The Impact of Digital Technology and social media On the Mental Well-Being of GEN Z In Education
Hoang Le Mai
Hospitality & Tourism Management Faculty, FPT University

ABSTRACT
This research study examines the influence of digital technology and social media on the mental well-being of Generation Z (Gen Z) within the context of education. With the widespread adoption of smartphones, internet access, and social media platforms, Gen Z students are increasingly exposed to the digital world. This study aims to explore the effects of this exposure on their mental health and overall well-being. The research utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The quantitative phase involves administering standardized questionnaires to a sample of Gen Z students, focusing on their technology usage patterns, social media engagement, and mental health indicators. The qualitative phase includes in-depth interviews with a subset of participants to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perceptions related to digital technology and social media. The findings of this study will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of digital technology and social media on the mental well-being of Gen Z students in educational settings. It is anticipated that the results will shed light on both positive and negative effects, such as increased connectivity and information access, as well as potential risks like cyberbullying, social comparison, and digital addiction. Furthermore, this research aims to identify strategies and interventions that can be implemented within educational institutions to support the mental well-being of Gen Z students in the digital age. By examining the relationship between digital technology, social media, and mental well-being, this study seeks to inform educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders about the importance of promoting healthy digital habits and creating a supportive environment for Gen Z students. Ultimately, the goal is to harness the benefits of technology while mitigating its potential adverse effects, thereby fostering the overall well-being of Gen Z in educational settings.

Key Words: technology, social media, mental, well-being, student.

1 Introduction
Generation Z, often referred to as Gen Z, is the demographic cohort that follows Millennials and is typically characterized as individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. Gen Z has grown up in a world where technology, particularly digital devices and social media, has become an integral part of daily life. While technology offers numerous advantages and opportunities, it has also contributed to the generation’s unique challenges, including increased levels of anxiety. Digital technology and social media have become pervasive in the lives of Generation Z (Gen Z) individuals, particularly in the context of education. With the advent of smartphones, tablets, and easy access to the internet, Gen Z students are increasingly engaging with digital platforms and social media networks. While these technological advancements offer numerous benefits and opportunities for learning, communication, and collaboration, they also raise concerns about their impact on the mental well-being of Gen Z in educational settings. The rapid growth of digital technology and social media has revolutionized the way information is accessed, shared, and consumed. Gen Z students have grown up in an era where digital devices and social media platforms are an integral part of their daily lives. They rely on technology for academic purposes, such as conducting research, accessing educational resources, and communicating with peers and instructors. Additionally, social media platforms provide avenues for self-expression, social connection, and staying updated with current events and trends. However, alongside the benefits, there is growing evidence suggesting that excessive use of digital technology and social media can have detrimental effects on the mental well-being of Gen Z in education. Research has highlighted concerns such as increased stress, anxiety, depression, decreased attention span, and negative body image due to factors like cyberbullying, social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), and information overload. Moreover, the constant connectivity and exposure to curated online personas may contribute to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem among Gen Z students. Understanding the impact of digital technology and social...
media on the mental well-being of Gen Z in education is crucial for educators, parents, and policymakers alike. It is essential to recognize both the potential benefits and risks associated with technology use to create a balanced and supportive learning environment for Gen Z students. By identifying the factors that contribute to positive and negative outcomes, educators can develop strategies and interventions to promote healthy digital habits, digital literacy, and foster well-being among Gen Z students. This research aims to delve deeper into the relationship between digital technology, social media, and the mental well-being of Gen Z in educational settings. By examining the existing literature, conducting empirical studies, and seeking insights from Gen Z students themselves, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of digital technology and social media on their mental well-being. Ultimately, this research seeks to inform educational practices, policies, and interventions that promote the well-being and development of Gen Z students in the digital age.

2 Literature review

Amanda Nicole Moscrip (2019) explains that Generation Z, also known as the iGeneration, iGenners, GenZ, or Generation Now, comprises individuals born from the mid-1990s to the late 2010s. This generation's perception of safety and their interactions with others have been shaped by significant historical events. Compared to previous generations, technological advancements such as smartphones and social media have profoundly impacted how Gen Z communicates, socializes, and receives information. Their unique experiences and characteristics have influenced their capacity for empathy, as witnessing and experiencing these events has altered their understanding and ability to empathize with others. Andreana Nop (2021) discusses how Millennials and Generation Z have grown up in a time where social media and digital technology are deeply ingrained in their daily lives. While social media has served as a valuable tool for communication and information sharing, the long-term psychological and social effects are becoming more evident as social media continues to evolve.

3 Research Methodology

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature, as the data is collected from both primary and secondary sources, which include various research journals, websites and newspapers. Exploring issues related to technology and the internet should be seen as a means to enhance and simplify our lives rather than a cause for distraction or worry. However, not all online experiences are positive for young people, they can have negative impacts on how they perceive themselves, relationships.

4 Research result and discussion

Gen Z has been reported to experience higher levels of mental health issues compared to previous generations. Factors such as academic pressure, social media use, economic uncertainty, and the impact of global events can contribute to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and stress among Gen Z individuals.

![Figure 1. Poor mental, social, and spiritual health compared with other generations](Source: McKinsey Health Institute Global Gen Z Survey (2022))
Gen Z has grown up in a highly connected digital world, which has both positive and negative implications for their social health. While social media provides opportunities for connection and communication, it can also lead to feelings of social isolation, cyberbullying, and increased social comparison. Gen Z individuals may face challenges in building and maintaining meaningful relationships in both physical and digital spaces. Gen Z exhibits a more diverse range of beliefs and practices compared to previous generations. Many Gen Z individuals are open-minded and seek spirituality in various forms, including traditional religious practices, personal beliefs, or a combination of different spiritual paths. However, there is also evidence suggesting a decline in religious affiliation among Gen Z, with a higher proportion identifying as non-religious or unaffiliated.

Gen Z tends to spend a substantial amount of time on social media platforms. Multiple studies have indicated that Gen Z individuals spend an average of several hours per day engaging with social media content, including platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube. Overload and Distraction: Spending excessive time on social media can result in information overload and decreased focus. The constant stream of news, notifications, and updates may lead to reduced productivity, difficulty concentrating, and a sense of being overwhelmed.

A significant number of Gen Z individuals actively use social media, with nearly three out of ten following influencers and experts on these platforms. However, they are increasingly aware of the negative effects associated with their social media presence. According to a recent GWI report, 45% of Gen Z believe that there is an excessive amount of pressure to present a flawless image on social media.

5 Recommendation
Incorporate digital literacy education into the curriculum to empower Gen Z students with the skills to navigate the digital world effectively. Teach them critical thinking, media literacy, online safety, and responsible digital citizenship to help them make informed decisions and mitigate potential risks. Integrate mindfulness and well-being practices into the educational environment to support the mental health of Gen Z students. Offer mindfulness exercises, relaxation techniques, and stress management strategies to help them develop resilience, manage anxiety, and find balance in their digital lives. Educate Gen Z students about the importance of digital detox and encourage them to develop healthy technology habits. Promote regular breaks from screens, setting boundaries for technology use, and engaging in offline activities to foster a healthy balance between the virtual and real world. Implement comprehensive cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs within educational institutions. Raise awareness about the impact of cyberbullying, teach students how to recognize and respond to it, and create safe reporting mechanisms. Foster a positive and inclusive school culture that promotes empathy, respect, and digital kindness. Involve parents, guardians, and the wider community in supporting the mental well-being of Gen Z students. Provide resources, workshops, and events that educate families about the influence of digital technology and social media on mental health. Foster open lines of communication and collaboration to address concerns and promote healthy technology practices at home and in the community. Offer professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their understanding of the impact of digital technology and social media on Gen Z's mental well-being. Provide training on incorporating digital well-being strategies into teaching practices, recognizing signs of distress, and accessing appropriate resources and support for students. Encourage ongoing research and evaluation of the effects of digital technology and social media on Gen Z's mental well-being in educational settings. Continually assess the effectiveness of interventions and strategies, adapt them based on emerging research findings, and share best practices across educational communities. In addition, it is important to understand that Generation Z are digital natives who live and learn in an advanced technological space that provides unlimited access to information. This also impacts their habits and preferences when it comes to reading, particularly reading books. The attention span of Gen Z is becoming shorter, and they tend to seek visually appealing information rather than audio or text-based content, personalized to their interests. Understanding the characteristics of Gen Z as well as their reading habits is the starting point for cultivating reading habits and a reading culture. Young people have a psychological desire to prove themselves and constantly strive to achieve their own goals. They are driven to continuously make efforts in order to attain these goals. It can be said that Gen Z does not allow themselves to stop if they feel they are falling behind others. Every day, they set deadlines and key performance indicators (KPIs) for themselves to keep pushing forward. Therefore, maintaining a balance between physical and mental well-being is extremely important.

6 Conclusion

Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive and collaborative effort involving educators, parents, mental health professionals, and policymakers. By promoting digital literacy, teaching healthy technology habits, fostering supportive school environments, and providing resources for mental health support, we can help Gen Z students navigate the digital landscape in a way that supports their mental well-being and academic success. Comprehensive human development encompassing moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic aspects is essential. All relevant stakeholders must take responsibility and propose appropriate and synchronized solutions to protect and improve the overall health of the population and particularly the youth. Placing the health and well-being of citizens as the top priority is crucial, as a healthy population leads to a healthy nation.

7 Conflict of interests

None

8 Acknowledgement

The research on the impact of digital technology and social media on the mental health of Generation Z in education will help educators, parents, and policymakers make informed decisions and develop strategies that promote a healthy balance between technology use and health. It emphasizes the need for continued research, collaboration, and implementation of evidence-based interventions to support the mental health of Gen Z students in the digital age. I am extremely grateful to the experts who accompanied me in this research.
References


