

## Differences between Active and Passive Social Media Usage on Well-Being in Reference to Adolescents



Ms. Jasmine Oberoi<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Rashmi Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, University Rd, Ganapati Nagar, Udaipur, Rajasthan 313001

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, University Rd, Ganapati Nagar, Udaipur, Rajasthan 313001.

**ABSTRACT:** Today in this fast pacing world and in the age of digital era, internet is easily accessible to every human being. Many researchers in the past have explored that social media is directly or indirectly affecting the physiological and mental health of an individual. Active users are the ones who are actively involved in the social media sites whereas the passive users are the ones who are not actively participating yet observing the other's profiles and posts. The aim of this paper is to identify the significant difference between genders (male and female) on well-being in reference to adolescents and significant difference between active and passive social media users on the well-being in reference to adolescents. The total sample size taken was N=120, which consists of 60 males and 60 females of both the groups that is active and passive social media users. Random purposive sampling was used for collecting data. The research design for the study is 2x2 factorial design. The independent variables of the study are Active and passive social media users whereas the dependent variables for the study are dimensions of well-being given by Carol Ryff i.e. autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, self-growth. Self-made online survey was done for collecting the sample for active and passive social media users and Ryff's well-being scale was used in the study. The analysis of data was done by using descriptive analysis and ANOVA. The findings of the study suggest that there was a significant difference between active and passive social media users on well-being also there was a significant difference between genders (male and female) on well-being in reference to adolescents.

**KEYWORDS:** Social media, active social media users, passive social media users, well-being, adolescents.

### INTRODUCTION

The term 'Social' refers to interaction among people and the term 'Media' refers to the mode of communication. Therefore, social media can be defined as a web-based communication that involves sharing and consuming of data. Examples are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc. Social media provides free web space, encourages the building of Social Media profiles, provides communication and sharing facilities, enables users to create unique pages, and also acts as a facilitator in branding and promotions. Active social media use refers to the behavioural pattern of actively creating content or interacting with others; specific behaviours include posting updates and photos, sharing information, meeting new people online and chatting with them, and participating in groups (Shaw et al., 2015). Passive social media use refers to the behavioural pattern of only browsing and consuming information, such as browsing friends' statuses or personal homepages (Ding et al., 2017).

Social media is a powerful tool and with its expansion in every nook and corner, it provides an individual with multiple opportunities such as career opportunities, business expansion as well as sharing and saving memories. Social media has also helped people to gain information from every part of the world. Now talking about the users of social media there are generally two types of users-active social media users (ASMU) and passive social media users (PSMU). Active users of social media share experiences of their life through texting, audio, or video content; and they interact frequently with other social media users. Such activities may enhance the social capital of these users thereby leading to improved well-being. They use digital platforms to identify their hobbies, enhancing their area of interest and skills. Conversely, passive users (or 'lurkers') have a tendency to observe and maintain low engagement with other users. Research has shown that passive social media usage is the presiding activity on Social media sites, and it has been associated with decreased well-being and social anxiety. It also includes scrolling through social media for hours, and reading about celebrities and what is going on in their lives.

Well-being:

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Well-being refers to a dynamic concept which has many facets such as social, health related and psychological. When an individual feels purposeful, is growing in life, is able to maintain good social relations and has a sense of independence and control over one's environment and is in acceptance with oneself. This study has used Ryff's scale to measure psychological well-being. Ryff has given six dimensions to measure psychological well-being which are:

- 1) Autonomy: When an individual does not give in to society's pressure rather has his/her own standards for evaluating oneself.
- 2) Environmental Mastery: When a person analyses the resources available in the environment and how those resources can be used for dealing with the environment and makes a good use of surrounding opportunities.
- 3) Purpose in life: When an individual has a direction and purpose in life and works in order to achieve his/her goals is one of the indicator of psychological well-being.
- 4) Personal Growth: When an individual has an intention of growing in life by improving oneself from his/her previous version by reflection and is striving to realise one's full potential is again an indicator of psychological well-being.
- 5) Positive relations: Ability to form close and trusting relations with others with people whom you can rely on and share anything with an assurance that they will always support you is definitely an indicator of psychological well-being.
- 6) Self-acceptance: It is an ability of an individual to accept oneself completely with both positive and negative qualities.

According to Ryff when all of these dimensions are combined and an individual score high on all these dimensions is an indicator that an individual is in a state of psychological well-being.

Adolescence:

WHO describes 'Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19.' It is a transition period often referred to as stage of turmoil where an individual is transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is a period of hormonal changes and development of secondary sexual characteristics.

In this digital age with plethora of information available online, variety of applications available to make our lives easier where anything to almost everything can be delivered on our door-step, where almost any information is just a click away of national or international importance of various jobs being created online and ability to connect with our loved ones have become much easier. Undoubtedly there are downsides to this also. The aim of this paper is to understand how the use of social media both in active and passive form can effect well-being of adolescents.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Boniell-Nissim et al. (2022) in their study explored the relationship between social media use (SMU), SMU that was problematic and well-being outcomes. They developed four categories taking into consideration both intensity of use and problematic SMU i.e. non-active usage, active usage, intense usage and problematic usage. With the help of these four categories they studied the associations between social media use, mental and social well-being and substance use on N=190089 respondents of ages 11, 13, and 15 years from 42 countries. The results of the study concluded that the problematic users displayed the least favourable mental and social well-being along with highest level of substance use. The non-active users reported lower mental and social well-being in comparison to active users but at the same time they had the lowest substance usage. Intense non-problematic users were the ones who displayed highest levels of social well-being.

Chen, S. (2022) collected the sample from 479 college students in China who were social media users. The aim of the study was to explore the mediation and moderation effects in the relationship to various social media usage patterns, the emotional responses of the consumers and their impulsive buying. The results of the study indicated that active and passive social media use were positively associated with enjoyment of the users, whereas passive usage of social media showed increased depression. Users' impulsive buying was significantly and positively related to depression and enjoyment. Materialism was found to be positively moderating the relationship amongst enjoyment and impulsive consumption where self-control lead to reduced effect of depression on impulse buying.

Valkenburg, P. M. (2022) conducted a review study to investigate the operationalisations and results of studies in relation to ASMU and PSMU with well-being and depressive symptoms. This review was based on 40 survey studies, which used 36 operationalisations of ASMU and PSMU and which resulted in 172 associations of ASMU and PSMU with well or ill-being. The results of the study indicated no evident support for the hypothesis. So, the study suggested to look into more factors to be considered for future research.

Farooq, S. et al. (2021) conducted a study to examine the correlation between social media usage and undergraduate students' psychological wellbeing by taking the samples from Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. A positive correlation was observed between social media usage and psychological wellbeing of the above mentioned students. The study also showed that the most popular social media app amongst these undergraduate students was Whatsapp.

Escobar-Viera, C. G. et al. (2018) conducted a study to find out the relation between social media use and mental health outcomes, such as anxiety or depressive symptoms. The aim of the study was to assess the independent associations between active versus passive social media use and depressive symptoms. The data was collected from the N=702 sample by doing an online survey of adults aged 18 to 49. Tools used to measure depressive symptoms was Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information

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System brief depression scale. The findings of the study were in PSMU there was an increase in depressive symptoms and in active media users there was a decrease in depressive symptoms.

Verduyn, P. et al. (2017) reviewed the outcomes of interaction with social networking sites for subjective well-being. They reviewed the relationship of these constructs. Negative relationships were observed between passively using social networking sites and subjective well-being. The study also revealed that positive relationships was found between actively using social networking sites and subjective well-being of the individuals.

Frison, E., & Eggermont, S. (2016) conducted a study to provide a deeper understanding of the relationships between different types of Facebook use, perceived online social support, and boys' and girls' depressed mood. The study has a sample of N= 910. The study concluded that the harmful impact of Facebook usage happens amongst those girls who passively use Facebook and among those boys who actively use Facebook in public setting on the other hand it was observed that girls who actively use Facebook, in a public or private setting and perceived online social support benefitted from the active usage of Facebook.

Tromholt, M. (2016) conducted a 1-week experiment on a sample of N=1095 in Denmark in late 2015. The study compared results of two groups the one was the treatment group which included participants who were on a break from Facebook with the control group which included the participants who continued using Facebook. The result of the study concluded that discontinuing Facebook had positive effects on the two dimensions of well-being. These effects were observed in participants who were heavy Facebook users, passive Facebook users, and the ones who used to envy other people on Facebook.

Verduyn, P. et al. (2015) conducted a study to find out that using Facebook leads to decline in subjective well-being over a course of time. They conducted 2 studies in which they did experimental and field methods. In the laboratory when the participants were cued to use Facebook passively it was observed that there was decline in well-being over time. The study also demonstrated that this decline was due to increasing envy. Therefore, the study revealed that passive Facebook usage undermines affective well-being

### Research Gap:

The aim of the study was to identify the effect of active and passive social media users and gender on well-being in reference to adolescents. In today's digital age where there is plenty of content and content consumers it becomes significantly important to understand how this fast changing world impacts our well-being. Adolescents being a target of a lot of content makes it more important to study how active and passive social media impacts their well-being. The study wanted to explore and identify the effect on all the dimensions of well-being given by Ryff i.e. Autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance and how are they different for males and females in reference to adolescents since very less studies are done exploring effect on all the dimensions of well-being specifically for population of Rajasthan.

### Objectives:

The aim of this paper is to identify the significant difference between

- 1) Gender on well-being in reference to adolescents.
- 2) Active and Passive social media users on the well-being in reference to adolescents.

### Variables:

Independent Variable:

Social media usage

- a) Active social media usage
- b) Passive Social media usage

Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female

Dependent Variable:

Dimensions of Wellbeing(Ryff)

- a) Autonomy
- b) Environmental Mastery
- c) Personal growth
- d) Positive relation
- e) Purpose in life
- f) Self-acceptance

### Methodology:

The total sample size of the data taken was N=120, which consists of 60 boys and 60 girls of both the groups that are active and passive social media users. Random purposive sampling was used for collecting the data. The research design for the study is a 2x2 factorial design. The Independent variables of the study are i.e. Active and passive social media users and gender whereas the dependent variable are the dimensions of well-being i.e. autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations,

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purpose in life, self-growth. A self-made online survey was taken to collect the sample for active and passive users and Ryff's Well-being scale (42 items) was used in the study. The data was collected by purposive random sampling. The analysis of the data was done by using descriptive analysis and ANOVA.

**Table1: Research Design:**

Gender	Social Media Users		Total
Male	Active (30)	Passive (30)	60
Female	Active (30)	Passive (30)	60
Total	60	60	N=120

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 shows that on the dimension autonomy active social media users were found to have high mean scores ( $M=35.50$ ) as compared to passive social media users ( $M=32.47$ ). In reference to gender, males were having more awareness about the autonomy as compared to females ( $M=30.35$ ) with a mean of 37.62. On the dimension environmental mastery active social media users were found to have high mean scores ( $M=35.88$ ) as compared to passive social media users ( $M=30.83$ ). In reference to gender, females were having higher environmental mastery as compared to males ( $M=30.08$ ) with a mean of 36.63. On the dimension personal growth active social media users were found to have high mean ( $M=27.32$ ) as compared to passive social media users ( $M=20.70$ ). In reference to gender, females tend to have a better personal growth than males ( $M=19.43$ ) with a mean of 28.58. On the dimension positive relations active social media users were found to have a high mean ( $M=31.37$ ) as compared to passive social media users ( $M=23.83$ ). In reference to gender, females scored higher on the dimension positive relations as compared to males ( $M=21.80$ ) with a mean of 33.40. On the dimension purpose in life Active social media users scored more ( $M=34.15$ ) as compared to passive social media users ( $M=32.25$ ). In reference to gender, males tend to have higher purpose in life as compared to females ( $M=29.07$ ) with a mean of 37.33. On the dimension self- acceptance active social media users were found to have higher self-acceptance ( $M=36.57$ ) than passive social media users ( $M=31.87$ ). In reference to gender, males were found to have higher self-acceptance than females ( $M=30.07$ ) with a mean of 38.37. All the above mentioned analysis is done in reference to adolescents of age group 10-19 years.

\*\* is an indicator of significant value  $<0.001$

**Table2: Descriptive Statistics**

Dependent Variable	Gender	Active/Passive	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Autonomy	Male	Active	38.20	3.39	30
		Passive	37.03	2.64	30
		Total	37.62	3.07	60
	female	Active	32.80	2.97	30
		Passive	27.90	5.48	30
		Total	30.35	5.02	60
	Total	Active	35.50	4.17	60
		Passive	32.47	6.28	60
		Total	33.98	5.52	120
Environmental mastery	male	Active	34.33	5.02	30
		Passive	25.83	2.27	30
		Total	30.08	5.77	60
	female	Active	37.43	3.30	30
		Passive	35.83	3.07	30
		Total	36.63	3.26	60
	Total	Active	35.88	4.49	60
		Passive	30.83	5.71	60
		Total	33.36	5.71	120
Personal growth	male	Active	22.90	1.70	30
		Passive	15.97	4.51	30
		Total	19.43	4.86	60
	female	Active	31.73	3.85	30
		Passive	25.43	2.60	30
		Total	28.58	4.55	60
	Total	Active	27.32	5.34	60
		Passive	20.70	6.01	60
		Total	24.01	6.56	120
Positive Relation	male	Active	23.90	2.63	30

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Table 3 shows a significant difference at <0.001 significance level between genders (male and female) on all the dimensions of well-being i.e. autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance which is an indicator that the difference is not merely due to chance. Also, as seen in Table 2 of descriptive analysis suggests that males tend to score higher on autonomy, purpose in life and self-acceptance dimensions of well-being in reference to adolescents while females scored higher on environmental mastery, personal growth and positive relations dimensions of well-being in reference to adolescents. The result of the study suggests that active male social media users are more independent and self-assuring and actively engage in content to have better and well-directed goals in life. Males who are actively involved in social media usage tend to be more self-accepting by accepting both positive and negative sides of self. While female active media users spend time on social media for self-improvement, realising their potentials, understanding the environmental demands and how to utilise resources for better environmental mastery simultaneously building satisfying, trusted and positive relations with others. The results indicate a significant difference in active and passive social media users on well-being in reference to adolescents. The results suggest that active social media users among adolescents have better well-being as compared to passive social media users. Several studies that have taken this difference into account have found that individuals' active social media use usually has a positive impact on their psychological factors, and, conversely, that passive social media use usually has a negative impact on psychological factors (Matook et al., 2015; Frison and Eggermont, 2016, 2020). Specifically, passively using social network sites provokes social comparisons and envy, which have negative downstream consequences for subjective well-being. In contrast, when active usage of social network sites predicts subjective well-being, it seems to do so by creating social capital and stimulating feelings of social connectedness. (Verduyn, P. et al., 2017).

**Table 3: Analysis of Variance**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Gender	Autonomy	1584.133	1	1584.13	110.21**
	Environmental mastery	1287.075	1	1287.07	101.26**
	Personal growth	2511.675	1	2511.67	223.27**
	Positive Relation	4036.800	1	4036.80	290.10**
	Purpose in Life	2050.133	1	2050.13	475.18**
	Self-acceptance	2066.700	1	2066.70	283.95**
<u>active_passive</u>	Autonomy	276.033	1	276.03	19.20**
	Environmental mastery	765.075	1	765.07	60.19**
	Personal growth	1313.408	1	1313.40	116.75**
	Positive Relation	1702.533	1	1702.53	122.35**
	Purpose in Life	108.300	1	108.30	25.10**
	Self-acceptance	662.700	1	662.70	91.05**
<u>gender * active_passive</u>	Autonomy	104.533	1	104.53	7.27**
	Environmental mastery	357.075	1	357.07	28.09**
	Personal growth	3.008	1	3.00	.26
	Positive Relation	333.333	1	333.33	23.95**
	Purpose in Life	288.300	1	288.30	66.82**
	Self-acceptance	410.700	1	410.70	56.42**

The interaction effect of gender and active and passive social media users was found to be significant in autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance. The results also suggest that there was no significant difference in personal growth. The possible reason for this could be that social media as a tool provides equal opportunities for both male and female for personal growth.

### Limitations of the study:

- 1) The geographical locale was limited to Rajasthan
- 2) The inclusion criteria for age group was adolescents.
- 3) No interviews were taken for the study

### Further scope for research:

- 1) The amount of screen time spent if measured in detail will help in better understanding for the well-being of active and passive social media users.

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2) The quality of content that is being consumed will also lead to better understanding of how the content consumed effects an individual's well-being.

### CONCLUSION

The results of the study suggest that overall active social media users were found to have better scores in all the dimensions of well-being which are autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life and self-acceptance in reference to adolescents. There was gender difference on dimensions on well-being in reference to adolescents. Males tend to score higher on autonomy, purpose in life and self-acceptance while females tend to score higher on environmental mastery, personal growth and positive relations.

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### APPENDIX

The online survey form for active and passive social media questions included 10 questions and the respondent had to answer whether in yes or no

- 1) Does your social media involves frequent interaction with people you know?
- 2) Do you keep scrolling on social media for hours?
- 3) Do you find a huge amount of your time being spent on social media without actively engaging with someone.
- 4) Do you feel or think that you will miss out on many things if you don't check social media daily?
- 5) Do you interact with your friends using social media platforms?
- 6) Do you frequently send memes and other links using social media?
- 7) Do you frequently check and follow celebrities to know what new is happening in their lives?
- 8) Do you use social media for identifying and building communities of your hobbies and interests?

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9) Do you think social media has helped in your growth?

10) Do you think social media is a boredom cure?



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