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RESEARCH ARTICLE

BALANCING CONNECTIVITY AND WELL-BEING: A STUDY ON DIGITAL MEDIA'S IMPACT ON MINORS' MENTAL HEALTH

Vansh Bansal

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Abstract

The research paper aims to analyse how the minds of minors or their mental health is being affected due to digital media. The rapid digitalisation has led to sudden increase of its risk to destroy mental health. The victims majorly comprise children aged from 8-17 years old. The research paper will explore how various forms of digital exposure can have different levels of effects on the young minds. In some cases this not only destroys the victim's life but sometimes the victims make wrong decisions that destroys other's life too. Key findings suggest that while digital tools can enhance access to mental health resources, they can also lead to increased anxiety, loneliness, and sleep disruption. With the increasing accessibility of smartphones and internet platforms, even young children are becoming regular consumers of digital content. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for digital literacy and balanced usage. It also emphasises on consumption of age-approved digital media content to ensure psychological safety and healthy development (V. Bansal., 2025).

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Introduction:-

As the world began to digitalise, everyday tasks became faster, easier, and more efficient. From communication to education and entertainment, digital technology has transformed nearly every aspect of modern life. However, this convenience comes at a cost, especially for the younger generation. While digital platforms offer endless opportunities for learning and connection, they also bring along serious risks to mental health, especially to minors. It can be agreed that digital media has become an integral part of the life of the generation. Initially, during the COVID-19 pandemic, people became aware of mental health and why it is important. There were digital media services available on mobile phones, smartwatches, etc., so that one could take care of their mental health. That was one way a person could enhance their digital mental health. But these platforms were not enough for long. These precautions became less relevant as the problems grew. Digital mental health refers to how digital media or technology like social media, apps, and screen time, affects a person's mental health. Today, digital mental health is as important as mental health. If a person has healthy mental health, they will have healthy growth and definitely a healthy body. (V. Bansal., 2025).

Factors Affecting Mental Health:-

While technology and digital media have opened new doors to innovation, they also bring a set of challenges that can affect one's mental well being. These issues are especially noticeable among adolescents and young adults, who

spend a large share of their daily lives online and are therefore more exposed to its risks. The harmful side of the digital world does not only include obvious threats such as harassment and exploitation, but also more subtle pressures like addictive behaviors, the constant need to maintain a digital identity, and the tendency to compare oneself with unrealistic standards presented on social media. (V. Bansal.,2025).

Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:-

Cyberbullying is one of the most harmful features of the internet. It can happen to any user at any time, and the worst part is that it spreads rapidly to a wide audience, leaving victims with almost no escape. The constant fear of being targeted online has been shown to cause anxiety, depression, and in severe cases, even suicidal thoughts. What makes it even more concerning is that bullies can easily hide behind fake usernames, VPNs, or anonymous accounts, making them difficult to trace or hold accountable. This anonymity gives them a sense of power while leaving the victim feeling helpless and isolated. "The internet neither forgets nor forgives". Unlike face-to-face bullying, the damage of cyberbullying often lingers because harmful posts, images, or comments can remain online indefinitely, resurfacing again and again. For many victims, the psychological weight of knowing that their humiliation can be seen by countless strangers makes the trauma far more severe. (V. Bansal.,2025).

Privacy Violations, Deepfakes, and Exploitation:-

The misuse of technology for activities such as spreading private content, manipulating images or videos through deepfakes, or leaking MMS clips has become a deeply troubling issue with serious mental health consequences. These violations do not just harm reputations but leave behind long-lasting scars of trauma, humiliation, and mistrust. Victims often live with the constant fear that their personal images or information could be misused again, turning even ordinary notifications or messages into sources of anxiety. What makes the damage worse is the permanence of the internet once something is shared online, it can resurface anytime, regardless of whether the original source is taken down. This uncertainty becomes a heavy burden, creating stress, anxiety and depression. Many victims withdrew themselves from digital platforms entirely, avoiding spaces that should have been safe and empowering, while they faced issues with privacy. The things that should have been private are now public. Such photos and videos are often created using AI or special digital tools which makes it more disturbing. Such tools are generally developed to make it easy for movie developers to create scenes that can't be physically shot. (V. Bansal.,2025).

Gaming and Gambling Addictions:-

Online gaming and digital gambling are increasingly being recognized as forms of behavioral addiction that carry serious risks. Young people, in particular teenagers, often find themselves spending excessive hours immersed in virtual worlds or betting platforms, sometimes losing track of time altogether. This constant engagement disrupts sleep cycles, academic performance, effecting across different areas of life. What begins as a form of entertainment can gradually turn into a dependency, where individuals feel restless, irritable, or even anxious when they are unable to play or gamble. Over time, this cycle not only damages mental and emotional health but also makes them isolate themselves from the world, as individuals may choose the screen over real-life interactions. In cases of gambling, financial losses and secrecy can add another layer of stress, often leading to tension and conflicts within families.. If left unchecked, such addictions can have long-term consequences, shaping a person's self-esteem, decision-making, and ability to build healthy relationships. Today children aged from 12-13 years are playing games like Call Of Duty, PUBG etc. Such games are rated adult or 17+ on play store and app store due to the presence of extreme violence. (V. Bansal.,2025).

Pressure to Maintain an Online Presence:-

In today's digital culture, self-worth is often tied to numbers on a screen—likes, comments, followers, and views. What may begin as a casual attempt to share a moment can quickly grow into a constant drive for validation. For many, particularly young people, this dependency turns social media into a source of pressure, where confidence rises or falls based on how others react online. The repeated cycle of posting, checking responses, comparing outcomes, and seeking more attention can become draining, even addictive. Over time, relying on external approval takes a toll on mental health, fueling anxiety, insecurity, and a fragile sense of identity. In some cases, the chase for recognition even pushes individuals to exaggerate their lives, change how they present themselves, or take risks simply to stay visible. Instead of remaining a space for genuine connection, social media risks becoming a stage where performance overshadows authenticity, and people measure their value through the approval of others rather than their own self-belief. (V. Bansal.,2025).

Case Study:-

A shocking case from Lucknow shows how dangerous gaming addiction can become. A 16-year-old boy who was addicted to PUBG lost control when his mother asked him to stop playing and ended up shooting her with his father's pistol while his father, an army officer, was away in another state. After the incident, he tried to hide what he had done by keeping her body in a room for two days, spraying air freshener to cover the smell, and threatening his younger sister to stay quiet. Later, when he couldn't manage anymore, he lied to his father saying that an electrician had killed his mother, but during the police investigation his sister revealed the truth. This tragic case shows how badly addiction to violent games can affect a person's mind, making them more aggressive and unable to separate the virtual world from reality. Instead of calmly talking to his mother, the boy felt that violence was the only solution, which proves how dangerous digital addiction can be if it goes unchecked. It's a reminder that too much gaming or unhealthy use of technology can ruin mental health, relationships, and even lives, and that balance and control are very important before things get out of hand.(V. Bansal.,2025).

Conclusion:-

Digital technology today has become such a big part of our lives that it is almost impossible to imagine a world without it, but the truth is that along with all the benefits it brings, it also carries risks that can harm our mental health if we are not careful. For teenagers especially, the problems are visible everywhere—cyberbullying makes people anxious and depressed, privacy violations and deepfakes create shame and fear, while gaming and gambling addictions waste time, ruin studies, and even damage family relationships. Social media adds another layer of pressure where likes, followers, and comments become measures of self-worth, and this makes many young people feel that they are never good enough. What makes these issues so dangerous is that they do not always show up immediately; instead, they slowly affect the way we think, behave, and even the way we see ourselves. Some extreme cases, like the tragic incident in Lucknow where a boy killed his own mother over PUBG, prove how serious these problems can become when addiction takes over and blurs the line between reality and virtual life. This is why digital mental health must be taken as seriously as physical health, because the mind suffers just as much as the body when it is not cared for. The good part is that solutions are possible—small steps like limiting screen time, avoiding age-inappropriate content, keeping social media accounts private, and most importantly, talking openly with parents and friends about problems can make a huge difference. Technology itself is not bad; it is how we use it that matters. If we learn to control it instead of letting it control us, we can enjoy its advantages without falling into the traps that destroy our peace of mind.(V. Bansal.,2025).

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