

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Social Media Usage and interpersonal interactions: A Survey-Based Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between social media usage and emotional intelligence (EI) among individuals aged 11 to 58. By employing a survey-based approach, we examine how different social media platforms influence emotional well-being and the extent to which EI moderates these effects. The results suggest that while social media can significantly affect emotions, interpersonal interactions have an even greater impact. The findings underscore the importance of emotional regulation and conscious social media consumption. Future research directions and implications for enhancing EI are discussed.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Well-Being, Interpersonal Interactions, Social Media, Relationship.

Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) involves recognizing, understanding, and managing one's own and others' emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). High EI is linked to better mental health, stronger relationships, and improved decision-making (Goleman, 1995). The rise of social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp has introduced new dynamics in social interaction, influencing emotional well-being, especially in younger users still developing their emotional skills (Vogel et al., 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). This study aims to investigate the impact of EI on the emotional effects of social media usage and interpersonal interactions, hypothesizing that:

Hypotheses:

- H1:** Individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence (EI) will report lower levels of negative emotional responses (e.g., anger, sadness, anxiety) to social media content compared to individuals with lower EI.
- H2:** Higher EI will be associated with greater ability to manage emotions during direct interpersonal interactions, leading to a more stable emotional state compared to those with lower EI.
- H3:** Taking breaks from social media and interpersonal interactions will be perceived as more beneficial by individuals with lower EI, as they may struggle more with emotional regulation in these contexts.

These hypotheses are tested through a survey-based study, which assesses the EI levels, social media usage patterns, and emotional responses of a diverse sample of participants. The findings aim to

contribute to the understanding of how emotional intelligence can serve as a protective factor against the potential emotional disturbances associated with social media use.

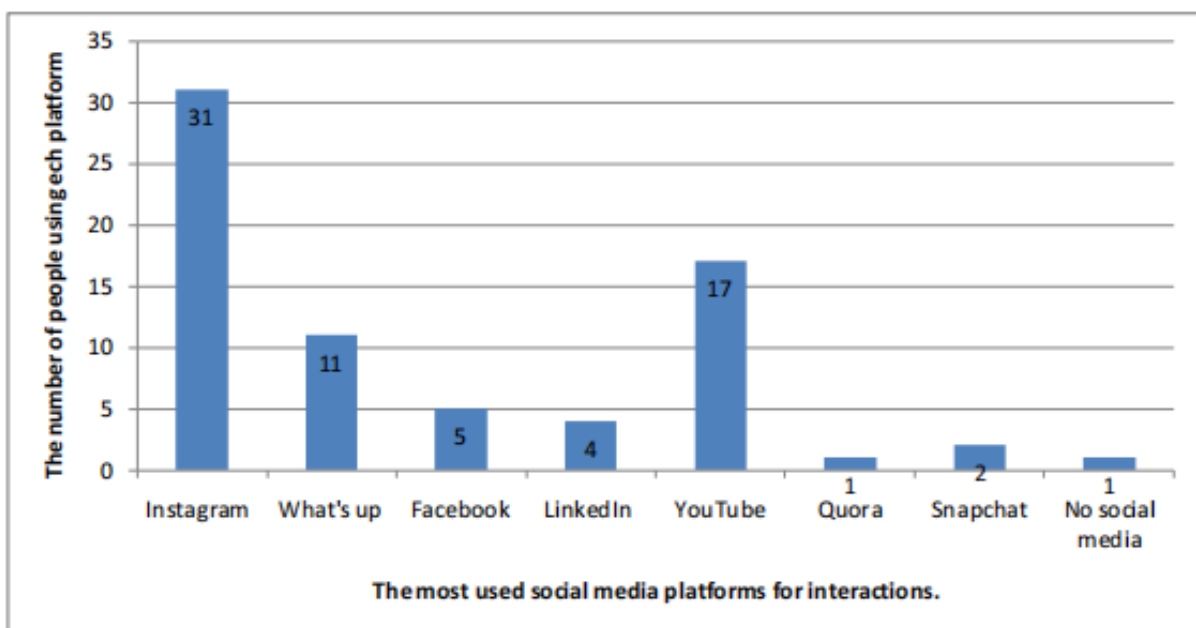
Methods

- **Participants** The study surveyed 59 participants (28 males, 31 females) aged 11 to 58 years, recruited through online platforms and community groups.
- **Survey Design** A structured questionnaire assessed social media usage patterns, emotional responses to social media, and EI using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) (Schutte et al., 1998). Key areas included:
 - **Social Media Usage:** Time spent on platforms, frequency, and interaction types.
 - **Emotional Responses:** Reactions to social media content and interpersonal interactions.
 - **Emotional Intelligence:** Assessed using the SSEIT.
- **Procedure** Participants completed the online survey anonymously, with voluntary participation and the option to withdraw. Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained.
- **Data Analysis** Descriptive and inferential statistics analyzed demographic data, social media usage, and emotional responses. Pearson correlation coefficients and regression analyses explored relationships between EI, social media usage, and emotional responses, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$.

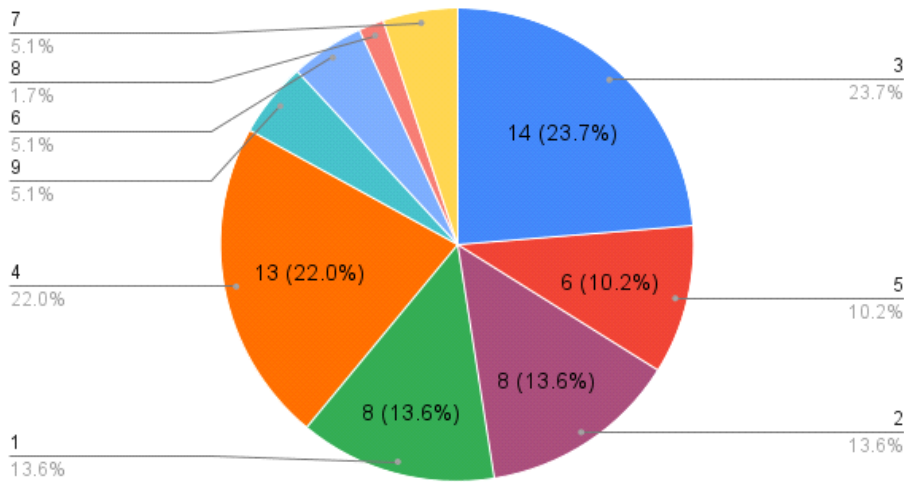
Results

Social Media Usage Patterns

Participants reported high engagement with social media, with Instagram being the most frequently used platform. The average time spent on social media was over 3 hours per day, with a subset of participants exceeding 9 hours of daily use. This high level of engagement suggests that social media is a central aspect of daily life for many individuals in the sample.



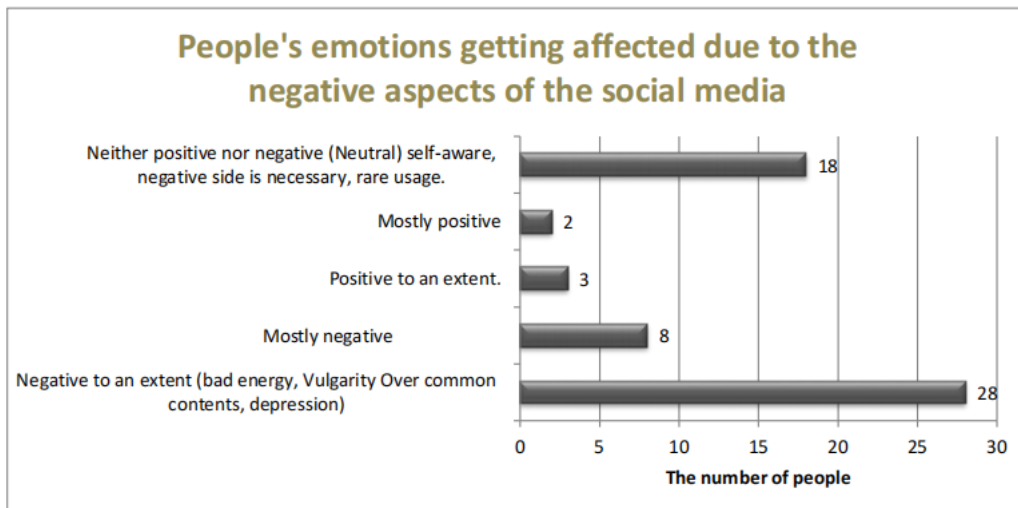
Amount of hours spent on social media.



Emotional Responses to Social Media

The survey revealed that 61% of participants experienced negative emotional responses, such as anger, sadness, and anxiety, in reaction to social media content.

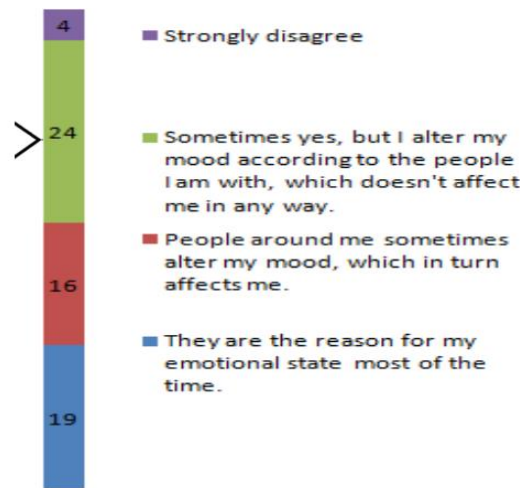
H1 Results: Supporting Hypothesis 1, the data showed that individuals with higher emotional intelligence (EI) scores reported significantly lower levels of negative emotional responses to social media content. This suggests that individuals with higher EI are better equipped to manage their emotions when faced with potentially distressing content on social media platforms.



Proportion of participants experiencing negative emotions due to social media.

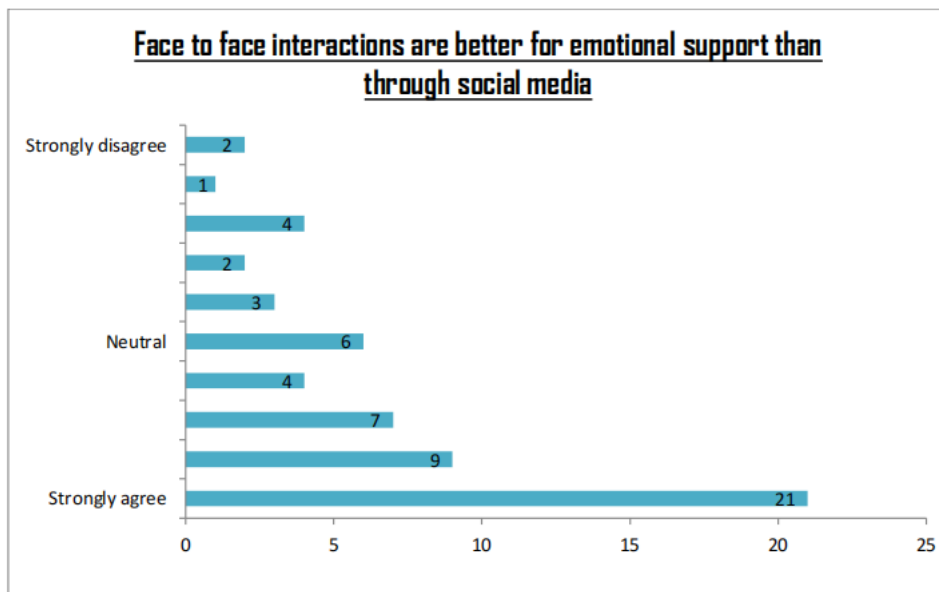
Impact of Interpersonal Interactions

While social media was a significant source of emotional influence, the data indicated that direct interpersonal interactions had an even more substantial impact. A striking 96% of participants reported that their emotional balance was affected by their interactions with surrounding people.



Comparison of emotional impact: social media vs. face-to-face interactions.

H2 Results: Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the study found that individuals with higher EI experienced greater emotional stability during interpersonal interactions compared to those with lower EI. This supports the idea that EI contributes to better emotional regulation in face-to-face social settings.

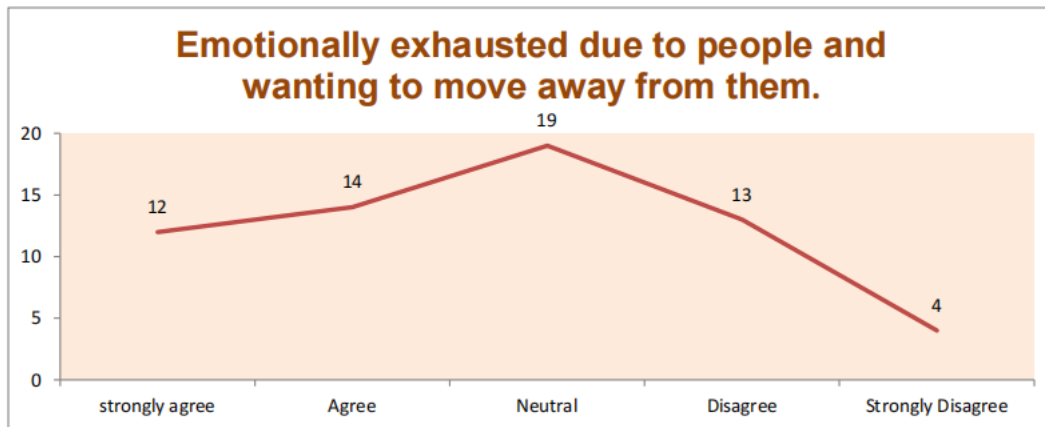


Perceptions of the benefits of taking breaks from social media and in-person interactions

Breaks from Social Media and Interpersonal Interactions

The majority of participants (67.7%) believed that taking breaks from social media was beneficial for emotional well-being. Furthermore, 52.5% felt the need to take breaks from interpersonal interactions to manage emotional exhaustion.

H3 Results: Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. While individuals with lower EI did perceive breaks from social media as more beneficial, there was no significant difference in the perceived need for breaks from interpersonal interactions between those with high and low EI. This suggests that while EI plays a role in managing social media-related emotions, the need for breaks from interpersonal interactions may be influenced by other factors.



Key emotional intelligence traits in managing social and interpersonal interactions.

Discussion

The results of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between emotional intelligence and the emotional impacts of social media usage and interpersonal interactions.

H1 Discussion: The confirmation of Hypothesis 1 aligns with the broader literature on emotional intelligence, which suggests that individuals with higher EI are better able to recognize, understand, and manage their emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). This ability likely helps them navigate the often emotionally charged environment of social media with greater resilience, reducing the negative impact on their emotional well-being.

H2 Discussion: The support for Hypothesis 2 highlights the importance of EI in direct interpersonal interactions. Given that face-to-face interactions can be more emotionally intense than online exchanges, the ability to regulate emotions effectively is crucial. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that EI is linked to better interpersonal outcomes and emotional stability (Goleman, 1995).

H3 Discussion: The partial support for Hypothesis 3 suggests a nuanced relationship between EI and the perceived benefits of taking breaks from social media and interpersonal interactions. While lower EI individuals do see more value in stepping away from social media, the mixed results regarding interpersonal interactions indicate that other variables, such as personality traits or social stress levels, might also play a role.

Conclusion

This study underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in navigating the complex emotional landscape of social media and interpersonal interactions. As social media continues to permeate daily life, fostering EI may be a crucial strategy for maintaining emotional health. The findings suggest that individuals with higher EI are less susceptible to the negative emotional effects of social media and more adept at managing emotions in direct interactions. Future research should continue to explore these relationships, with a particular focus on the role of other factors that might influence the need for emotional breaks from social media and interpersonal interactions.

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