity to reflect on the consequences it may have on their lives. As coded by Participant 2, It causes distraction in studies and develops anxiety exposing you to a hostile environment. *Negative Impact of Distractions on Academic Performance and Mental Well-being* highlights distractions' detrimental effects on academic studies and mental health.1. Distraction in studies: This refers to various factors or stimuli that divert an individual's attention from their studies or learning activities. Examples of distractions could include excessive use of

electronic devices, noisy environments, social media, or engaging in activities unrelated to studying. These distractions can impede concentration, reduce productivity, and hinder the ability to comprehend and retain information effectively.2. Anxiety development: Constant exposure to a hostile environment, such as one filled with distractions, can lead to the development of anxiety. Anxiety can arise from feelings of overwhelm, fear of falling behind, or the pressure to perform academically despite ongoing distractions. The stress and anxiety associated with the hostile environment can further exacerbate difficulties in focusing, problem-solving, and overall mental well-being.

These factors contribute to a cycle where distractions hinder studying, leading to increased anxiety, further hampers academic performance. The emergent theme highlights the importance of minimizing distractions, creating a positive learning environment, and managing stress to foster better educational outcomes and mental well-being.

Relevant Theme 6: ***Challenges and Consequences of Insufficient Self-Management Skill***

Another emergent theme, Challenges *and Consequences of Insufficient Self-Management Skills* revolves around the difficulties and adverse outcomes arising when an individual lacks effective self-management skills. Here's a further explanation:1. Definition of self-management: Self-management refers to the ability to regulate and control one's actions, behaviors, and choices. It involves setting goals, prioritizing tasks, managing time effectively, staying organized, and exercising discipline and self-control. 2. Challenges arising from lack of self-management skills: When individuals struggle with self-management, they may encounter various challenges. These can include difficulties in managing time efficiently, procrastination, poor organization, inability to set and achieve goals, and a lack of discipline in adhering to plans or routines.3. Consequences of insufficient self-management skills: The consequences of poor self-management can be significant.

It can lead to decreased productivity, missed deadlines, increased stress levels, reduced motivation, compromised quality of work or performance, and an overall sense of being overwhelmed or disorganized. Additionally, a lack of self-management can hinder personal growth and limit one's ability to effectively juggle responsibilities and progress towards desired outcomes.

The emergent theme emphasizes the importance of developing solid self-management skills to overcome these challenges and mitigate the negative consequences. It highlights the need for individuals to cultivate habits such as time management, goal setting, organization, and self-discipline to enhance productivity, reduce stress, and achieve personal and professional success.

Relevant Theme 7: ***Negative Impact Academic Performance and Sleep Patterns.***

This theme revolves around the student's observations of the negative attitudes and behaviors associated with social media use. They highlight the tendencies towards laziness, procrastination, and delayed completion of daily activities, resulting in students failing to complete assignments. Additionally, they mention the negative impact on sleep patterns, with individuals staying up late due to slow internet connection and using social media until the link improves.

The significance lies in the student's awareness of the negative consequences of social media use on academic performance, time management, and sleep habits. They recognize the tendency for students to become lax and delay tasks, ultimately leading to incomplete assignments. They also acknowledge the disruptive effect of social media on sleep schedules, which can further impact overall well-being and academic performance. This theme showcases the candidate's understanding of the potential pitfalls of excessive social media use, particularly regarding time management, productivity, and sleep hygiene. It implies their ability to recognize the need for self-discipline, responsible internet usage, and establishing healthy routines.

An initial theme also arises the *Negative Impact on Academic Productivity and Procrastination; this* emergent theme focuses on the candidate's acknowledgement of the negative experiences they have encountered in using social media for academic learning. They highlight the detrimental effects of procrastination and unproductiveness resulting from prolonged social media use, leading to forgetfulness and neglect of their academic tasks and assignments. The significance lies in the student recognizing their challenges in maintaining focus and productivity while using social media. They acknowledge that the enjoyment derived from social media can be a disadvantage, as it leads to losing track of time and priorities.

This theme showcases the student's awareness of social media's potential distractions and time-consuming nature. It implies their understanding of the need to balance engaging with digital platforms and fulfilling their academic obligations. *Also,* an initial theme, *Distraction and Time Mismanagement code is another relevant theme.* This theme revolves around the candidate's acknowledgement of social media as a source of distraction that has negatively impacted their punctuality and time management. They initially underestimated the time-consuming nature of social media activities, leading to lateness in school. The significance lies in the student recognizing the negative consequences of being distracted by social media. They highlight the discrepancy between their initial perception of social media as needing to be more time-consuming and the reality of its impact on their daily routines and responsibilities.

This theme showcases the student's self-awareness and reflection regarding their experiences with social media. It implies their understanding of the need to exercise self-discipline, set boundaries, and manage their time effectively to avoid the pitfalls of excessive social media use. Furthermore, as coded by the participant, an initial theme *was Distraction and Disruption of Daily Routines.* This theme focuses on the candidate's observation of how social media easily distracts individuals from their tasks and routines. They

highlight the tendency to draw to notifications and the subsequent loss of focus. Additionally, they mention the impact on sleep, as individuals continue browsing social media even when they should be sleeping.

The significance lies in the student's recognition of social media notifications' immediate and powerful pull and their potential to disrupt daily activities. They acknowledge the detrimental effect on productivity and the negative impact on sleep patterns caused by prolonged social media use, as evidenced shown *It is the laziness and delaying every activity you should do in a day that's why there are students that when they come to school, they don't have an assignment and one of the negative attitudes that social media bring as well is sleeping late at night because here in our place the internet connection is prolonged, we staying up too late up until 12 since 12 onwards the internet connection is faster.* This theme highlights the student's understanding of the need for self-control and time management in social media. It implies their awareness of the potential pitfalls of excessive engagement with digital platforms and the importance of setting boundaries to maintain focus and prioritize healthy habits.

Relevant Theme 8*: **The strategies used by Generation Z students to overcome the social media challenge***.

It explores the proactive approaches and techniques they utilize to navigate the issues related to social media use. The table offers insights into the various coping mechanisms, self-regulation methods, and adaptive strategies these students adopt to address the challenges arising from their engagement with social media platforms. As evident presented in Table 3, participants have seven initial themes: *The importance of Time Management, the Importance of Self-Discipline, Encouraging Exploration and Seeking Opportunities Beyond social media, Prioritization and Focus, Prioritizing Family, Personal Growth, and Health, Finding Healthy Distractions and Setting Boundaries, Finding Grounding and Engaging in Hobbies.*

The first emergent theme code is 016 with an evident *"So it is monitoring your time management, ma'am. You monitor how you manage your time on things you need to do".* This theme focuses on the candidate's emphasis on monitoring and managing their time effectively. They highlight the significance of being mindful of allocating time to various tasks and responsibilities. The significance lies in the candidate's recognition of time management's critical role in their daily activities. They emphasize the need to monitor and track their time to ensure that essential tasks are prioritized and completed efficiently. This theme showcases the candidate's understanding of time's value and ability to take ownership of their time management practices. It implies their commitment to effectively allocating time to different activities related to social media use.

As coded by the participant, an emergent theme is "First and foremost, having self-discipline. Because when you have self-discipline, you'll be able to control yourself in using social media and also engaging in other activities such as exercises and hobbies" *Importance of Self-Discipline*: This theme revolves around the candidate's emphasis on the significance of self-discipline in managing social media usage and engaging in other activities. They highlight how self-discipline allows individuals to exert control over their behavior and make intentional choices. The candidate's recognition of self-discipline as a critical factor in balancing social media use with other aspects of life is significant. They emphasize the ability to regulate oneself, resist temptations, and allocate time and attention effectively. This theme showcases the candidate's understanding of the role of self-discipline in maintaining a healthy relationship with social media. It implies their awareness of the potential risks of excessive use and commitment to developing self-control and prioritization skills.

Relevant Theme 9: ***Encouraging Exploration and Seeking Opportunities Beyond Social Media***

An emergent theme also coded as 018 response, *"My advice is finding other alternatives like going outside with others or reading books because there are so many things outside social media that we have not explored. We are imprisoning ourselves on social media when there's a lot of opportunity outside social media"* This theme centers around the candidate's advice to look for alternative activities and experiences outside social media. They highlight the importance of exploring the world, engaging with others, and delving into activities like reading books.The significance lies in the student recognizing the limitations and potential negative consequences of excessive social media use. They encourage individuals to break free from the "prison" of social media and embrace the many opportunities available in the real world.

This theme showcases the student's understanding of the value of diverse experiences and the need to balance online engagement with offline pursuits. It implies their ability to recognize the importance of personal growth, social connections, and expanding one's horizons beyond the digital realm. Coded 016, an initial theme, *Prioritization and Focus,* is present: This theme revolves around the candidate's emphasis on prioritizing tasks and responsibilities over social media use. They highlight the need to be aware of one's priorities and make intentional choices when engaging with social media. The significance lies in the student recognizing the need to allocate time and attention to more essential tasks. They emphasize the necessity of focusing on primary priorities and avoiding the potential distractions of social media. This theme showcases the student's understanding of the role of prioritization in managing one's time and maintaining productivity. It implies their ability to make conscious decisions about when and how to engage with social media, ensuring that it does not interfere with essential tasks and goals.

Another emergent theme is present. *Prioritizing Family, Personal Growth, and Health:* This theme centres around the student's recognition of the potential benefits of reducing social media usage. They highlight the opportunity to spend quality time with family, engage in educational activities outside social media, and prioritize personal health and well-being. As quoted, "I think better things would happen if I lessen my social media usage. One of these is I have more time with my family. I'll have more time to engage with

educational activities outside social media that would help." The significance lies in the student's understanding of the impact of excessive social media use on family relationships, personal growth, and overall health. They acknowledge the value of investing time in meaningful interactions, continuous learning, and self-care practices. This theme showcases the student's awareness of the need for balance and intentional choices in managing social media consumption. It implies their commitment to fostering strong family bonds, pursuing personal development opportunities, and prioritizing their physical and mental well-being.

Relevant Theme 10: ***Finding Healthy Distractions and Setting Boundaries***

Moreover, another emergent theme coded by Participant 5. This theme revolves around the student recognizing the need to find alternative activities and set limits on social media usage. They highlight the importance of engaging in hobbies and new experiences to divert attention from social media and suggest implementing time limits and substituting that time with other activities.

The significance lies in the student's understanding of the potential negative consequences of excessive social media use and the desire to mitigate its impact. They emphasize the importance of finding healthy distractions and setting boundaries to maintain a balanced lifestyle.

This theme showcases the student's proactive approach to managing social media consumption and willingness to explore new interests and hobbies. It implies their ability to prioritize their time effectively, make conscious choices about their digital engagement, and seek out meaningful alternatives. As gleaned from the participant's response coded 022, *"It's grounding and also finding your hobbies, like if you want to do bicycling, it can help to keep yourself busy because I witnessed it. Because I am also using social media if I have nothing to do, so if possible, keep yourself busy. Another is controlling as long as you can control your social media usage.* Finding Grounding and Engaging in Hobbies: This theme revolves around the candidate's suggestion of finding grounding activities and hobbies to keep oneself busy and occupied. They highlight personal experiences like bicycling to divert attention from social media. The emphasis is on finding activities that bring fulfilment and contribute to emotional well-being.2. Exercising Self-Control: This theme focuses on the importance of self-control in managing social media usage. The candidate suggests that controlling one's social media consumption is vital to preventing it from becoming a hindrance.

The significance lies in the student's understanding of the need for balance and self-regulation regarding social media use. They advocate for finding constructive ways to keep busy and engaged and maintaining control over the time spent on social media. This theme showcases the student's practical approach to managing social media usage and their recognition of the potential negative consequences of excessive consumption. It implies their ability to prioritize and engage in meaningful activities while maintaining self-discipline.

Conclusions

The study revealed that, despite its advantages, social media can also lead to addiction and distraction, which may negatively impact students' academic performance. Therefore, while it holds great potential for educational enrichment, students must use it responsibly to avoid its detrimental effects on their academic and personal development.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study the following are recommended.

The students should be enlightened to pay minimal attention to social media and focus more on their academic activities

The students should be familiarized with how to manage their time on social media to avoid addiction and to make them focus more on academics instead of entertainment.

Parents, on the other hand, should monitor their ward's usage of social media to avoid using it for illicit acts since it has privacy.

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