EXPLORING THE ROLE OF FAMILY FUNCTIONING AND ONLINE SOCIAL INTERACTION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY AMONG GEN ZS

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ABSTRACT: This study examined family functioning and online social interaction (social media) as predictors of depression and anxiety among the Gen Z developmental cohort at the University of Lagos. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The study selected (320) participants across the University of Lagos in Lagos State with the use of a convenient sampling method. Four Hypotheses generated were tested using multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that family functioning had an insignificant positive relationship with depression and anxiety (F $(7,65)$ = 0.042, p=0.09) < There was a significant relationship between online social interaction [R^2 = .000, F $(1, 409)$ = .073, p> .787) and depression and anxiety. Family functioning and online social interaction significantly predicted depression and anxiety in the Gen Z group (R^2 = .069, F (6.633) =.196). The study concluded that there is a complex interplay between family functioning, social media use and the mental well-being of Generation Z (Gen Z). The findings indicate that a high level of family functioning characterized by effective communication and emotional support was not linked to a high level of depression or anxiety among individuals in the GenZ. The study recommended a good family relationship to promote healthy living among adolescents especially those in the GenZ developmental age cohort because of their exposure to social media.

Keywords: Gen Z, Depression, Anxiety, Family Functioning, Online Social Interaction

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and rapidly changing world, the lives of individuals, especially the younger generation, are intricately woven with technology and social connections. A recent study conducted by (Akinwale, et al 2024) among university students showed that social media and digital contents have influence on identity construction and self-presentation among adolescents and young adults, the representation may lead the development of anxiety and other related health outcomes, the study further established that Generation Z, born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, has grown up in an era of unprecedented technological advancement characterized by ubiquitous internet access and the proliferation of social media platforms. Simultaneously, they have experienced shifting family dynamics, with varying structures, roles, and patterns of interaction.

The significance of understanding the mental health implications of these contextual factors cannot be overstated. Depression and anxiety, two of the most prevalent and debilitating mental health disorders globally, affect individuals across all age groups, with adolescents and young adults being particularly vulnerable. In this context, the interplay between family functioning

and online social interaction has emerged as an area of interest for researchers and mental health professionals.

Gen Zs are aware of the struggle, too. Reports on suicide rates increased among the following:

- adolescents 15–19 years old, from 8 per 100,000 in 2000 to 11.8 per 100,000 in 2017.
- The number of young adults aged 20–24 years increased from 12.5 per 100,000 in 2000 to 17 per 100,000 in 2017.

However, the authors noted that the study is limited due to occasional inaccuracies in death certificates (e.g., an intentional opioid overdose recorded as accidental).

Family functioning plays a crucial role in the development and well-being of individuals, particularly during adolescence. The family environment significantly influences various aspects of adolescents' lives, including their emotional, cognitive, and social development. Poor family functioning, characterized by dysfunctional dynamics and negative interactions, can have significant adverse effects on Gen Zs, potentially leading to various negative outcomes, including mental health issues.

Poor family functioning refers to the presence of dysfunctional dynamics within the family system, such as high levels of parental conflict, ineffective communication, lack of emotional support, and inconsistent discipline (Conger et al., 2010). These factors can create a challenging and distressing environment for Gen Zs, which can impact their overall well-being and contribute to the development of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety. High levels of parental conflict are particularly detrimental to adolescents' mental health. Witnessing frequent and intense conflict between parents can be distressing and emotionally unsettling for Gen Zs (Conger et al., 2010). Exposure to parental conflict increases vulnerability to emotional distress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. The chronicity and severity of parental conflict can further exacerbate these negative effects. Emotional turbulence resulting from ongoing conflict can disrupt the sense of stability and security that adolescents require for healthy development, potentially leading to long-term emotional difficulties. Ineffective communication patterns within the family can also contribute to poor family functioning and negatively impact Gen Zs. Communication breakdowns, such as lack of open dialogue, active listening, and respectful exchanges, hinder the expression of thoughts, emotions, and needs. This can create misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and feelings of being unherdable or invalidated among Gen Zs (Conger et al., 2010). A lack of healthy communication channels may prevent adolescents from seeking support, expressing their concerns, or discussing their emotions, which can further exacerbate feelings of isolation and emotional distress.

Background to the study

Inconsistent discipline practices within inconsistency in setting and enforcing boundaries, rules, and consequences can lead to confusion and a lack of structure for adolescents. This can result in feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, which can increase anxiety levels and negatively impact mental health (Conger et al., 2010). Additionally, inconsistent discipline may contribute to the development of externalizing behaviours or difficulties in self-regulation, further exacerbating mental health issues.

The effects of poor family functioning on Gen Zs can be understood through various theoretical frameworks. For instance, family systems theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of family members and suggests that dysfunction within the family system affects individual members' well-being (Bowen, 1978). Social learning theory posits that adolescents learn behaviours and coping strategies through observation and interaction within the family, with dysfunctional patterns being internalized and impacting their psychological functioning (Bandura, 1977).

By recognizing the negative consequences of dysfunctional family dynamics, professionals and practitioners can work toward promoting healthy family functioning through therapeutic interventions, family counselling, and parental education programs. Creating supportive, nurturing, and communicative family environments can contribute to the overall well-being and mental health of Gen Zs, fostering their resilience and positive development. Family functioning plays a critical role in the psychological well-being of adolescents (McHale et al., 2012). A supportive and cohesive family environment characterized by effective communication, warmth, and positive parent–child relationships is associated with better mental health outcomes for adolescents (Shek, 2002). On the other hand, dysfunctional family dynamics, including high levels of parental conflict, lack of emotional support, and inconsistent discipline, contribute to an increased risk of depression and anxiety among adolescents (Conger et al., 2010).

The advent of digital technology has transformed the way individuals interact and socialize, particularly among the Gen Z population (Twenge, 2017). Gen Zs exhibit a preference for online social interaction, spending a substantial amount of time on social media platforms and engaging in online relationships (Oberst et al., 2017). However, excessive reliance on online social interaction and a lack of face-to-face interactions may have detrimental effects on mental health. Research suggests that a stronger preference for online social interaction is associated with increased levels of depression, anxiety, and feelings of loneliness among adolescents (Odgers et al., 2020). Bada et al. (2023) reported problematic internet use among emerging adults in a study and stated that the problems spanned other mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety.

Families that exhibit healthier functioning tend to offer greater emotional and material support to their members, assisting them in coping more effectively with negative conflicts (Hu, 2022).The family, functioning as an ecosystem, assumes a highly significant role in the development of adolescent mental health by acting as a protective buffer against adverse mental health problems and reducing the risk of such issues arising (Haefner 2014), while individual studies have examined the role of family functioning and preference for online social interaction as risk factors for depression and anxiety, there is a need for comprehensive research that explores the combined influence of these factors, specifically within the Gen Z population. This research aims to address this gap by investigating the cumulative effects and potential interactions among family functioning and online social interaction in relation to depression and anxiety among Gen Zs. By gaining a deeper understanding of these risk factors, this research can contribute to the literature on adolescent mental health and provide valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and educators working with the Gen Z population. The findings of this research will inform the development of targeted interventions and preventive measures to promote positive mental health outcomes among Gen Zs.

Aroyewun et al. (2019) stated that teenagers and undergraduates must be screened for depression and other mental health issues, the study further revealed that assessment is

necessary for school-based therapy or counselling to help students tailor their needs within the school and their families.

Gen Z Cohort

The term "Gen Z" refers to the fact that this generation is the second after Generation X in the alphabetical sequence, following Generation Y (Millennials) and ending with Generation Z (or simply Gen Z). Also referred to as "Zoomers," this demographic cohort comes after Millennials and before Generation Alpha. The mid-to-late 1990s are considered the beginning birth years, and the early 2010s are considered the ending birth years by researchers and the media. Children of Generation X or younger Baby Boomers make up the majority of Generation Z. It is possible that the older members of Generation Alpha are the parents of the younger members.

The phrase "iGeneration" (or "iGen") was coined by a psychology professor and author Jean Twenge. Originally, she planned to use it as the title of her book about Millennials, Generation Me, published in 2006, but her publisher, Atria Publishing Group, disapproved it. There were iMac computers and iPods available at that time, but no iPhones or iPads were available. This phrase was later utilized by Twenge in her 2017 book iGen. Additionally, it has been claimed that demographer Cheryl Russell came up with the name in 2009.

This study aims to address this research gap by investigating the impact of these factors on the psychological well-being of Gen Zs. Adolescent depression symptoms and suicide rates in the US increased significantly between 2010 and 2015, particularly for girls, according to surveys of the country's youth. Akinwale et al. (2024), in a study among emerging adults in Lagos, found that increased engagement with social media platforms enhanced identity formation and other mental health-related challenges.

In Nigeria, as in many other cultures, family is highly valued, and the family unit plays a central role in socialization and support. When family members struggle with communication difficulties, unresolved conflicts, or neglect, young individuals may experience feelings of isolation, rejection, or emotional emptiness. This may contribute to feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and despair, which are core symptoms of depression. Studies have shown that poor family functioning, including low levels of parental warmth and high levels of conflict, is associated with higher rates of depression among Gen Zs (Adegunloye et al., 2020; Ogunfowora et al., 2019). Similarly, Bada et al. (2023) found that problematic internet use was present in 80.8% of the participants in a study. The authors further stated that a plausible explanation for this level of PIU could be the ever-increasing accessibility and ubiquity of smartphones and other internet-enabled devices, which may have adverse effects on users.

Additionally, poor family functioning can also contribute to anxiety symptoms among Gen Zs. The presence of chronic family conflict, lack of emotional support, and inconsistent or harsh parenting styles can create an environment of unpredictability and insecurity. This can heighten feelings of worry, fear, and restlessness, which are characteristic of anxiety disorders. Studies conducted in Nigeria have demonstrated a significant association between poor family functioning and higher levels of anxiety symptoms among youth (Oladeji et al., 2018; Omigbodun et al., 2006).

Moreover, the impact of poor family functioning on Gen Z's mental health extends beyond depression and anxiety. It can also influence individuals' overall psychosocial well-being, self-

esteem, and resilience. When family relationships are characterized by dysfunction and lack of support, young individuals may struggle with their sense of identity, experience difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and face challenges in adapting to stressors.

Statement of the problem

Understanding the effect of poor family functioning on the mental health of Gen Zs is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems. Strategies aimed at improving family communication, promoting positive parenting styles, and enhancing emotional support within the family can be beneficial for mitigating the negative impact on youth mental health. Furthermore, increasing awareness and reducing stigma around mental health issues within Nigerian society can help facilitate early identification and access to appropriate mental health services for affected youth. Poor family functioning has a significant impact on the mental health of Gen Zs, contributing to the development of depression, anxiety, and other psychosocial problems. In recent years, the preference for online social interaction has significantly increased among Gen Zs, facilitated by advancements in technology and the prevalence of social media platforms. The rapid advancement of technology and the widespread use of online social media platforms have significantly transformed the way individuals interact and communicate with others. Among the problems at hand is investigating the role of online social interaction as a predictor of depression and anxiety among Gen Zs. Although online social interaction offers various benefits, such as increased connectivity and social support, there is a need to understand its potential negative consequences on mental well-being. The excessive use of social media, cyberbullying, and comparison-based self-esteem issues within online platforms may contribute to heightened levels of depression and anxiety among Gen Zs.

However, the impact of excessive online social interaction on mental health outcomes remains unclear. Exploring the relationship between preferences for online social interaction and mental health outcomes, specifically depression and anxiety, is crucial in the current digital age.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine the relationship between family functioning and online social interaction as predictors of depression and anxiety among Gen Zs.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research was to assess whether the combined influence of family functioning and online social interaction will cumulatively predict levels of depression and anxiety among Gen Zs. The specific objectives are to

a) explore the level of family functioning among Gen Zs and its relationship with depression and anxiety,
b) investigate the role of online social interaction, social media use and virtual communication, in predicting depression and anxiety among Gen Zs,
c) explore the correlation between the frequency and intensity of online social interaction and the levels of depression and anxiety among Gen Zs, and
d) assess how the interaction between family functioning and online social interaction will significantly predict the levels of depression and anxiety among Gen Zs.

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory posits that families function as interconnected systems in which the behaviour and well-being of each family member are interdependent (Bowen, 1978). This theory emphasizes the importance of family functioning and dynamics in influencing individuals' mental health outcomes. A healthy family system characterized by open communication, support, and cohesion provides a protective environment that promotes positive mental health among Gen Z individuals (Minuchin, 1985).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies have recognized the interplay between family functioning and online social interaction in shaping mental health outcomes among Gen Z individuals. Supportive family environments can act as protective factors against the negative effects of online social interaction (Li et al., 2020). Additionally, effective communication and parental guidance regarding online behaviours have been shown to moderate the impact of social media use on mental health (Gros et al., 2018; Moreno et al., 2016). Research on family functioning, in particular, shows how families communicate, carry out their responsibilities within the family, organize their daily schedules, and build emotional bonds (Haines et al., 2016). The physical, social, and emotional health of adolescents are influenced by the family environment, and one significant component of that environment is family functioning. Teenagers should be able to express their thoughts, interact with their surroundings, and feel more connected to their family than their electronics if their families are running smoothly. Consequently, many facets of a child's development and a smooth transition to adulthood may be jeopardized in a dysfunctional family setting. A study by Akinwale et al. (2022) revealed that family type and parenting styles in the twenty-first century have caused children to deviate from what used to be an acceptable pattern of behaviour in the formative years. The authors concluded that parenting styles should be mixed to raise an optimal child.

METHODS

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design to conveniently select 320 undergraduate students from the University of Lagos, Akoka. Standardized Questionnaires were used for data collection because they offer a considerable advantage in administration and provide the investigation with an easy accumulation of data. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. McMaster Family Functioning Scale (MFFS), Preference for Online Social Interaction Scale (POSIS), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) and Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI). The McMaster Family Functioning Scale is a 12-item scale developed by Nathan B. Epstein, Lawrence M. Baldwin, and Duane S. Bishop. The researchers obtained a Cronbach Alpha of 0.86 for BAI, and 0.81 for BDI respectively.

The demographic profile of the respondents revealed that the majority of them were females (55.3%), while 44.6% were male. It is important to note that the data were derived at random distributions, and as such, no specific number of data points were intended for any of the sexes. The highest age grade among the Gen Z cohorts was 19-22 years (54.1%), followed by 15-18 years (30%), while 15.9% of the respondents were 23-26 years old. Similarly, 45% of the respondents representing the highest percentage were Christians, followed by 38.7% who affirmed being Muslim, 10% who were pagan, and 6.2% who were traditional worshippers.

Furthermore, 18.1% of the respondents were from the Department of Psychology, 11.8% from Urban and Regional Planning, 11.2% from the Department of Surgery and Medical Sciences, 10.3% from Sociology and Anthropology, 7.1% from the Department of Finance and Accounting, 6.5% from Estate Management, 6.2% from Economics and Business Administration, and 4.3% from Civil Engineering. Moreover, the majority of the individuals in the Gen Zs cohort were 300 level (28.4%), followed by the 200 level (26.8%); 22.8% were at the 100 level, 17.5% were at the 400 level, and 4.3% were at the 500 level.

Procedures

Due to the nature of this study, where the intention is to investigate family functioning and online social interaction as predictors of depression and anxiety among Gen Zs, the researcher decided to reach students wherever they could be on campus to collect data through the use of a self-report inventory, which was administered to undergraduates at the University of Lagos. The gathering of data ranged from going to Departments and faculties to collecting information through questionnaires. The researchers adhere to ethical guides for research, the formal consents were sought for by all the participants and they were assured of confidentiality and voluntariness, after which there was enough time to complete the questionnaires. The researcher then collected the completed questionnaires within the stipulated time. The result was analysed with SPSS v29.

RESULTS

Prevalence of Depression Among Gen Zs
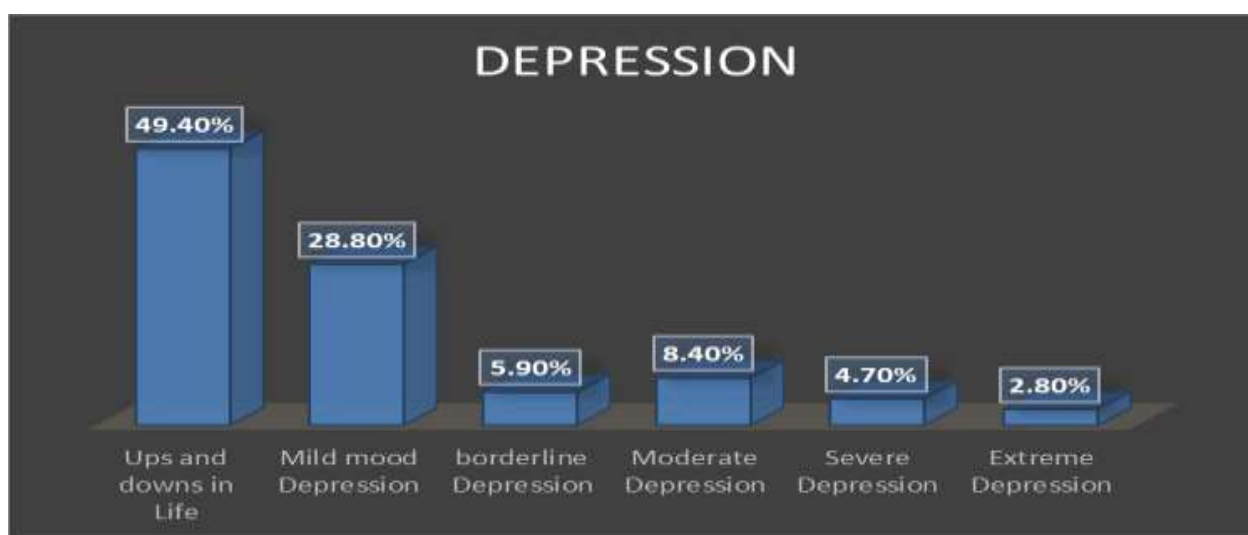
Source: Primary data 2023

The figure above shows that the most prevalent form of depression is ups and downs in life depression (49.4%), followed by mild mood disturbance depression (28.8%), moderate depression (8.4%), borderline clinical depression (5.9%), and severe depression (4.7%), while the least prevailing is extreme depression (2.8%).

Measurement	Anxiety	F (%)	Rank
0-21	Low Anxiety	196 (61.3)	1st
22-35	Moderate Anxiety	87 (27.2)	2nd
36 and above	Potentially Concerning Level of Anxiety	37 (11.5)	3rd

Source: Primary data 2023

The data from the table above reveal that the first form of anxiety experienced by the respondents is low anxiety (61.3%), followed by moderate anxiety (27.2%), while the lowest form of anxiety experienced by the respondents is the third form, which is a potentially concerning level of anxiety (11.5%).
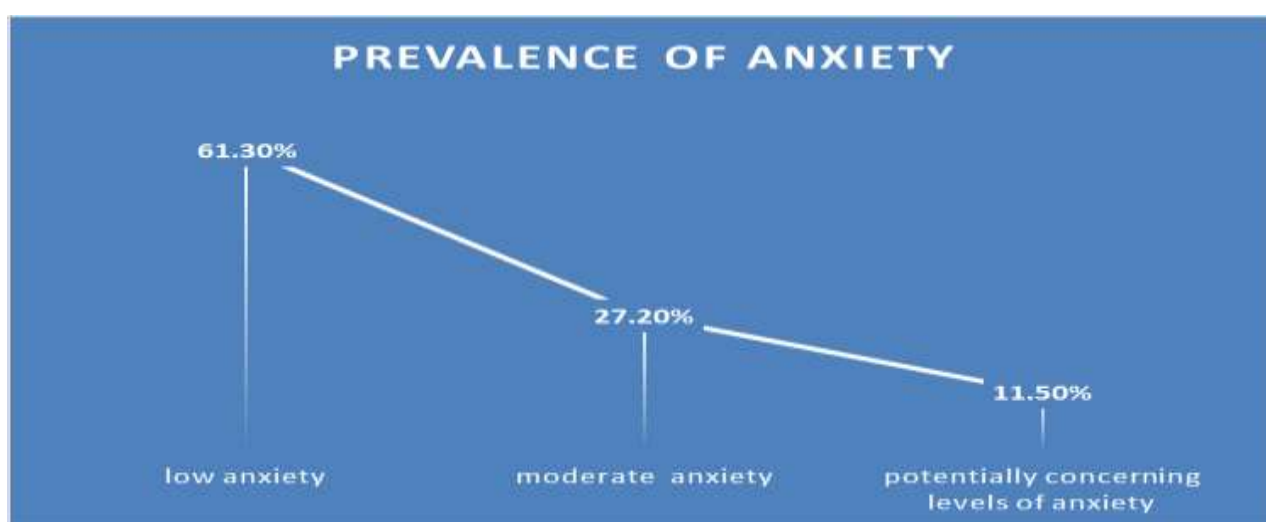

Fig. 4.2: Prevalence of Anxiety Among Gen Zs at the University of Lagos

Figure 4.2 reveals that the most prevalent level of anxiety among the respondents was low anxiety (61.3%), followed by moderate anxiety (27.2%), while the least prevalent anxiety was potentially anxiety (11.5%).

Table 4.26: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Relationships among Family Functioning and Social Media Interaction and Anxiety and Depression Among University of Lagos Undergraduates

Variable	Beta	T	Sig	R	R2	Adjusted R	Pv
constant)		2 200	.029	.118	.014	-001	<.05
Social media interaction	-075	-824	.411				
Negative family functioning	-106	-1 482	.140				
Positive family functioning	062	.689	.491				

Dependent Variable: Anxiety and Depression

The table above shows that the beta weight social media interaction is -075, the P value is .411, the beta weight of negative family functioning is -106, and the P value is .140, while the beta

weight of positive family functioning is 062, and the beta weight is .491, as displayed in Table 4.26. The P values of the independent variables (age, gender and religion) are greater than 0.05; as such, they have a significant relationship with anxiety. That is, social media interaction, negative family functioning, and positive family functioning are significantly related to anxiety and depression.

In the model summary, the value given under the heading R-square indicates how much variance in the dependent variable (anxiety and depression) is explained by the model. The value is 0.118 (expressed as a percentage, you will have 11.8%). This implies that the model (set of independent variables) explains 11.8% of the variance in depression and anxiety.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the findings of the study is drawn from the analysis in the result section. In the quest to illuminate the complex relationship between family dynamics, online social interaction, and the mental well-being of Generation Z (Gen Z), our research project has unearthed results that challenge and broaden our understanding. These findings provide a compelling glimpse into the multifaceted factors influencing depression and anxiety among this distinctive cohort.

First, in assessing the level of family functioning among Gen Zs and its association with depression and anxiety, the study demonstrated that a high level of family functioning has little association with depression and anxiety. Those who participate most in family activities have no form of depression or anxiety because they confide with their family members for mental support. Our study aimed at unravelling the intricate connections between family functioning and the mental health of Generation Z (Gen Z), has revealed a paradoxical and intriguing set of results. In the following discussion, we elucidate the implications and potential interpretations of our key findings. This finding supports the findings of Bor et al. (2014) and Racz et al. (2020), who reported that positive family dynamics, such as open communication, support, and cohesion, are associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety. In addition, Hammen (2009) and McLeod et al. (2016) postulated that dysfunctional family environments characterized by high conflict, neglect, or lack of emotional support are linked to increased risk for depression and anxiety. Contrary to initial expectations and previous research, our analysis indicated that high levels of family functioning were associated with little to no elevation in the levels of depression and anxiety among Gen Z individuals. This outcome is indeed noteworthy and challenges preconceived notions about the integral role of family in shaping the mental well-being of this generation. The family, a historically prominent source of emotional support and guidance, emerges from our results as a robust pillar of resilience in the lives of Gen Z. A high-functioning family, it seems, provides a nurturing environment that can buffer the effects of depression and anxiety. These findings suggest that Gen Z, even in the face of the unique pressures and challenges of modern life, is able to draw considerable strength from the family structure. This result implies that for many Gen Z individuals, the family home serves as a protective refuge. It provides a safe space where emotional support and understanding are prevalent, acting as a counterbalance to the stressors and uncertainties faced in the outside world. The family's role in fostering the psychological well-being of Gen Z is, therefore, paramount and should be recognized as a source of potential resilience.

Secondly, the research has yielded compelling results regarding the relationship between social media use and the mental health of Generation Z (Gen Z) individuals. In this extensive

discussion, we explored the intricacies of these findings and their potential implications, shedding light on the pressing issue of how excessive social media use contributes to heightened rates of depression and anxiety in this demographic population by investigating the role of online social interaction, which includes social media use and virtual communication, in predicting depression and anxiety among Gen Zs. The study revealed that high and excessive use of social media resulted in a high rate of depression and anxiety, and those who constantly engaged in online interactions were more prone to depression and anxiety. This study, in alignment with previous research, underscores the notion that social media serves as a double-edged sword for Gen Z. It provides a platform for social interaction, self-expression, and the consumption of information while simultaneously exposing users to potential psychological distress. The extensive use of social media by Gen Z. has created a digital ecosystem that profoundly influences their lives. Social media platforms, with their emphasis on validation through likes, shares, and comments, have become a breeding ground for social comparison and the cultivation of unrealistic standards. This constant exposure to curated representations of the lives of peers and influencers can contribute to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and a sense of not measuring up. Research has elucidated the intricate feedback loop between excessive social media use and the emergence of depression and anxiety. As Gen Z individuals engage with these platforms excessively, they experience a heightened likelihood of encountering cyberbullying, online harassment, and a relentless quest for digital validation. Cyberbullying, in particular, has emerged as a substantial threat to the mental well-being of Gen Z. The anonymity and detachment provided by online interactions can cause individuals to engage in hurtful behaviour, which can lead to severe emotional consequences for the recipient. This constant exposure to negativity and harassment on social media can indeed precipitate and exacerbate feelings of anxiety and depression.

Furthermore, the endless comparison with idealized images and lifestyles depicted on social media can breed a sense of insecurity and discontent. Gen Z, who is constantly exposed to these images, may feel pressured to conform to unrealistic beauty standards, career achievements, and lifestyles. This often leads to internal struggle, low self-esteem, and heightened anxiety, which can develop into clinical depression over time. It is crucial to recognize that excessive social media use, while contributing to mental health issues, may also be a response to pre-existing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Gen Z individuals, grappling with these conditions, might find the allure of social media as an escape from their offline lives. This escapism, however, often proves to be counterproductive. Instead of providing relief, it exacerbates their emotional distress, as the barrage of images, news, and social interactions further intensifies their negative emotional states. This finding correlates with the findings of Liu et al. (2018), Sampasa-Kanyinga and Lewis (2015), and Twenge et al. (2018), who indicated that excessive social media use, cyberbullying, and social comparison are associated with increased levels of depression and anxiety among Gen Z individuals.

Third, in exploring the interactive effects of family functioning and online social interaction on depression and anxiety among Gen Zs, we examined whether certain family dynamics (e.g., parental monitoring, family cohesion) can buffer or exacerbate the impact of online social interactions on mental health outcomes. This study uniquely highlighted the interplay between family functioning and online social interaction and its direct relationship with the levels of depression and anxiety among Gen Z. We found that individuals experiencing negative family functioning and high levels of online social interaction are at significantly greater risk of experiencing heightened levels of depression and anxiety. When family functioning is compromised, the protective elements that family typically offers are diminished. In such

instances, Gen Z may turn to online social interaction as a substitute for the emotional support and understanding they are not receiving within the family. However, the digital realm does not consistently provide the necessary coping mechanisms, empathy, or resilience that are critical for emotional well-being. The result is that individuals from families with poor functioning may become more vulnerable to the adverse effects of high levels of online social interaction. Cyberbullying, excessive social comparison, and the endless quest for validation can become overwhelming stressors that, when combined with family-related stress, contribute to the emergence of depression and anxiety.

Finally, to assess the mediating role of self-esteem and coping mechanisms in the relationships among family functioning, online social interaction, and depression/anxiety among Gen Zs and to investigate how these psychological factors may influence the pathway between the predictors and mental health outcomes, this study revealed that every individual has his/her own different coping strategies or mechanisms for controlling depression and anxiety. Depression has influenced the mental health outcomes of Gen Zs, causing them to lose self-worth and self-esteem among their parents and course mates. However, because the level of depression among people in Gen Zs is low, the mental health risk is minimal. This means that they can effectively relate with their family members, as well as social media.

Conclusion

The study concluded that there is a complex interplay between family functioning, social media use and the mental well-being of Generation Z (Gen Z). The findings indicate that a high level of family functioning characterized by effective communication and emotional support was not linked to a high level of depression or anxiety among individuals in the GenZ. This suggests that a supportive family environment can act as a protective factor for promoting emotional resilience and well-being. This research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships among family dynamics, social media, and the mental health of younger adults.

Recommendations

The study recommended a good family relationship to promote healthy living among adolescents especially those in the GenZ developmental age cohort because of their exposure to social media. It is also important for families to encourage healthy social interaction so as to reduce incessant validation from the social media.

Limitations of study and direction for future use

The limitation of the study is addressed as implicit recommendations for future research, future research is needed to expand the findings of the study. This study is limited in scope, due to the limited number of study participants which were exclusively drawn from an age cohort, future studies can make comparisons among different age groups to see the pattern of anxiety and depression for the age groups.

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