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NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ACHIEVING SDG 4: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

SDG 4, declared by the United Nations, aims to ensure free, equitable, and quality secondary education for all by 2030 to promote effective learning and sustainable development. However, excessive social media use among secondary students is hindering the achievement of this goal. The primary objective of this study is to examine which types of social media applications secondary-level students use, the purposes behind their usage, and whether such usage exposes them to negative effects—factors that ultimately hinder the implementation of SDG 4. This was a mixed-method study. For primary data, 231 students and 5 teachers were selected as samples through random and purposive sampling. Questionnaires and interviews were used as data collection tools. Data were analyzed using inductive coding, categorization, and SPSS software. Results were validated through the triangulation method. The findings indicate that secondary-level students primarily use TikTok, YouTube, gaming apps, and Facebook, mostly for entertainment purposes. However, such use negatively affects their academic performance and leads to multiple adverse impacts, including physical health issues, disobedience to elders resulting in scolding, irritability, sleep disorders, and a tendency toward antisocial behavior. Collectively, these effects act as barriers to achieving SDG 4. To achieve SDG 4, secondary students must be engaged in study and positive activities by reducing excessive social media use through joint efforts of families, communities and the state.

KEYWORDS: Negative Impacts, Social Media, Secondary Education, SDG 4

INTRODUCTION

According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's Uses and Gratifications Research, people actively use mass media to fulfill their psychological, personal, and social needs. Similarly, students engage in social media mainly for entertainment, maintaining communication with friends, and gathering necessary information [1]. Teeppal (2025) stated that in recent years, social media has emerged as an indispensable tool of communication, transforming the way people interact and share information [2]. Webstar said, this medium is viewed as a platform of cybernetic and simulated relationships where individuals, institutions, and organizations search, share, and exchange information through texts, images, and symbols [3]. Balakrishnan, Teoh, Pourshafie, and Liew (2017) argued that these platforms create virtual communities where students remain connected with friends and share information and

communication [4]. Boyd and Ellison (2007) and Odynokaya et al. (2022) found that social media plays a significant role in communication and information exchange, and at present, it has become an integral part of life, including in educational contexts [5]. Oberiri and Gregg (2017) pointed out that for the younger generation, social media has now turned into a habit, becoming as essential as the fourth meal of the day [6].

Research also shows that social media has now become a common and essential part of our daily lives. It has turned into an indispensable element in everyone's life, including students, and its use is rapidly increasing day by day, especially among teenagers [7, 8, 9, 10]. According to recently published Data Reportal, "*As of April 2025, the number of social media users worldwide has reached approximately 5.24 billion, which is 64.7% of the global population.*" In 2025, the 10 most widely used social media platforms have been identified as the most influential: Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, WeChat, Telegram, Messenger, Snapchat & Douyin [11].

Davis, Canche, Dail-Amen, and Rios-Aguilas (2012) described social media as a web-based and mobile application that allows individuals and organizations to create, share, and engage in multidimensional communication with existing or new content in a digital environment [12]. Pew Research Center has reported that the use of social media in the lives of teenagers has now become an almost ubiquitous feature [13]. Its negative effects are especially evident among adolescents. Excessive use of platforms such as Likee, TikTok, and WeChat is leading them astray [14]. Dhaka-based child psychologist Dr. Tonima Rahman commented that it is no longer just a tool of communication, but rather turning into a psychological trap for many young people [15]. A survey found that an average user engages with about seven different social media platforms per month and spends a significant amount of time there every day. Teenagers spend an average of about 7 hours and 22 minutes daily, while children aged 8–12 spend about 4 hours and 44 minutes on social media [16].

Symptoms of social media addiction include—wasting excessive time, using it solely as a means of communicating with friends, engaging in unnecessary screen time, craving to be online, the habit of taking pictures of everything, accepting it as a part of life, and the tendency to check it repeatedly [17]. Addiction reduces students' motivation, increases unnecessary information sharing, and pushes them toward social isolation. As a result, it can lead to depression, aggressiveness, anxiety, social fear, eye problems, lack of family communication, laziness, and reduced academic attention, which ultimately hinders the achievement of desired goals [18]. Shrestha and Adhikari (2024) noted that this addiction disrupts students' daily life, academic performance, and sleep, which increases anxiety and restlessness, thereby harming their overall well-being [19]. Research has demonstrated that excessive social media use disturbs students' sleep, spreads rumors and misinformation, increases peer pressure, and creates various problems such as negative body image, sadness, anxiety, cyberbullying, and eye fatigue [20].

According to data published by the U.S.-based research organization Pew Research Center, from May 19 to September 5, 2023, TikTok was used among students as a popular short-video platform.

However, the most widely used platform among participants was YouTube, with 83% of students actively engaged [21]. A large survey conducted in Wales, UK, including approximately 130,000 students from grades 7 to 11, found that social media, which has become a regular habit for teenagers, negatively impacts girls twice as much as boys. This study provides significant evidence regarding adolescents' mental health, social relationships, school life, and technology use [22]. In Nigeria, the negative impact of social media use on secondary-level students' study culture has been clearly observed, disrupting their academic focus [23]. The global trend of smartphone use is also reflected in Bangladesh; the number of mobile phone users here has continuously increased [24]. Students are currently using various social media platforms for multiple purposes, such as entertainment, social communication, and educational support [25]. According to *Daily Asian Age* (2017), teenagers are more active in using Facebook and other social media platforms. Popović-Čitić, Djurić, and Cvetković (2011) reported that in a survey of 387 middle school students in Serbia, most students regularly used the Internet and all of them used mobile phones. Research on Bangladeshi students from grades 6 to 9 found that students in grades 9 and 10 were more active on social media compared to those in grade 8 [26].

In Bangladesh, the number of social media users grew from approximately 1 million in 2009 to 45 million in 2021. As a result, teenagers are rapidly becoming addicted to these platforms, which have become an indispensable part of their daily lives [17]. According to the government's "ICT Application and Usage Survey (April–June 2025)," 98.8% of households in Bangladesh have a mobile phone, and 72.8% of households have a smartphone, representing a significant increase from 63.3% in 2023 [27]. The *Digital 2025: Bangladesh* report by Data Reportal states that in January 2025, there were approximately 60 million active social media users in Bangladesh (34.3% of the population). Among them, TikTok users alone reached 46.5 million [28]. Under SDG 4, it is emphasized that quality education should be ensured for secondary-level students in Bangladesh [29]. According to BANBEIS (2023), the number of secondary-level students in Bangladesh exceeds 10.6 million, providing an important context for understanding the extent of social media spread among adolescents [30].

Students without adequate parental or institutional supervision are easily affected by the negative impacts of social media [31]. As a result, adolescents' social-emotional, mental, and physical health, as well as students' academic performance, are adversely affected [32]. Radio-frequency radiation (RFR) emitted from smartphones can increase the risk of cancer in humans. Especially during voice calls, these waves are absorbed by the human body, affecting the head and neck region. This can lead to neck pain, hand problems, memory loss, and mental-behavioral difficulties [24]. Noorun Nahar Hena, Director General of the National Media Institute, has stated that social media is negatively influencing the youth [33]. Zheng and Li (2016) demonstrated that uncontrolled use of technology produces negative emotions, reduces mental well-being, and causes individuals to begin neglecting important areas such as family, work, and education [34]. Alam et al. (2024) and O'Keeffe and Pearson (2011) have shown that daily social media use exceeding two hours negatively affects students' physical, mental, and family well-being. It is also associated with sleep deprivation, insomnia, and

physical health issues [6, 19]. Lukos et al. (2023) have demonstrated that prolonged social media use is associated with negative mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation [5]. According to experts, long screen time harms the mental and physical well-being of children and adolescents. This leads to sleep disruption, loneliness, attention deficits, reduced self-confidence, depression, fatigue, decreased academic performance, and behavioral changes [9, 10, 16].

Shrestha and Adhikari (2024) noted a relationship between social media use and mood changes and anxiety. Alam et al. (2024) observed that especially among female students, anxiety increases, self-esteem decreases, feelings of inferiority and body dissatisfaction are more prominent, resulting in depressive symptoms [19]. Excessive social media use negatively affects mental well-being. It is associated with mood swings, disruption of thought and performance, reduced self-confidence, and decreased quality of life. Research indicates that overuse can cause depression, anxiety, social isolation, reduced self-esteem, and tendencies toward self-harm, weakening an individual's self-regulatory capacity [35, 13]. Bowler and Bork (2019) demonstrated that excessive screen time is associated with difficulty initiating sleep, nighttime awakenings, and reduced sleep quality [2]. Research shows that increased screen time leads to sleep deprivation, irritability, and reduced physical activity among students. This disrupts mental health, classroom behavior, physical capabilities, and sleep cycles, subsequently increasing stress, anxiety, and social problems [36]. Poor sleep quality is closely linked to poor academic performance and high mental stress [37]. Karim et al. (2020), Marino et al. (2018), Nassy (2020), and Twenge & Martin (2020) have shown that excessive social media use is associated with mental health problems, including anxiety and depression [38].

Oye et al. (2012) noted that most students are subconsciously addicted to social media, negatively affecting their academic results and grades. Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2016), Jha et al. (2016), Kowalski & Limber (2013), and Abaido (2019) discussed the negative effects of social media on students' physical and mental health and academic performance [25]. When students use social media primarily for entertainment, their academic performance suffers, and levels of anxiety, stress, and depression increase [39]. Goet (2022) showed that video games, watching videos, and internet surfing increase students' attraction to social media, negatively impacting academic success. Briones & Martinez (2022) noted that inappropriate use of social media reduces students' quality of life and academic achievement while increasing technology dependence [40]. Mosharraf, Siddique, and Akhtar (2024) mentioned that social media use negatively affects students' attention span, homework completion, and ability to cope with academic stress [2]. Masood et al. (2020) and Wu & Cheng (2019) demonstrated that SNS (social networking site) use is problematic and negatively correlated with academic achievement. Similarly, Junco (2012) reported that SNS use reduces time spent studying and preparing for class, negatively impacting GPA. Hurt et al. (2012) noted that SNS use decreases attention and disrupts course completion. Kuppuswamy & Narayan (2010) also showed that SNS reduces students' focus and diverts them from studying [41]. Tenzin et al. (2019) and Tezci & İçen (2017) reported that secondary-level students often use SNS for entertainment and educational purposes. However, multiple studies show that excessive or inappropriate SNS use negatively affects

academic performance [36]. Tkaková et al. (2022) demonstrated that long-term social media use is negatively associated with academic performance. Adorjan & Ricciardelli (2021) and Griffioen et al. (2021) noted that constant notifications and easily accessible entertainment reduce students' attention, and habitual use diverts focus from academic responsibilities [5].

Students who sleep after midnight and use social media 2–6 hours daily are more prone to headaches, eye strain, and sleep disturbances, creating negative health impacts [42]. According to students, while social media is an easy way to access information and news, it is simultaneously entertaining, addictive, and inappropriate for children [43]. Consequently, it can push adolescents toward negative behaviors such as substance use, violence, and cyberbullying [44]. Studies show that 86% of young people believe excessive internet use is a major cause of mental health problems such as sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, and reduced attention to studies [15]. The long-term negative effects of smartphones and social media demonstrate that controlling and limiting their use is essential [36]. The negative impact is not only personal but also poses threats to culture, identity, society, and the nation. Therefore, governments, teachers, parents, and social media stakeholders should take effective measures to prevent these harmful effects [45]. Experience from Nigeria shows that government regulation has become necessary to prevent social media misuse among secondary school students [23]. The researcher conducted this study to understand whether students in the research area use social media, how much time they spend on it, which types of apps they use, whether there are any harmful effects of usage on their educational attainment, academic success, and psychological well-being, and what role it plays in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4 – ensuring quality education).

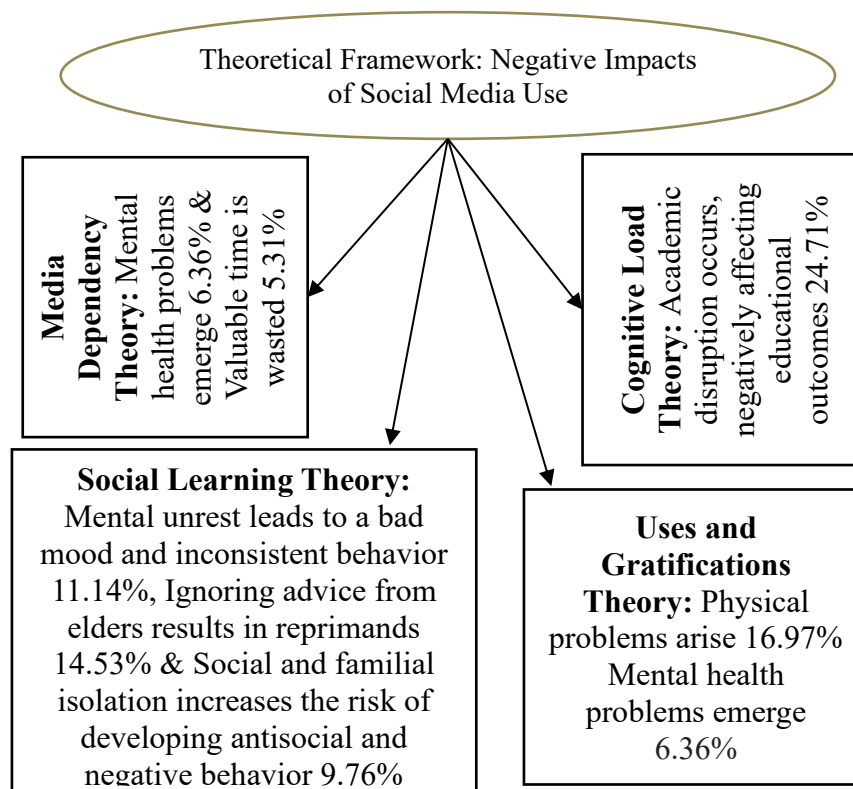
Main Research Question

Which types of social media apps do secondary-level students use, and why? Are the apps they use causing any harm that hinders the achievement of SDG 4?

Sub-questions:

1. Which social media app do you use the most? On average, how much time do you spend on this app daily, and what attracts you to it?
2. Has the social media app you use had any negative impact on you? If yes, what kind of harm has it caused?

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



According to John Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory, the effectiveness of the learning process depends on the level of cognitive load. When students' minds are burdened with unnecessary or excessive information, learning efficiency decreases [46]. Spending excessive time on social media increases students' cognitive load, reducing their study and learning efficiency. Research results indicate, "Academic disruption occurs, negatively affecting educational outcomes 24.71%".

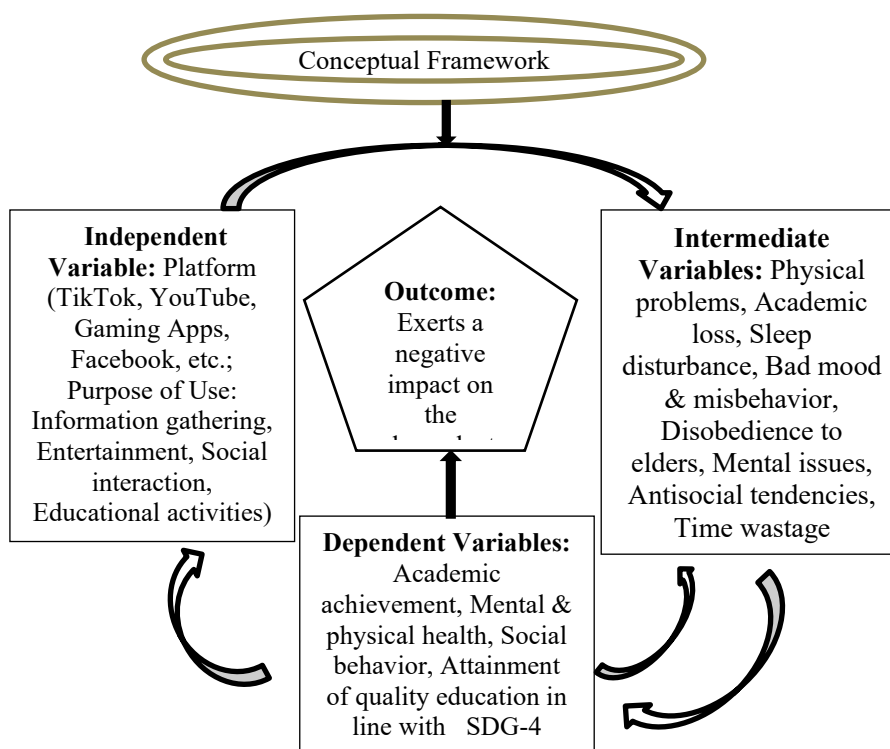
According to Thomas E. Ruggiero's (2000) Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals use media to satisfy their mental and social needs. Students mainly use social media for entertainment, information gathering, and social communication [47]. However, research findings indicate that, in addition to fulfilling necessary needs, excessive use also causes negative effects such as, "Mental health problems emerge 6.36% & Physical problems arise 16.97%".

According to Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, people learn by observing and imitating others' behaviors [48]. Students observe the behaviors of peers or popular personalities on social media and apply them in their own lives, which affects their academic life, values, and social behavior. According to the research data, students experience, "Mental unrest leads to a bad mood and

inconsistent behavior 11.13%, Ignoring advice from elders results in reprimands 14.53% and Social and familial isolation increases the risk of developing antisocial and negative behavior 9.76%". These results reflect the negative aspects of social learning.

According to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's (1976) Media Dependency Theory, when individuals become highly dependent on media, their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors are gradually shaped by the influence of media [49]. Research findings indicate that students' excessive dependence on social media leads to, "Mental health problems emerge 6.36% & Valuable time is wasted 5.31%". This is a clear reflection of the negative effects of media dependency.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework



Hypotheses:

H₁ Students primarily use social media for entertainment.

H₁ Social media use has a negative impact on students.

H₁ There is a significant positive relationship between the time spent on apps and their negative impact.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This study employed a mixed-methods research design. For primary data, the population consisted of all educational institutions in Begumganj and Sadar Upazilas of Noakhali District. From the population, one institution was selected using purposive sampling. Within this institution, students were selected using random sampling on ongoing school days (Monday and Wednesday) via a lottery method. All students present on these days formed the total sample.

For students from other institutions in the Upazila, purposive sampling was applied to select the sample. Combining both groups, the total sample consisted of 231 students, who were studying in grades 6 to 10 during May–July 2025. The sample included students from government, MPO-recognized, non-MPO, urban and rural schools, as well as madrasahs. A total of 21 educational institutions were included in the study.

For secondary data, books, newspapers, web articles, journal articles, and relevant institutional websites were used. Data collection instruments included questionnaires and interviews. Interviews were conducted with 15 students, 2 male teachers, and 3 female teachers. Data analysis was performed through manual coding and categorization. Categories were further analyzed using SPSS software to convert findings into percentages. The results were reviewed and validated using the triangulation method.

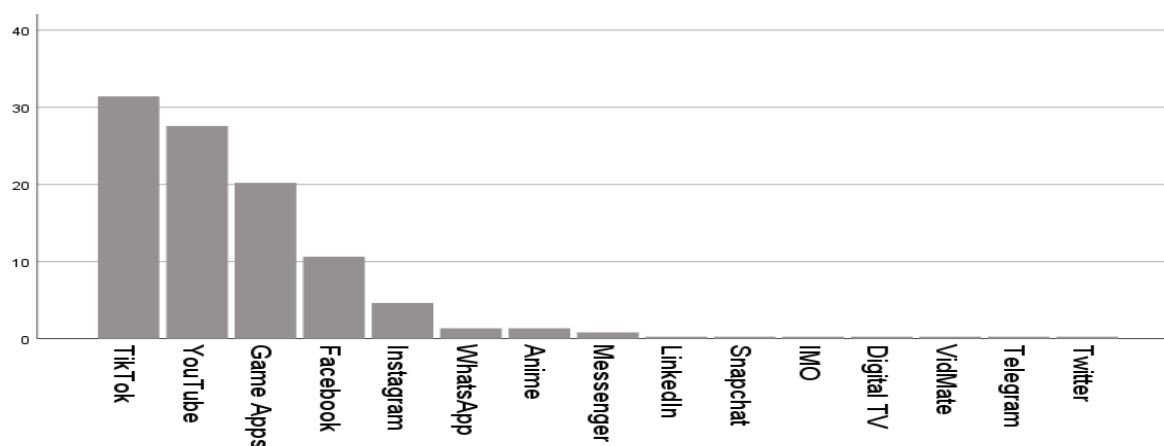
RESULT & DISCUSSION

All participants were residents of Noakhali District, aged between 11 and 16 years, and were students from grades six to ten. Among the participants, 60.6 percent were female students. In addition to the random sampling method, purposive sampling was also employed to collect data from 20 educational institutions. These institutions included government, MPO-affiliated, private schools, madrasahs, and technical schools at both district and upazila levels.

Question 1:

Which social media app do you use the most? On average, how much time do you spend on this app daily, and what attracts you to it?

Figure 3. Used social networking app



Students in the research area use the following apps most frequently: TikTok: 31.42%, YouTube: 27.60%, Game apps: 20.22%, with Facebook: 10.66% and Instagram: 4.64%. Those who generally play excessive games tend to face related problems [50].

During opening days, students spend a minimum of 1 hour 30 minutes and often 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours on these apps. On off-days, they spend even more time, which is mainly observed among 6th and 7th-grade students. Among students from 8th to 10th grade, most male students own personal smartphones and use them regularly; however, their in-class use is limited. Their daily usage time exceeds 5 hours. On the other hand, female students have very limited access to personal phones and often use phones belonging to household guardians, but they do not get equal opportunities as male students.

Students primarily use these apps for entertainment, and to a lesser extent for social communication, educational activities, and information gathering. They use TikTok the most, creating and sharing videos, enjoying likes and comments, and getting motivated and inspired by watching others' videos. When one student engages in this, others are inspired and often discuss it during or outside classroom activities. This pattern is especially observed among 6th to 8th-grade students.

Students of all grades use YouTube to watch songs, movies, dramas, short videos, cartoons, animation-based stories, as well as videos related to personal, household, and other activities for enjoyment. Gaming and entertainment time is highest among male students, who play various games such as Free Fire, football, and cricket. Among 8th to 10th-grade students, male students use Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, Anime, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn more frequently.

Overall, students mainly use digital platforms for entertainment, fun, and enjoyment [51]. Interview

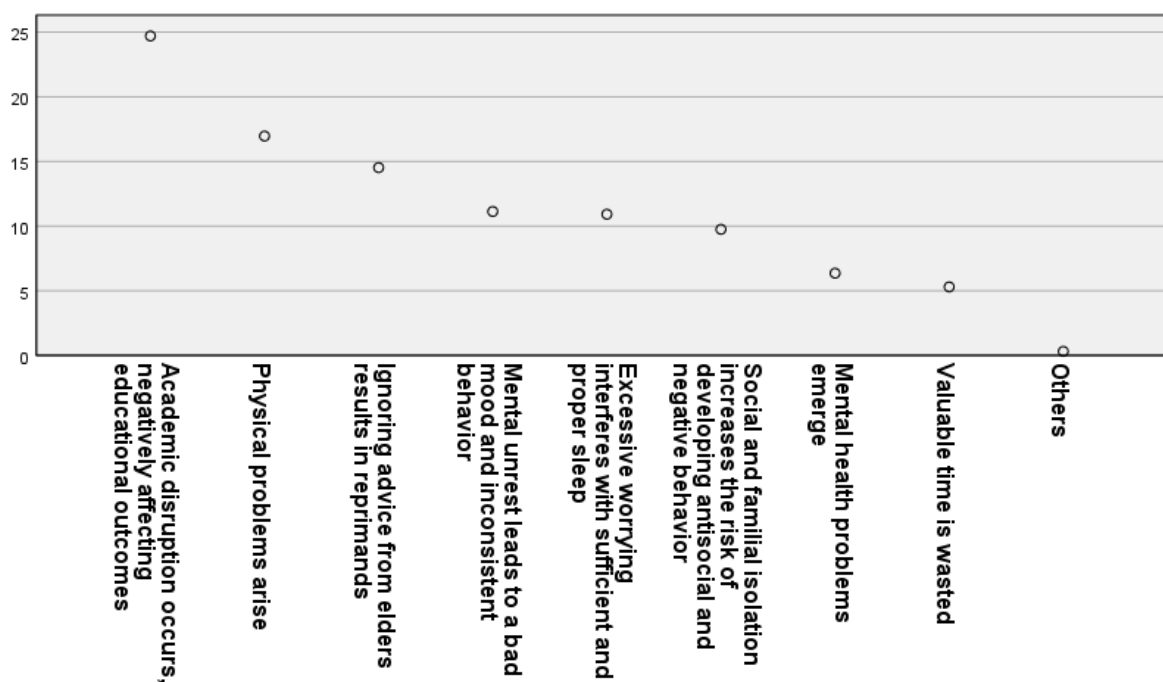
results confirm that their use is primarily for entertainment.

Question 2:

Has the social media app you use had any negative impact on you? If yes, what kind of harm or adverse effects has it caused?

All the students who participated in the study reported experiencing negative effects of social media use.

Figure 4. Types of harm caused by the used app



Excessive use of apps is having multidimensional negative impacts on students, causing them to face various harmful consequences, such as Academic disruption occurs, negatively affecting educational outcomes' in 24.71% of students. According to Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch (1973), although students actively use media, its effects are not always positive. In the process of fulfilling their needs, they inadvertently experience academic loss [39, 41, 5, 1]. Physical problems arise in 16.97% of students. Previous research has shown that the use of social media can have negative effects on physical health. Therefore, its impact is not only on individual health and well-being but can also potentially affect their relationships and social activities [6, 52, 50]. Ignoring advice from elders results in reprimands in 14.53% of students. "Interviews revealed that students spend excessive time on social media. When parents, older siblings, or other elder family members try to limit or stop their use, students often do not comply, resulting in frequent complaints or scolding. Additionally, because of excessive time spent

on social media, they fail to properly fulfill personal and family responsibilities, which exposes them to further criticism.”Mental unrest leads to a bad mood and inconsistent behavior in 11.13% of students. Behavioral changes are accompanied by observable mood changes [50].

Excessive worrying interferes with sufficient and proper sleep in 10.92% of students. According to O’Keeffe and Pearson (2011), excessive use of social media is associated with sleep deprivation, insomnia, and persistent illness. Shrestha and Adhikari (2024) noted that disrupted sleep negatively affects mental health. Alam et al. (2024) reported that students who spend more than two hours daily on social media experience higher rates of sleep problems and insomnia [19, 6]. According to Bolar and Bork (2019), excessive social media use is linked to difficulty initiating sleep, nighttime awakenings, and reduced sleep quality [2]. Social and familial isolation increases the risk of developing antisocial and negative behavior in 9.76% of students. Previous studies have shown that sharing information on social media can reduce life satisfaction and increase loneliness among young adult users [50]. Kraut et al. (1998) found that the more time an individual spends online, the higher their levels of both depression and loneliness [53]. Research emphasizes that social isolation caused by excessive social media use can lead to mental fatigue and depressive symptoms [19].

Mental health problems emerge in 6.36% of students. Previous research has confirmed that social media use can negatively affect both physical and mental health [6, 52]. However, the impact of social media on students’ mental health is complex and multifaceted [19]. Valuable time is wasted in 5.30% of students. ৯০. Studies show that 88% of students are negatively affected by excessive social media use. Those who spend more time on social media often waste time engaging in trivial conversations [17]. Kuss & Griffiths (2017) noted that excessive and uncontrolled social media use can lead to addiction, posing challenges for both individuals and society [50]. According to Jung (2017), when people rely on media daily for information, education, or entertainment, it deeply influences their thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. Students’ dependence on social media for information, communication, and entertainment drives them toward negative outcomes [54].

Almost all students agreed that excessive use of social media is harming them and expressed their intention to reduce their usage as much as possible. During data collection, those students who did not use their phones in class actively participated. For instance, among the students present, 5 from Grade 6 and 2 from Grade 7 did not use their phones. Students prefer online social interaction, but excessive use negatively affects their mental, physical, and academic well-being—aligning with Caplan’s theory [18, 6, 53]. These findings indicate that the adverse effects on students’ physical and mental health impact academic performance and social skills, ultimately posing obstacles to achieving quality education in line with SDG Goal 4.

This study provides novel insights by collecting qualitative data directly from secondary students in a specific region of Bangladesh, where no prior research on social media’s impact on SDG 4 has been conducted. It reveals that platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and gaming apps significantly disrupt

academics and mental health, showing region-specific negative effects that differ from previous studies.

Teachers' Opinions:

Interviews with teachers revealed that they also acknowledge the harms students face due to social media usage. According to them, most students in this region come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated educational weaknesses. Additionally, due to limited parental awareness, students have unrestricted access to social media. As a result, instead of spending adequate time on studies, they spend most of their time on these platforms. Teachers noted that over the past 4–5 years, students' learning proficiency has declined significantly.

One teacher remarked, "Students spend the most time on TikTok reels and online games." Another teacher observed, "Most students from Grades 8 to 10 have their own smartphones and can use them freely, which is a major reason for their declining learning proficiency." Yet another teacher stated, "Students are gradually falling behind in manners, humility, ethics, and social values." Another opinion highlighted, "They do not want to listen to or follow advice from anyone at home or outside." Based on the students' current trends and behavioral patterns, teachers expressed deep concern and apprehension about their future.

Therefore, all agree that urgent and effective measures are essential to help students overcome their current situation to ensure a sustainable future.

CONCLUSION:

The Government of Bangladesh has placed considerable emphasis on achieving SDG Goal 4. However, in reality, according to Md. Fakhrul Islam, Bangladesh is still lagging behind in this regard [55]. SDG Goal 4 is considered the foundation for achieving all other goals. Rapid technological advancement and easy access to the internet have increased smartphone usage in households, providing secondary-level students with greater opportunities for excessive use. Unfortunately, this usage has caused more harm than benefit to the students. Therefore, freeing students from these negative effects is not only the responsibility of families or the state but requires the coordinated effort of all parts of society, in which the students' own awareness and proactive role are also crucial. This study can be useful in the secondary education systems of Bangladesh and other developing countries, particularly in the fields of Education, Sociology, Communication and Media Studies, and Sustainable Development (SDG 4). It will provide valuable insights for policymakers, teachers, educators, and researchers on how social media affects the quality of education and students' behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Excessive use of social media by secondary-level students poses a significant barrier to achieving SDG Goal 4. Therefore, it is essential to implement effective and continuous measures to engage students in academic activities, sports, and other co-curricular programs to protect them from these harmful effects. Simultaneously, students should be encouraged to participate in moral and social activities to

foster their positive development. Ensuring active parental involvement and awareness is crucial for sustaining this process. Additionally, educational institutions must conduct regular awareness programs and maintain effective monitoring, while appropriate social and governmental policies and initiatives should be adopted—these actions are now more necessary than ever.

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