# Analyzing the impact of social media usage on modern parenting

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# Abstract

Family bonding is defined as the emotional connection and intimacy experienced by family members. It entails forming strong bonds via common experiences, mutual support, communication, and a sense of belonging. Building and maintaining strong family relationships requires activities like quality time together, meaningful talks, and common interests. Social media involve technological advances and online platforms that allow individuals to establish, share, and interact with multimedia content, ideas, and information in online communities. These platforms facilitate global interaction between people and encourage networking, communication, and the development of virtual communities. Users may communicate in real-time and share information by exchanging text, images, videos, and other kind of content. Social media raises concerns about privacy, misinformation, and mental health even while it also provides advantages like connectivity and information exchange.

The study intended to understand the effect of the extensive use of social media on family bonding and how children are affected by the elders' spending time on social media. The study reveals significant reliance on social media among parents, with varying perceptions of its impact on family dynamics.

**Keywords: Communication, social media, family bonding, Parenting**

## Introduction

Social networking is becoming a vital aspect of our lives in the rapidly evolving digital world of today. Social media platforms have a big influence on how individuals interact with friends, exchange details about their lives, and acquire news and entertainment. With the increasing use of digital space, family connections become a pressing concern nowadays (Procentese et al., 2019). As online engagement becomes more and more ingrained in parents' daily lives, worries about potential effects on their kids' growth and well-being could also be increased. Social media is being used widely among all sort of ages today. The way that parents and kids utilize digital platforms and information is referred to as their online media usage. This covers usage such as the use of websites, social media, online games, viewing movies, access to online learning resources, and many more (Doğan-Keskin et al., 2023). In addition, to setting boundaries, and guidelines and guiding appropriate digital citizenship, parents regularly monitor and mentor their children's online activity. Web media may be used by kids for learning, socializing, entertainment, and communication.

According to Ortiz-Ospina and Roser (2024), by starting of 2023, forty percent of the Indian population over the age of eighteen were active on major social media. The authors also stressed that the average daily usage of social media by Indians is 141 minutes. In the year 2023, Instagram became the most popular platform with 74.70 percent of online users. And, young generation especially teens use Instagram with a majority. Facebook ranks second in popularity among internet users in India, with 492.70 million active users.

The average daily usage of social media by Indians is 141.6 minutes. 74.70 percent of online users in the country used Instagram in the year 2023 and it became the platform with the greatest number of users. A total of 516.92 million engaged users of Instagram in the country.

This study investigates parental social media use and its implications on children and family dynamics. Parents' behaviors, routines, and views toward social media have an inevitable effect on the house as they navigate it. Setting boundaries and participating in their children's activities may have a significant influence on a child's growth. On the other hand, social media use among parents may have a variety of intricate impacts on children. Parental online engagement may promote interactivity, strengthen family bonds, and advance digital literacy among children too. Children who see excessive screen time from parents and distracted parenting due to social media may suffer from neglect, have fewer in-person interactions, and have a harder time distinguishing between online and offline reality. Doğan-Keskin et al. (2023), report that photos and videos of their children are regularly posted on social media by parents, which contributes to neglect and abuse. Thus, it is essential to understand these dynamics for creating positive digital habits and preserving solid parent-child relationships in the digital age. Through examining parental social media activities and their effects on children, this research seeks to assist educators, legislators, and families in making responsible and constructive use of the digital world.

## Review of Literature

The increased use of social media among parents at home may hinder communication within the family. Children might feel neglected when parents are busy on their mobile phones using social media beyond office hours. Procentese et al. (2019) reveal that the parents' belief that they can control their children's social media use without harming the family unit is just as important as the consequences of social media on the Family.

In addition, Williams and Merten (2011), looked into how parents and teenagers internet media to better understand parent-child relationships and family connections. The findings

demonstrate how family ties may be strengthened by social media technologies. In addition, how parents and teenagers handle the internet's position in the house has an impact on how much exposure teens have to potentially harmful sources elsewhere.

Similarly, Archer and Kao (2018) revealed in their study that, how Australian mothers of young children, ages one to four, utilize social media to connect with others. It was seen as helpful, but there were also some negative impacts of social media practice found. The findings highlight how important it is to carefully consider if social media could offer new mothers a support system.

Online interactions are important antecedents to learning ecologies, and deepen our understanding of internet use in the world, even though development, as traditionally understood, is not concerned with the purposeful takeaways of online enjoyment activities such as games, online dating, and fun (Rangaswamy & Arora, 2016).

On the other hand, Joo and Teng (2017), investigated the wide and increasing online conversation in societal life. Researchers employed an online poll to collect comments from social networking sites, by keeping users of all levels informed on viewpoints. The research findings indicate that social media platforms, like Facebook, have a positive impact on family members. Additionally, they will contribute to the creation of a more positive and harmonious society by strengthening and developing family relationships and communication to the point where a cohesive society is achieved.

According to Shafi et al. (2020), social media has a greater influence on kids and their parents. It might be in the form of entertainment or raising consciousness and understanding. In any case, it will affect a child's psychological behavior. A child is exposed to varied information when using social media, which can swiftly lead to positive development. However, it is noted

that children's social media use contributes to their aggressive behavior, lack of apathy, and alienation from notions found in the actual world.

Richards et al. (2015) study states that the negative effects of social media platforms on children as well as the psychological wellness of youth were emphasized in the realms of values and contentment, with linked concerns including cyberbullying and Facebook depression, and the relationship between utilization of social networking sites and negative body image and self-esteem.

The introduction of digital technology has made parenting incredibly tough. Children's access to media is limited by stringent mediation, which is detrimental to their mental and physical health. Late teens, on the other hand, benefit from fewer restrictions. Active mediation is effective until children reach an age when they can process information. Co-viewing is important since it helps the youngster form intimate relationships and get along with their parents (Burhan et al., 2021).

Akram and Farzand (2022), examined the impact of excessive parental usage of social media on the communication and interaction between parents and their children. It was an exploratory study, which discovered that family members' greater use of electronic devices as a result of social media usage results in less time spent together as a family. Additionally, they claim that technology has reduced in-person family interactions and quality time.

Nur'Aini and Minsih (2022) looked at how parents' behaviour was affected by digital parenting. The study's descriptive quantitative technique included use of a basic linear regression analysis. According to the study, children whose parents supervise their online engagement have used social media for improvement. Parental surveillance, disapproval,

response, and positive parental assessment of digital gadgets help prepare their kids for responsible use of technology.

Similar research with 400 mothers of children under 14 was conducted in the Kottayam region of Kerala revealed conflicting views on social media use. While using social media reduces physical exercise, it's still important and enhances living in the digital era. The majority of mothers felt it is important to monitor and guide children on their social media use (Abraham & Selvan, 2022).

Research Gap: The existing literature provides mixed ideas on the effects of social media on society, the studies concentrating on children of low ages (up to 12 years) are merely found and thus the current study is significant.

## Objectives

1. To understand the parents' digital engagement.
2. To find out the social media use by parents and their influence on children.
3. To analyze whether social media enhances or hinders family connections.

## Methodology

The study uses a quantitative research methodology (Wimmer & Domnick, 2014). The quantitative approach allows the generalization of findings to the broader population of the study set.

The study focused on gathering large responses from a different set of parents and the survey method was adopted for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to 103 parents through WhatsApp in the form of Google form (Nur'Aini & Minsih, 2022). An online survey was chosen for its efficiency, ability to gather quantitative data, broader accessibility, and compatibility for parents (Abraham & Selvan, 2022). The parents from Bangalore whose children below the age of twelve were studied. A simple random sampling technique was used for choosing the respondents.

This study aimed to understand the parents' perception of their children's feelings about parents' social media usage at home. It was an attempt to check whether the kids feel neglected or bored when parents are occupied by mobile phones at home. Among 103 responses gathered mothers' participation is slightly high at 61 percent. The data is being analyzed using tabular distributions.

## Findings and Analysis:

The data is elicited from parents who have children below the age of twelve, to understand parents' perspectives on the child's growth and whether it is affected by their online engagement at home.

Table 1: Demographic Details                              n=103

| Parenthood | No of Resprondents | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Mother | 63 | 61% |
| Father | 40 | 39% |
| **Parent Education** | **No of Respondents** | **%** |
| Upto 12th Grade | 17 | 16.5% |
| Under-Graduate | 41 | 39.8% |
| Post-Graduate & above | 45 | 43.6% |
| **No of Child/Children** | **No of Respondents** | **%** |
| 1 Child | 85 | 82.5 |
| 2 Children | 16 | 15.5 |
| 3 Children | 2 | 2 |

Table 1 represents the demographic details of the study. There were 103 responses from parents gathered for the study, with mothers comprising 61 percent and fathers with 39 percent. This indicates a slight skew toward maternal participation. Regarding education levels, the majority of parents have completed either undergraduate 39.8 percent or postgraduate 36.8 percent degrees, while a lesser percentage have completed only high school (10th grade: 6.8 percent, 12th grade: 9.8 percent). Interestingly, a minority hold Ph.D. qualifications 6.8 percent. The majority of parents 82.5 percent have one child, while a significant minority have two children 15.5 percent, and a negligible percentage have three children 2 percent.

Table 2: Age representation of children                             n=103

| Age of Child/Children | No of the children of the respondents | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 to 4 yrs | 25 | 24.3 |
| 5 to 8 yrs | 42 | 40.8 |
| 9 to 12 yrs | 47 | 45.6 |
| Total | 114 | 100 |

A parent may have one or more children, therefore total number of children is 114.

Table 2  shows the age distribution of children, it is found that 24.3 percent of the children are aged 1-4, 40.8 percent are aged 5-8, and 45.6 percent are aged 9-12. This indicates a larger proportion of children in the middle childhood stage (5-8 years) compared to other age groups.

Table 3: Social Media usage among parents                    n=103

| Social Media Platforms | No of Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Facebook | 85 | 82.5% |
| Instagram | 73 | 70.8% |
| WhatsApp | 99 | 96.1% |
| Twitter | 47 | 45.6% |
| Snapchat | 34 | 33% |
| LinkedIn | 55 | 53.3% |
| Sharechat | 23 | 22.3% |
| Moj | 22 | 21.3% |
| Telegram | 46 | 44.6% |
| Youtube | 55 | 53.3% |
| Reddit | 22 | 21.3% |

The above table reflects the consumption of a variety of social media platforms by parents. 96.1 percent of respondents preferred WhatsApp, and Facebook with 82.5 percent being the higher choice of social media preference of parents (Singh, & Tyagi, 2023). Instagram was chosen by 70.8 percent of the parents, showing that visual communication is still preferred in a better way. A significant portion of internet users surveyed are influenced by these platforms, which stand out for their chat features and multimedia-sharing capacities. Though their respective shares are just 53.3 percent and 21.3 percent, platforms like YouTube and Moj are still crucial in encouraging the production and consumption of videos. Since anybody can now make and distribute a variety of videos, from entertaining vlogs to educational courses, YouTube in particular is also a prime example of the democratization of content creation. Meanwhile, messaging applications that target specific groups with features like encrypted communication and ephemeral messaging, such as Telegram 44.6 percent and Snapchat 33

percent, are popular. In addition to more conventional Facebook and Instagram, LinkedIn 53.3 percent provides a virtual environment where people may establish and maintain professional relationships. By connecting members based on shared hobbies and interests, Reddit 21.3 percent fosters a sense of community among like-minded individuals.

Time dedicated to the engagement in digital space by parents: There are 34 percent reported spending more than 4 hours on social media daily, indicating a significant portion of the population with potentially high levels of digital distraction followed by 23.3 percent spending time 2-4 hours, 24.3 percent 1-2 hours and 18.4 percent less than 1 hour.

Quality time engagement of parents with their child/children: Despite the prevalence of social media usage, a substantial portion 80.6 percent reported engaging in quality time with their children daily. However, concerning is the 5.8 percent who reported not engaging with their children at all followed by 2.9 percent of parents who answered 1-2 days a week, 4.9 percent replied 4 days a week and 5.8% said once a week. The data suggests a complex relationship between social media usage and parental engagement. While a significant percentage of parents spend considerable time on social media, the majority still manage to engage with their children regularly. However, there is a concerning minority who appear to prioritize social media over quality time with their children, as evidenced by the 5.8 percent who reported no engagement at all and 5.8% who reported once a week.

Table 4: Online content consumption by children          n=103

| Online Content | No of Responses | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| Cartoons | 56 | 54.3% |
| Education | 20 | 19.4% |
| Games | 20 | 19.4% |
| Movies | 17 | 16.5% |
| Music | 17 | 16.5% |

The data reveals a diverse range of media preferences among children which is observed by their parents is shown in Table 4. Cartoons are the most popular category with 54.3 percent followed by education and games at 19.4 percent each and movies and music at 16.5 percent each. Interestingly, a significant portion of children also showed interest in combinations of entertainment and educational content, such as cartoons with educational elements or multiple forms of media (e.g., games, movies, music) with educational components. The findings have shown the importance of providing children with media options that blend entertainment with educational value. This can enhance learning experiences while catering to their entertainment preferences.

Table 5: Statements related to Social Media usage, Family and Parenting Practices n=103

| Statement on Social Media Usage | Yes | % | No | % | Maybe | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-control over the time spent on social media usage | 52 | 50.5 | 21 | 20.4 | 30 | 29 |
| Child/children ever felt neglected or ignored due to parent social media usage | 27 | 26 | 50 | 48.5 | 26 | 25 |
| Social media usage enhances family communication | 37 | 36 | 31 | 30 | 35 | 34 |
| Social media has strengthened bonding with child/children | 6 | 5.8 | 64 | 62 | 33 | 32 |
| Parental controls or restrictions for child/children access to social media | 83 | 81 | 15 | 14.6 | 5 | 5 |
| Important family information is neglected due to social media distractions sometimes | 42 | 41 | 38 | 36.9 | 23 | 22 |
| | Yes | % | No | % | | |
| Social media usage has any influence on child/children mental health | 49 | 48 | 54 | 52 | | |
| Encourage child/children to use educational resources available on social media | 79 | 77 | 24 | 23 | | |
| Discuss the potential risks of social media with child/children | 78 | 76 | 25 | 24 | | |
| Participate in child/children online activities to better understand of their digital world | 82 | 80 | 21 | 20 | | |

The above table describes the data related to social media usage among parents. A significant portion 50.5 percent of respondents indicated that they have control over the time spent on social media. However, a notable percentage 20.4 percent says no, and 29 percent remains

uncertain, suggesting a lack of clear boundaries in managing social media usage. Alarmingly, over a quarter 26 percent of respondents admitted that their child or children have felt neglected or ignored due to their social media usage whereas 48.5 percent and 25 percent say no, and maybe this highlights a potential negative consequence of excessive screen time on family relationships. While a considerable number 36 percent believe that social media enhances family communication, there exists a substantial percentage 34 percent who remain uncertain about its impact and 30 percent say no this ambiguity shows that few of them consider that social media helps in enhancing family communication. Contrary to expectations, only a small fraction of 5.8 percent of respondents felt that social media has strengthened bonding with their child or children. The majority 61.2 percent expressed skepticism or disagreement with this notion and 32 percent said maybe, indicating a potential disconnect between virtual interactions and real-life bonding experiences. A significant majority 81 percent reported implementing parental controls or restrictions for their child or children access to social media, whereas very few percentages 14.6 percent and 5 percent answered no and maybe respectively thus, the majority's proactive measure reflects parental concerns about the potential risks associated with unrestricted online activities. Approximately two-fifths 40.8 percent of respondents admitted that important family information is sometimes neglected due to social media distractions whereas 36.9 percent and 22.3 percent replied no and maybe; this suggests that digital distractions hamper parents to prioritize familial responsibilities.

Nearly half of respondents, 48 percent perceive that social media usage has some influence on child mental health, while a slightly higher percentage, 52 percent believe otherwise, this dichotomy underscores the ongoing debate surrounding the potential adverse effect on children's mental health. A significant majority of 77 percent of respondents actively encourage their child or children to utilize educational resources available on social media platforms, thus, this proactive approach reflects a recognition of the educational potential

inherent in digital spaces despite concerns about other aspects of social media usage. A substantial proportion 76 percent of respondents reported engaging in discussions with their child or children about the potential risk associated with social media, this communication strategy demonstrates parental awareness of the need to address digital literacy and online safety concerns within the family environment. An overwhelming majority of 80 percent of respondents actively participate in their child or children's online activities to gain a better understanding of their digital world, this hands-on approach exemplifies parental efforts to bridge the generational gap and foster open communication regarding digital experiences. The main concern is, that some parents still do not discuss the risks of social media or are not motivated to use educational resources on social media. Also, parents' non-participation of online activities with their child or children shows the lack of communication or education on social media to their child or children.

Table 6: Parental Involvement in Digital Experiences of Children                    n=103

| Statement on social media use | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Whether child/children discuss their online experiences with parents | 30 (29.1%) | 13 (12.6%) | 31 (30.1%) | 14 (13.6%) | 15 (14.6%) |
| Parents' social media use impacts their child/children's academic performance | 48 (46.6%) | 11 (10.7%) | 32 (31.1%) | 7 (6.8%) | 5 (4.9%) |
| Whether parents promote discussions about the digital world within their family | 16 (15.5%) | 8 (7.8%) | 16 (15.5%) | 16 (15.5%) | 47 (45.6%) |

A significant proportion of children seldom discuss their online experiences with their parents, with 29.1 percent reporting never engaging in such conversations whereas 30.1 percent answered sometimes 14.6 percent replied always and 12.6 percent and 13.6 percent said rarely and often respectively. Furthermore, parental social media use appears to have a negligible impact on academic performance, as indicated by 46.6 percent of respondents reporting that it never affects their child's academic performance still there is a concern because 31.1 percent replied sometimes, and 10.7 percent, 6.8 percent and 4.9 percent answered rarely, often and always it sheds light on the impact of academic performance of the child or children for their parents' social media usage. However, there is a concerning lack of proactive engagement by parents in promoting discussions about the digital world within the family, with only 45.6 percent reporting that they always encourage such discourse whereas 15.5 percent are there in often, sometimes, never and 7.8 percent answered rarely. Despite the pervasive influence of digital technologies, many parents fail to actively engage in meaningful discussions about the digital world with their children. Addressing this gap is crucial for promoting digital literacy,

enhancing online safety, and ultimately improving children's academic outcomes in an increasingly digitized society.

Table 7: Parental Awareness on the Effects of Social Media                                          n=103

| Statements on parental awareness | Fully Unaware | Unaware | Neutral | Aware | Fully Aware |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The potential long-term effects of parent social media use on their child/children | 3 (2.9%) | 6 (5.8%) | 10 (9.7%) | 35 (34%) | 49 (47.6%) |
| Parents' awareness level of privacy or security on social media that may impact their | 3 (2.9%) | 4 (3.9%) | 12 (11.7%) | 33 (32%) | 51 (49.5%) |

Responses indicate a significant level of awareness among parents. Nearly 81.6 percent of respondents acknowledge the potential lasting impact of their online engagement on their children. Specifically, 47.6 percent are fully aware, while an additional 34 percent are aware to some extent. However, a notable portion (8.7 percent) remains either fully unaware or unaware whereas 9.7 percent replied neutral of these potential consequences. The majority of parents 81.5 percent demonstrate awareness of privacy and security issues associated with social media use. Specifically, 49.5 percent are fully aware, and an additional 32 percent are aware. Nonetheless, a considerable proportion of 6.8 percent exhibit either full unawareness or unawareness regarding these concerns, and 11.7 percent replied neutral. It sheds light on the varying degrees of parental awareness of the impact of such media on children, associated

privacy and security concerns. While a significant portion of parents demonstrate awareness, there remains a notable proportion who are either fully unaware or only partially informed. Addressing these gaps in knowledge is crucial for fostering a safer and more conducive digital environment for families.

Diverse viewpoints have been gathered of parents on their family bonding; participants express a balanced view, acknowledging both positive and negative impacts, and also highlight concerns about the detrimental effects of excessive social media usage. Social media facilitates communication and connectivity within families, especially with distant relatives or children who are away from home. It also highlights the educational benefits of social media, such as access to information and learning resources. In addition, social media platforms are seen by parents as tools for creating and sharing memorable family moments, such as through photo and video sharing.

On the contrary, some parents experienced raised concerns about addiction to social media, leading to neglect of familial responsibilities and decreased productivity in other aspects of life. Also, they highlighted excessive social media use which is cited as a source of distraction, leading to neglect of family members and reduced quality time spent together(Abraham & Selvan, 2022).. Moreover, participants expressed worries regarding the detrimental effects of these media on the younger mind, particularly among children, including effects on attention span, behavior, and academic performance. Some respondents mention conflicts arising from differences in social media usage habits within families, leading to disconnection and strained relationships.

A notable finding is that parents highly recommend setting limits on social media usage, particularly within the family context, to mitigate its negative effects on bonding and well-being. Also shredded a light on encouraging a balanced approach to social media usage, where

it complements rather than replaces real-life interactions and activities, is seen as essential. It also highlights guidance and supervision to children regarding social media usage, emphasizing responsible and mindful engagement. Some parents also prioritize quality time spent with family members over screen time is emphasized as crucial for maintaining strong family bonds. Parents also highlighted that increasing knowledge of the advantages and problems associated with social networking sites, along with promoting digital literacy skills, can empower individuals and families to make informed choices.

## Discussions

The study consists of more participation of mothers with 61 percent. The majority of parents hold undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. This indicates a well-educated sample population, potentially influencing their perspectives on social media usage and family dynamics. The study showed significant reliance on social media among parents, with varying perceptions of its impact on family dynamics. At the same time, many parents feel in control of their social media usage with 51 percent, while some parents (41 percent) are concerned about neglecting family information. It has also been noted that parents discuss the potential risks of social media with child/children is 75.7 percent. There's a consensus on the importance of discussing online experiences and promoting educational resources, yet perceptions of social media's overall impact on family communication and bonding are mixed. Awareness of long-term effects and privacy concerns indicates a recognition of the need for parental vigilance in navigating the digital landscape as the survey identifies fully aware with 47.6 percent and 49.5 percent respectively. While a significant proportion of parents demonstrate awareness about potential long-term effects and privacy/security concerns of social media, there remains a notable gap in knowledge among some participants with 18.4 percent and 18.5 percent notably.

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Addressing these gaps through targeted interventions is essential for promoting a safer and more conducive digital environment for families. The study highlights a concerning lack of proactive engagement by parents in promoting discussions about the digital world within the family. This underscores the importance of fostering open communication and digital literacy skills to empower families in navigating the digital landscape effectively. Despite acknowledging the potential drawbacks, parents advocate for setting limits, adopting a balanced approach, providing parental guidance, prioritizing quality time, and increasing awareness and education about social media risks and benefits. These recommendations reflect a proactive stance towards fostering healthy digital habits and strengthening family bonds.

## Limitation

1.  The study is based on parent perspectives, conducting qualitative study considering the children's perception in social media use of their parents can provide a clear version.

2.  Limited samples size

3.  Equal parents' participation could have been much more justifiable

## Recommendation

1. Conducting longitudinal studies would allow researchers to track changes in social media usage and family bonding over time, providing insights into the evolving nature of these relationships and any potential casual relationships.

2. Combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups could offer deeper insights into the nuances of parental attitudes and behaviors regarding social media usage and family bonding. Qualitative data could provide context and enrich the understanding of quantitative findings.

## Operational Definitions:

**Social media:** It refers to the various online networking platforms. The study included facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube, shareit, chat, snapchat, LinkedIn ,Twitter, Moj, Telegram and Reddit as social media.

**Modern Parenting:** Parenting in the internet era, when a parent spends most of the time either in the office or on the phone; how their online engagement affects their children in the digital age is referred to as modern parenting. Also it refers to how parents have involved in regulating their children's social media use.

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