SURVEYING THE VIETNAMESE YOUTH ON THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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A B S T R A C T

In the context of globalization and the rapid development of the Internet, social networks have become an indispensable part of the lives of citizens in the 21st century. In addition to helping people communicate and connect, wireless platforms bring benefits to work, study, and entertainment. However, faced with the staggering increase in the use of social networks, many argue that they can have negative impacts on users, particularly those who are studying or working. This study aims to provide readers with an overview of the negative impacts of social networks on Vietnamese youth. The research data was collected by gathering reputable sources and surveying young people born between 1995 and 2010, belonging to Generation Z, who are living, studying, and working in major cities in Vietnam and using social networks. Through statistical analysis and data processing, the results show that the use of communication platforms has a negative impact on the productivity and health of Vietnamese youth. To minimize the negative impacts on daily life, young people should consider the amount of time they spend using social networks and the content they publish. Additionally, protecting personal information and building positive communities is necessary to avoid unnecessary risks.

K E Y W O R D S

Social media, youth, the negative impact of social media, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

In modern times, the use of social media has become a necessary demand regardless of age, social class, educational level, or employment status. Currently, 27 online platforms are operating on a massive worldwide scale, and the number of active users has increased significantly since the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020. With the rapid increase in the use of social media platforms worldwide, there are concerns about these networks and how they affect young people. The harmful consequences of social media significantly replace their benefits. (Colombo, 2021).

Despite the public perception of social media misuse, most university students nowadays consider social media a useful tool for learning. The positive impact of social media on university students seems to outweigh the negative. However, ANOVA results show no statistically significant difference between the positive and negative effects of social media on students' academic achievements. Teachers and students can use social media as an information and communication tool to reduce and improve the learning process. (Ahmad Jahed Mushtaq, 2018)

Differing views exist regarding the benefits and drawbacks of social media. Nevertheless, humanity is now more connected and interactive than ever before thanks to the development of social media. Today's citizens widely use social media, and their lives depend heavily on these platforms. This study focuses on how young people in Vietnam use social media. The survey was conducted from February to March 2023, with 379 responses, including those from students and working people in major cities in Vietnam. The young people surveyed belong to the Generation Z group, born between 1995-2010. The survey aims to understand how social media affects the physical and mental health, work productivity, and relationships of young people with others. The survey focuses on questions about the purpose and duration of social media use and the personal opinions of participants on the issue of social media use. The findings of this survey will clarify the limitations of using social media and the potential harm it may cause to young people in Vietnam.

2. Social Media and its negative impact
2.1. Social Media

Social media is known as an internet-based technology that supports the sharing of ideas and information through virtual networks and communities. It allows users to create content, exchange or provide content, share information, and engage in other forms of expression. (Colombo, 2021).

A social network can be understood as an online website or platform with many different forms and features that help people easily connect from anywhere. The social network can be easily accessed from many different devices, such as computers, phones, etc. (Thinh, N.V., 2021)

Social media is an online platform that people use to build social networks or social relations with other people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. (W.Akram, R.Kumar, 2017)

Social media is a platform for people to discuss their issues and opinions. (Shabnoor Siddiqui, Tajinder Singh, 2016)

Social media is now being described as a network for disseminating knowledge between communities and learners (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017).

As an interactive technology, social media facilitates the forming and maintenance of social relationships through the electronic interpersonal communication (Larose et al., 2014)

Social media is a new online media group that enables sharing within the context of participation, openness, chatting, society, and being connected. (Bekdemịr, Ü., & Tağrịkulu, P., 2018)

Thus, social networks operate on the Internet platform with features such as chat, email, movies, voice chat, and file sharing,... On social networks, users can share images, and personal opinions, or search for friends and partners. Although social networks have different names, some different features, and ways of use, they share some common characteristics: (i) Users must create profiles and have their accounts; (ii) Many users connect through names, email addresses, and nicknames, and social networks will link user accounts to personal or organizational accounts; (iii) The content posted and shared on social networks is determined by the users themselves, including images, words, and sentences. (https://hieuluat.vn, 2022)

2.2. Overview of the downsides of social networks

In an overview of the research process on the negative sides of social media, the research team examines various aspects of the dark side of social media. Regarding physical health, W. Akram, and R. Kumar (2017) show that social media leads some individuals to self-diagnose inaccurately. Research by Monica Munjial Singh and colleagues (2017) reveals that social media can have negative impacts on physical health such as headaches, back pain, eye strain, and digestive issues. In addition, research by Anushree Tandon and colleagues (2020) focuses on the psychological health aspect, while the study by Hemantha Kulatunga (2021) points out the negative effects of social media on mental health, causing some psychological problems. Furthermore, social media leads to "anxiety" and "peer pressure" (Walaa Elsayed, 2021). The dark side of social media also includes "privacy invasion" (W. Akram, R. Kumar, 2017) and "influence on real-life relationships" (Monica Munjial Singh and colleagues, 2017). Colombo (2021) indicates that the dark side of social media includes "the separation of individuals from the community and the isolation of users". Regarding learning and work aspects, research by Mingle, J., Adams, M. (2015) shows that excessive use of social media leads to poor grammar and spelling, late submission of assignments, less study time, and poor academic performance. Eke, Helen N. Miss, and colleagues (2014) highlight the dark side of social media, including "cyberbullying, cyber violence." Sudha, S and Kavitha Es. (2016) show that "students and teachers lack awareness of appropriate use of social media topics relevant to education" or "students lack a habit of reading books and newspapers" (Mushtaq, A, J.,2015). Eke, Helen N. Miss, and colleagues (2014) identify a range of negative impacts of social media, such as "cybercrime, internet addiction, laziness, some social vices like fraud, murder, and kidnapping," and "unethical acts such as pornography, prostitution." One of the factors of the learning and work aspect under the negative influence of social media is "reduced concentration," according to W.A.

Table 1. Overview of the negative effects of social media

No.	Negative effects of social media	Source
1	**Negatively affecting physical health**	
1.1.	Incorrect self-diagnosis	W.Akram, R.Kumar, (2017)
1.2	Constant headaches/Back-pain /Eye-strain/Hand-corns	Monica Munjial Singh, Mohammad Amiri, Sherry Sabbarwal (2017)
1.3	The problem of high blood pressure	

1.4	Problem-related to digestion/stomach	
1.5	Sleep disturbances	Anushree Tandon, Puneet Kaur, Amandeep Dhir, Matti Mäntymäki (2020)
2	**Negatively affecting mental health**	
2.1	Psychological issues	Hemantha Kulatunga (2021)
2.2	Anxiety	Monica Munjial Singh, Mohammad Amiri, Sherry Sabbarwal (2017)
2.3	Peer pressure	Walaa Elsayed (2021)
2.4	Privacy concerns	W.Akram, R.Kumar, (2017)
2.5	Negatively impacting real-life relationships	Monica Munjial Singh, Mohammad Amiri, Sherry Sabbarwal (2017)
2.6	Social separation and loneliness.	Colombo (2021)
3	**Negatively impacting study and work**	
3.1	poor grammar and spelling, late submission of assignments, less study time, and poor academic performance	Mingle, J., Adams, M. (2015)
3.2	cyber-bullying	Eke, Helen N. Miss; Omekwu, Charles Obiora Prof; and Odoh, Jennifer Nneka Miss. (2014)
3.3	Lack of awareness among the students and faculty members about the appropriate usage of social media on topics of educational interest.	Sudha, S and Kavitha Es. (2016)
3.4	Lack of habits of reading newspapers among students	Mushtaq, A, J. (2015).
3.5	E- crime, Internet addiction, laziness, a standard crime like fraud, murder, kidnapping; immoral acts like pornography, prostitution	Eke, Helen N. Miss; Omekwu, Charles Obiora Prof; and Odoh, Jennifer Nneka Miss. (2014)
3.6	Attention span drops, jeopardizing the capability to concentrate	W.Akram, R.Kumar, (2017)

Source: Synthesis of the research team

An overview of the negative aspects of social media was conducted across three aspects, including:

-The impact of social media on physical health, including eye strain, decreased vision, joint and digestive problems, blood pressure issues, and sleep disorders.

-The impact of social media on mental health, including anxiety disorders, emotional disorders, privacy violations, conflicts in real-life relationships, loneliness, and peer pressure.

-The impact of social media on learning and work, including school violence, language expression ability, decreased concentration, reduced member interaction, and influence on motivation and academic/work outcomes. This study gathered information on these aspects through research and analysis.

3. Research Method

The author group utilized desk research and social investigation methods to conduct the study. Data was collected and analyzed using Excel software.

The desk research method involved gathering and summarizing related documents and articles to clarify the concepts and characteristics of social networks, specifically examining their negative aspects. Based on the approach taken, the research team developed a survey questionnaire on Google Drive that focused on survey questions to clarify the research objectives.

After creating a preliminary survey, the team conducted trial interviews with five young people who frequently use social networks. The opinions of these five young people were summarized to finalize the official survey questionnaire *(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScSJRpTVHlsYFYkYBh2LRh920SFedP658a_qgjUHd2m 648oWQ/closedform)*,which was then sent to Generation Z respondents born between 1995-2010 in large cities throughout Vietnam via social media platforms such as Facebook, Zalo, Viber, and email.

The social investigation method used a convenience sampling approach and snowball sampling to identify the next target based on the suggestion or introduction of the previously surveyed individual. Through the survey, the authors collected 379 responses, which were compiled, analyzed, and statistically validated using Excel software.

The survey included Likert-5 scale questions with five levels:

1. Strongly Disagree / Do not use,

2. Disagree / Use a little,

3. No Opinion / Use normally,

4. Agree / Use relatively Often,

5. Strongly Agree / Use A Lot.

Assessing the degree of opinions, the author determines the values of the distance range and the mean value, specifically:

For the 5-level Likert scale:

Distance range = (Maximum - Minimum) / n = (5-1)/5 = 0.8

Meaning of the levels:

> *1.00 - 1.80: Strongly Disagree / Do Not Use*
> *1.81 - 2.60: Disagree / Use A Little*
> *2.61 - 3.40: No Opinion / Use Normally*
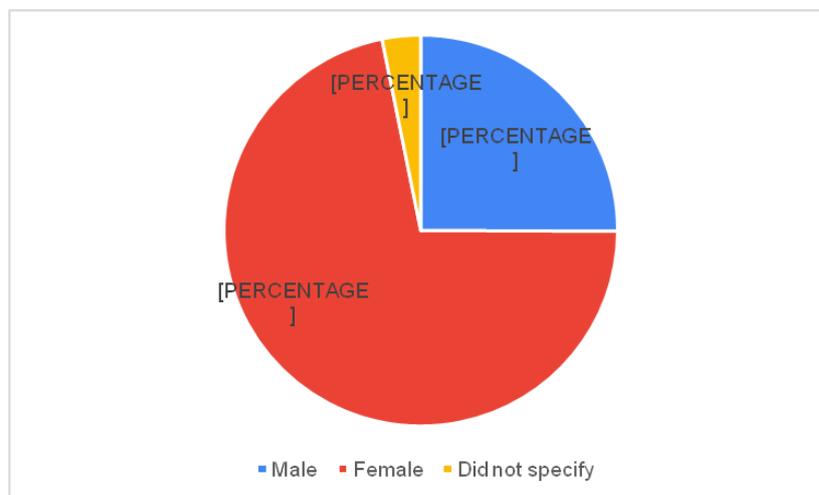> *3.41 - 4.20: Agree / Use Relatively Often*
> *4.21 - 5.00: Strongly Agree / Use A Lot*

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics of survey participants

Three hundred seventy-nine individuals participated in the survey, of which 95 were male (25%), 272 were female (72%), and 12 did not specify (3%). (Chart 1)

Chart 1. Gender of survey participants

Source: Survey results

Chart 2 shows three age groups among the survey participants, with 27 individuals born from 1995 to 1999 (7%). Meanwhile, the number of individuals born from 2000 to 2005 accounted for the highest proportion at 293 individuals (77%). The remaining 59 individuals were born from 2006 to 2010 (16%). (Chart 2).
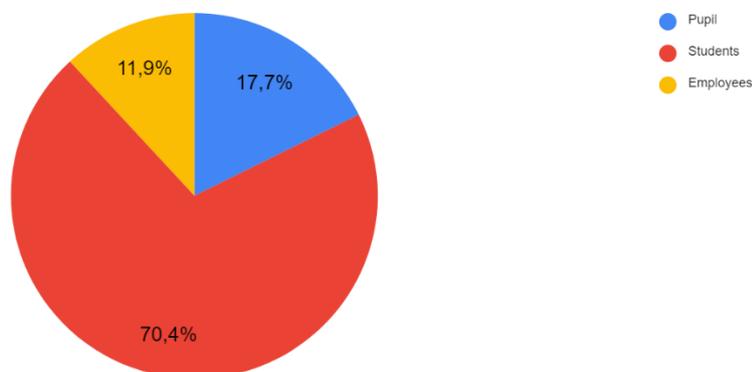
Chart 2. Age of survey participants
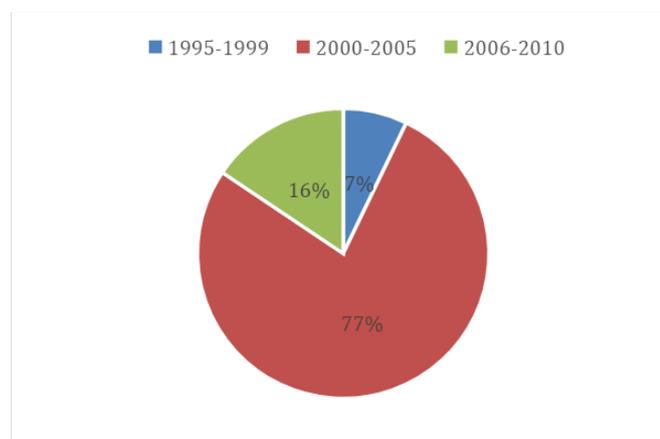
Source: Survey results

The results show that ***most survey participants were students***, with 267 individuals accounting for 70%. The second group was students, accounting for 18%, with 67 individuals. Finally, the number of employed individuals accounted for 12%, with 45 individuals. (Chart 3)

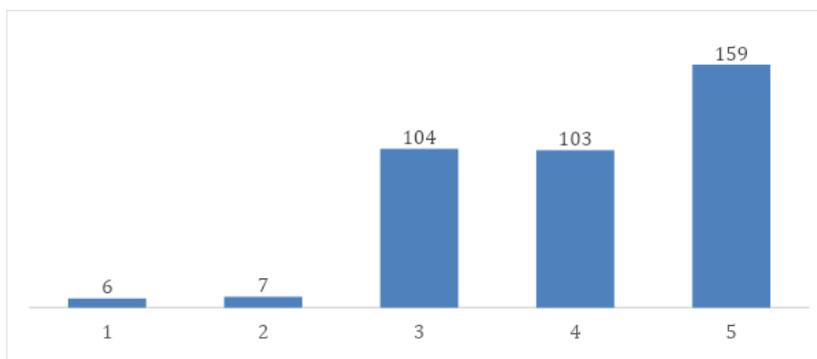**Chart 3.** Occupation of survey participants

Source: Survey results

4.2. General information on the level of social media usage

Regarding the level of social media usage among the 379 survey participants, the results are shown in Chart 4.

**Chart 4.** Level of social media usage

1. Not used; 2. Used sparingly; 3. Used commonly; 4. Used relatively frequently; 5. Used frequently.
Source: Survey results

The average score calculated from the survey results was ***4.06***, indicating that young people participating in the survey are currently using social media at a ***relatively high level***.

Chart 5. Social networks that young people commonly use
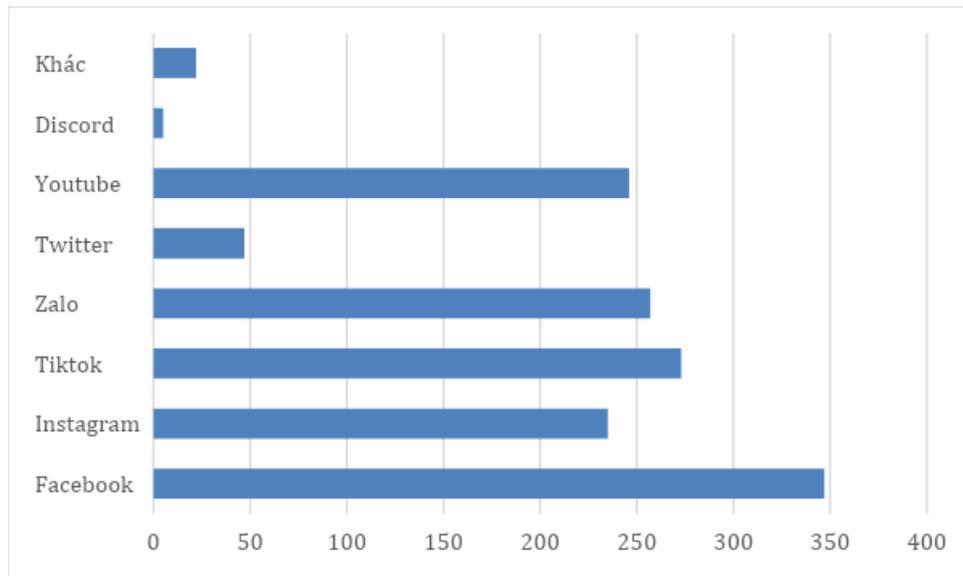
Source: Survey results

Chart 5 shows that 347 survey participants are Facebook users (accounting for 91.6%), rankingthe highest proportion. The second most commonly used social network is TikTok, with 273 users (72%). The following three positions are Zalo, YouTube, and Instagram, swinging from 235 to 257 individuals (accounting for 62% to 68%). The remaining options, such as Twitter, Discord, and others, accounted for less than 12%.

Chart 6. Daily social media usage time
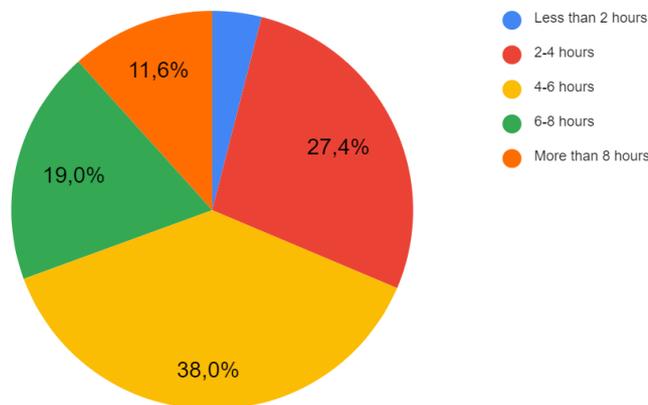
Source: Survey results

Chart 6 shows that the ***majority of users (38%) use social media for 4 to 6 hours a day***, 19% of survey participants (72 individuals) reported using social media for 6 to 8 hours a day, and ***even 12% (44 individuals) use social media for over 8 hours a day.***

The second-highest rank on the ranking table is for people who use social media for 2 to 4 hours a day (104 individuals), accounting for 27%. Meanwhile, 15 individuals, ***equivalent to 4% of survey participants***, use social media for less than 2 hours.

The survey results on the purpose of social media usage among young people are shown in Chart 7.

Chart 7. Purpose of social media usage
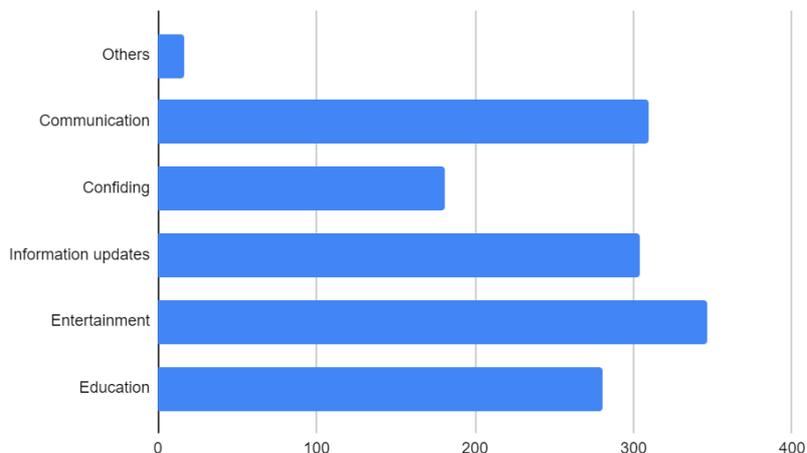
Source: Survey results

The survey results show ***that most participants use social media for entertainment***, accounting for 91.6% (347 responses). The following reason is for ***communication and updating information***, accounting for 81.8% (310 answers). Next is for studying purposes, with 74.1% (281 replies). The number of responses using social media for sharing emotions is 181, accounting for 47.8%, and other purposes account for 4.5% (17 responses).

4.2. Vietnamese youth's perception of the negative aspects of social media

Regarding the negative aspects of social media, the research group discussed the impact of social media on physical and mental health, as well as its effects on learning and work.

**Figure 8.** Impact of social media on physical health
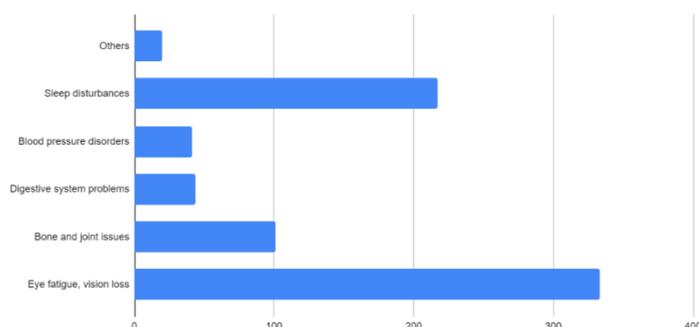
Source: Survey results

As for physical health, 333 out of 379 people, or 87.9%, felt that ***their eyesight had decreased when using social media***; 57.3% (217/379) of those surveyed reported ***sleep disturbances***; and 26.6% (101/379) had problems with bones and joints. The remaining respondents reported 11.6% digestive

problems and 10.8% blood pressure disorders. A small percentage of survey participants (5.8%) reported no effects or simply a waste of time.

Figure 9. Impact of social media on mental health
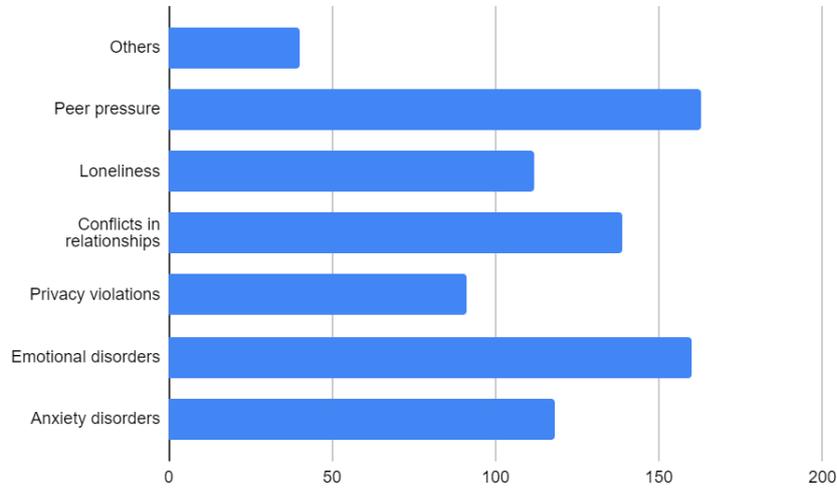
Source: Survey results

The top issues were ***emotional disorders and peer pressure***, accounting for 42.2% (160 responses) and 43% (163). Next, 36.7% (139 replies) reported ***conflicts in their relationships***, 31.1% (118 responses) experienced ***anxiety disorders***, and 29.6% (112 responses) felt ***lonely*** while using social media. Additionally, 91 (24%) respondents reported ***privacy violations***. Other symptoms accounted for 12% (40 replies).

Chart 10: The negative aspects of social networking on learning and work
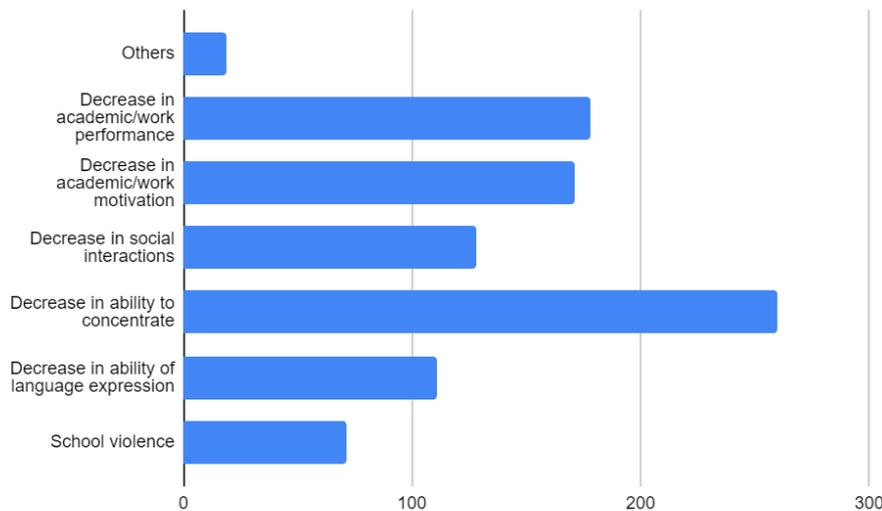
Source: Survey results

According to Chart 10, 260 people feel that using social networks reduces their ***ability to concentrate*** (accounting for 68.6%). Next, 178 (47%) people believe it ***affects their learning outcomes***, and 171 (45.1%) feel ***less motivated to learn and work***. In addition, 128 (33.8%) respondents believe that social networks ***reduce interaction***, and 111 (29.3%) believe that it ***affects***

their language expression ability. Finally, 71 (18.7%) people surveyed believe that using social networks *leads to violence in schools*, and 19 people (5.3%) do not feel affected or imply waste their time...

Based on the survey results, the research team evaluated the negative impact of social networks on three aspects: physical health, mental health, and learning/work outcomes, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Evaluation of the Negative Impact of Social Networks

Impact of Social Networks	Rating	Number of Respondents
Social networks have a negative impact on physical health	1. Strongly disagree	11
	2. Disagree	30
	3. No opinion	93
	4. Agree	198
	5. Strongly agree	47
Social networks have a negative impact on mental health	1. Strongly disagree	12
	2. Disagree	26
	3. No opinion	85
	4. Agree	193
	5. I Strongly agree	63
Social networks have a negative impact on learning/work outcomes	1. Strongly disagree	14
	2. Disagree	32
	3. No opinion	103
	4. Agree	179
	5. Strongly agree	51

Source: Survey results

From the survey results, the research team calculated the average score for the negative impact of social networks on physical health, mental health, and learning/work outcomes. The average scores for evaluating the adverse effects of social networks are shown in Chart 11.

Chart 11. Assessment of the negative impact of social media
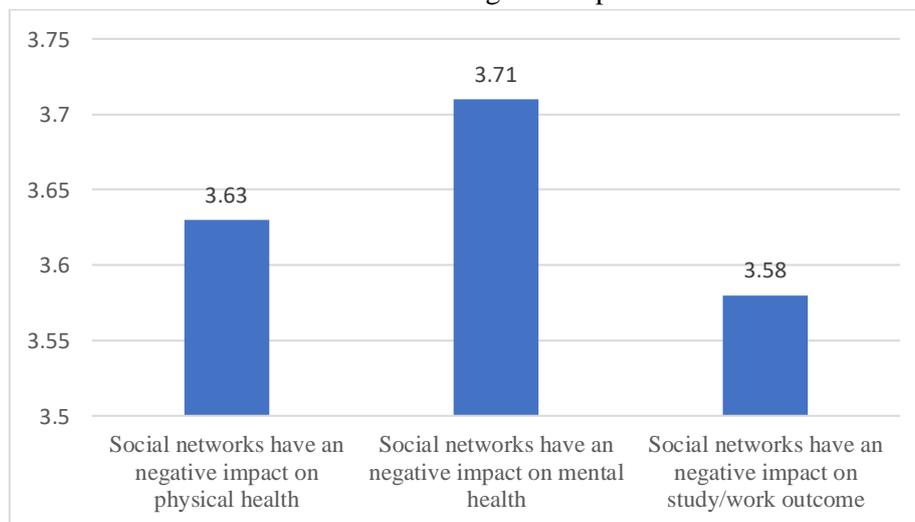
*Source: Calculated from survey results.*

Thus, the survey results show that the negative impact of social networks on mental health is 3.63 points; *the highest score is for the adverse effects on mental health, at 3.71 points*; and the lowest score is for the negative impact on learning/work outcomes, at 3.58 points. All three scores are in the range of (3.41-4.2), *indicating that survey participants agree* with the research team's view that social networks negatively affect all three issues discussed in the study.

5. Discussion of Research Results

Focusing on examining the negative aspects of social networks, the research results showed that young people use social networks quite a lot, with 12% of respondents using social networks for more than 8 hours per day, primarily using social networks for 4-6 hours per day, and only 4% of respondents using social networks for less than 2 hours. Facebook is the most used social network, followed by TikTok, Zalo, YouTube, and Instagram. Most survey participants use social networks for entertainment, communication, and information updates. The research results also showed that most survey participants believe that social networks harm physical health (*evaluation score of 3.63/5*), such as reducing vision when using social networks and sleep disorders. Mental health issues were also noted (*evaluation score of 3.71/5*) in emotional disorders, peer pressure, conflicts in social relationships, anxiety disorders, loneliness, or privacy violations. Regarding the learning and working issues, the data (*evaluation score of 3.58/5*) showed that many students would have reduced concentration, affecting their learning outcomes, reduced motivation to learn and work, and reduced interaction.

The study also examined measures to use social networks reasonably.

Chart 12. Reasonable Use of Social Networks
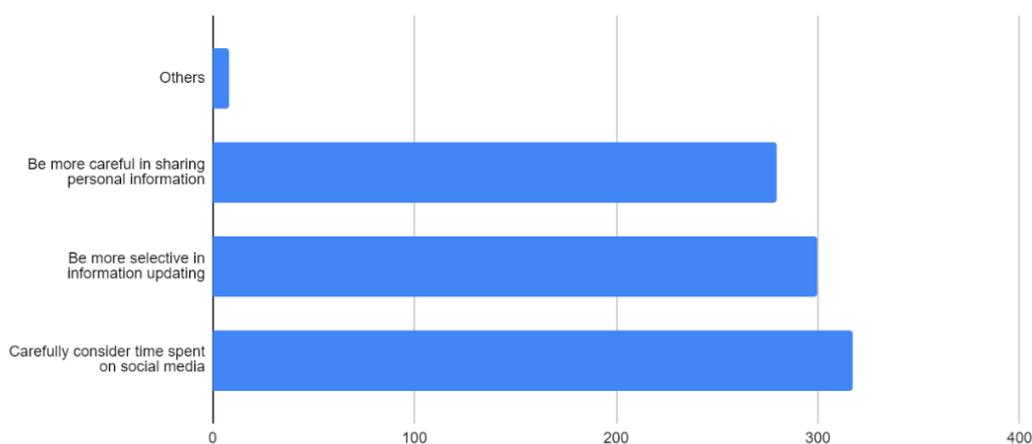
Source: Survey results

The survey results showed that 317 respondents (83.6%) believe we should *consider our time on social networks*. In addition, 300 respondents (79.2%) agree that we need to *select information when updating social networks* and 280 respondents (73.9%) believe we should be *careful when sharing information on social networks*. In addition, eight respondents (2.4%) provided other suggestions, such as knowing when to stop and use social networks reasonably, being civilized on social networks, balancing daily activities in real life with activities on social networks, and identifying the purpose of using social networks…

In the end, social media has played and is playing a very important role in our lives, especially for the younger generation. It helps us connect with friends, family, and people of interest from all over the world. Moreover, thanks to social media, we can search for information, share

knowledge and experience, connect with people who have the same interests, and create new business relationships.

However, misusing social media can bring many undesired harms. One of the harms of social media is that it can harm the mental state of the users, especially children, and teenagers. Excessive reliance on social media can lead to feelings of loneliness, mental pressure, sleep disorders, and even physical deterioration. In addition, misusing social media can also lead to the loss of privacy, fraud, and cyber-attacks. Therefore, to use social media correctly, we need some guidelines as follows:

- Allocate an appropriate amount of time for social media: Avoid spending too much time on social media, especially during working or studying hours.
- Protect personal information: To avoid fraud and cyber-attacks, make sure that your personal information is secure and not shared with strangers.
- Filter content: Carefully select the content that you post and share on social media, avoiding posting inaccurate or false information.
- Establish positive relationships and build a conscious community on social media: Avoid joining or participating in negative or abusive groups or communities.

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