

Relationship Quality and Social Media Influence on Individual Performance: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract : Based on the centrality of interpersonal relationships and social media use in contemporary interaction, this conceptual review considers the impact of the quality and quantity of interpersonal relationships, perceived and enacted social media use on academic, professional, and sports performance. Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Self-Determination Theory, Social Comparison Theory and Usage and Gratification Theory, the article describes how supportive relationships increase motivation, emotional stability and resilience while toxic relationships reduce concentration and performance. The article shows how social media increases access to learning and network opportunities, while decreasing work concentration and increasing social comparison and mental fatigue. It concludes that balanced engagement and emotion regulation are paramount for performance outcomes in the digital era.

IndexTerms - Relationship quality, social media, Performance, Motivation, Psychological well-being, Digital distraction, Cognitive Load.

1. Introduction

While interpersonal relationships continue to be an important part of life in the 21st century, the rise of the digital age has changed the way in which people interact. Performance is generally considered the successful completion of academic, occupational, or sporting tasks. It is contextualized by skills or abilities, and emotional and sociocultural factors. The integration of social media into everyday life means the relationship between social media, personal relationships, and individual performance needs to be further understood. The aim of this paper is to analyze these influences from a psychological perspective.

1.1 Objective Of The Research

The main aim of the study is to evaluate the effects of both relationship and digital habits on an individual from a psychological and behavioural view. In particular, the study seeks to;

- To examine the dual influence of relationship quality and social media usage on academic, professional, and athletic performance.
- To address existing research gaps by analyzing how relational satisfaction and social media engagement jointly influence these performance outcomes.
- To explore how supportive relationships enhance motivation and resilience, compared to how toxic relationships and digital distractions impair concentration and productivity.

2. Literature Review

The relationship between interpersonal dynamics, social media engagement, and individual performance has attracted increasing scholarly attention. Research indicates that both relational quality and digital interaction patterns significantly influence psychological well-being, motivation, and productivity outcomes.

2.1 Relationship Quality and Performance

The foundational work of Abraham Maslow (1943) laid the foundation for belonging as a human element to grow and maximize oneself. An individual, when feels secure with regards to his/her relationships, he/she will feel more confident and have stable performance levels. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), people have a need of belonging. So, this means that people want to create positive relationships with each other and maintain those relationships. Therefore, as studies like Deci and Ryan's Self Determination Theory (2000) show, meeting people's basic psychological need of relatedness will help people grow, increase the ability to cope with surprises and improve motivation that comes from within. By creating and maintaining supportive relationships, we can create a strong foundation for academic and athletic performance. In the sense that feeling safe in relationships will encourage "internal motivation and perseverance", but conflict amongst individuals can lead to "anxiety alongside that and lower levels of focus and productivity. First, on Emotional Intelligence, Attachment Theory, which was developed by John Bowlby in 1969, provides the groundwork to suggest how individuals relate to the ability of their secure attachment patterns, (i.e. Relationships) define their ability to experience other relationships and how they will function at work, i.e. they will be able to explore cognitively, and perform the task. Hazan and Shaver (1987) have translated Attachment Theory into the adult world, stating that individuals with a Secure attachment style have higher satisfaction and are less stressed emotionally. Further, according to Gottmans (1994) research on Long Term Relationship Stability, a person who is in a high conflict relationship will be constantly at peak physiological arousal and, therefore, have poor executive functioning, and focus and will be unable to perform at work.

2.2 Social Media and Psychological Outcomes

Social media and Effects on Mental Health, the appearance of Facebook and Instagram has both changed the way people compare themselves and represent themselves to others. Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) in that view of mass communication tells us that people actively choose special media to fulfil psychological and social needs. The research by Whiting & Williams(2013) applies this theory to the digital age and shows that the use of social media for "information seeking" and "social interaction" purposes improves performance. The psychological danger inherent in these platforms stems primarily from the fact that they are presented as performative venues. Leon Festinger (1954) proposed Social Comparison Theory in order to help explain

how individuals assess their own capabilities against those of others. In an environment comprised of digital portrayals of successful people, these upward comparisons could have an adverse effect on individuals' self-esteem. Kross et al. (2013) found that use of Facebook increased use of the platform corresponded to lower levels of subjective well-being for young adults. Likewise, Rosen et al. (2014) found that excessive use of media was positively correlated with greater levels of anxiety and lower levels of academic performance. Tandoc, Ferrucci, and Duffy (2015) created an empirical relationship between heavy use of Facebook and higher levels of envy while serving the mediating role of developing symptoms of depression. Twenge et al. (2018) found a significant correlation between large volumes of screen time, producing depressive symptoms.

Moreover, when taken in the context of engaging with social media, this media multitasking will also detract from the individual's cognitive performance. Ophir, Nass, and Wagner (2009) conducted a seminal study, establishing that heavy media multitaskers are less adept at filtering through extraneous and irrelevant stimuli in their environment, thereby decreasing the potential for cognitive control.

On the other hand, social media can serve as a source of education and motivation. For example, sites such as YouTube provide educational video content to facilitate an increase in learning and developing skills. Professional sites, such as LinkedIn, contribute to an individual's professional development and allow individuals to develop their own personal brand. Through the framework of Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory, social media platforms promote observational learning; users learn successful behaviors by observing their peers.

2.3 Gap of the Study

This study aims to fill the gaps in the literature by considering the impact of relational satisfaction and social media engagement on performance together. Prior work studies relationship quality or social media usage by themselves but few have attempted to study both measures to determine how they interact to influence academic, professional, and athletic outcomes.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow asserts that people require a sense of belongingness and love to achieve psychological stability. When multiple secure and supportive relationships exist within an individual's life, they are more likely to achieve both esteem and self-actualization and thus improve performance.

3.2 Social Comparison Theory

According to social comparison theory, an individual's self-evaluation is based on comparison with others a common tendency among most people. The use of social media enhances this tendency, as we are continuously exposed to images which convey success and lifestyles that can potentially influence one's self-esteem and motivation to perform.

3.3 Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive Load Theory was first proposed by John Sweller in 1988. His research suggested that human working memory is limited and increases in the amount of time spent engaging in digital media increases cognitive load and reduces the attentional focus that is considered necessary for peak performance.

3.4 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (2000) states that optimal performance and psychological well-being depend on the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs; autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Hence, the quality of one's relationships fulfills the need for relatedness, which leads to strong intrinsic motivation.

3.5 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

UGT originated from the field of mass communications research (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) and changes the emphasis in mass communications by placing it on the audience (people) instead of how media effects audience members. The UGT perspective proposes that individuals actively engage with social media by choosing particular social media platforms to fulfill needs in the following three categories: informational (to seek information), entertainment (to have fun), and social (to connect with others) (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The use or gratification sought by the user ultimately dictates whether social media will serve as a helpful medium for networking and building positive relationships or as a harmful agent for distractions.

4. Methodology

This methodology for this study is conceptual in nature and uses all relevant literature to look at the overall conceptual agreement and/or differences across existing literature that addresses the intersection of social media use, interpersonal relationship quality, and individual performance. The methodology includes:

1. literature synthesis through a review of prior research in the empirical literature and/or theoretical literature that examined the influence of relational quality in an individual's ability to positively influence/impact their psychological well-being, motivation and performance;
2. theoretical framing of the data based on foundational theories (e.g. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Social Comparison Theory, Cognitive Load Theory, Self-determination Theory, and UGT) in analysing the relationship between social media engagement, relational quality, and psychological well-being, motivation, and performance; and
1. comparative analysis of the improved performance resulting from the use of social media for seeking social support through an educational context versus the negative impact on performance resulting from relational conflicts and/or digital distractions that may result from using social media.

5. Positive Impacts of the Quality of Relationships on Performance

5.1 Emotional Stability and Stress Reduction

When someone has a supportive relationship, both the cognitive and emotional buffering effects can be significant in reducing the level of cortisol in the body, as well as contributing to improved emotional regulation for the individual. When someone is securely

attached and receives support from another, he/she is less likely to remain hyper-aroused (in “fight or flight” mode) when faced with challenges. This emotional stability allows for freeing up valuable cognitive bandwidth and enhances cognitive executive functions, such as decision making, memory retention, and focus. For instance, when a student is studying for potentially high-stakes competitive exams that require peak concentration on complex subjects like logical reasoning or media law, having a calm, supportive home environment is essential to his/her emotional stability and is therefore critical to sustaining mental resilience needed to recover from any setbacks while either participating in athletics or pursuing an academic career.

5.2 Motivation and Goal Reinforcement

Partners, peers, and family members frequently function as external motivational agents, actively reinforcing an individual’s goals and promoting a culture of accountability. This dynamic is rooted in social facilitation, where the encouragement of a trusted circle drives a person to push beyond their perceived limits. In athletic contexts, such as the grueling training schedules and high-pressure matches inherent in Indian football, strong support systems among teammates and coaches foster a collective drive and higher persistence. In academia, peer study groups or supportive mentors provide the necessary scaffolding to maintain momentum during long, self-directed research projects or exam preparation.

5.3 Improved Sense of Self-Confidence

Receiving support from those you value increases your overall feelings of self-efficacy (the core belief in your ability to accomplish). When you continuously feel validated by the people around you, especially by those you hold in high regard, the positive feedback is internalized, which also helps lessen feelings of imposter syndrome and performance anxiety. This new sense of self-confidence is a significant predictor of performance outcome due to an individual’s likelihood of taking risks, being involved in their profession, and approaching challenging situations in their lives with minimized fear of failure.

6. Negative Effects of Normally Disfunctioning Relationship

6.1 Emotional Turmoil and Anxiety

Long-term, high-conflict interactions with others are very damaging psychologically due to the pain associated with them, whether it is from constant arguments, jealousy or dealing with the effects of a break up. These psychological issues create an overwhelming amount of stress on your memory and cognitive capabilities. The cognitive load theory states that when you spend a lot of mental energy processing relational anxiety, you have less available for concentrating, thus lowering the level of your performance in both school and work.

6.2 Time Misallocation

In addition to the psychological effects, most dysfunctional relationships are also characterized by behaviours that are distracted from their primary purpose. This is mostly due to excessive time spent obsessively worrying about how to handle conflictual situations in the relationship, texting/sending messages as many times as possible to resolve conflict; as well as dwelling on interpersonal issues that detract from the overall time available to successfully carry out highly organized daily schedules, (e.g., study schedules, timelines for doing research, as well as athletic conditioning routines), which result in a significantly measurable decrease in productivity.

6.3 Dependence Upon Others and Limitations on Autonomy

Overdependence upon romantic partners or groups of friends for validation can limit personal growth by creating blocks that prevent an individual from becoming independent. If an individual is only motivated externally (i.e. they seek approval from their partner), they will be unable to create internal motivation. The end result is a reduced level of personal autonomy, wherein individuals are unable to make independent decisions, start new projects and/or perform at their best when separated from their support network.

7. Social Media's Positive Impact on Performance

7.1 The Benefits of Social Media

Educational Resources: Social Media provides everyone access to information and has been responsible for revolutionizing how we learn from others. With YouTube, there is an endless supply of tutorial videos that provide valuable insight and guidance into the workings of various types of businesses. Students and professionals can access breakdowns of information, ranging from complex statistical datasets to theories regarding mass communication, that will impact their ability to perform academically and/ or professionally.

Professional Networking and Branding: Social media platforms such as LinkedIn and X allow individuals to create online portfolios that allow them to connect directly with employers and showcase their accomplishments without having to go through a traditional "gatekeeper" (e.g. a recruiter). Additionally, social media allows individuals to create a personal brand or presence that allows them to market themselves globally.

Online Social Support Networks: Social media provides targeted communities that individuals can access when they do not have access to the same community within their physical location. For example, participation in online forums and creating or joining specialized support groups allows individuals to collaborate with others to solve problems together while also receiving support from others. This creates a network of peer-to-peer mentoring relationships.

7.2 Negative Effects of Social Media

Decreased Attention and Productivity Due to Digital Distractions: Social media was designed with attention-grabbing techniques using variable and intermittent sources of reward (i.e., lots of notifications). This constant pinging causes a person to switch between multiple tasks, which keeps him/her from being in a state of “deep work” that is needed for high-level cognitive work and results in a lack of sustained attention, as well as fragmented productivity.

Comparing Yourself to Others in the Digital World and Self-Esteem: When people look at the digital world, typically, they will see highlight reels instead of the real-life performances of all individuals. The digital world provides a skewed and unrealistic view of how successful someone is (e.g., an individual can look at someone posting multiple times about going to a top university or getting a job with a top company) that can cause a person to experience a high level of upward social comparison and feel inadequate; therefore, having performance anxiety.

Sleep Disrupted: The habit of looking at social media late at night exposes a person to blue light (which reduces the production of melatonin and disrupts circadian rhythms). The result is sleep deprivation, so the person will have decreased cognitive function, decreased ability to consolidate memory or peak physical performance (i.e., athletics/academics).

Cyberbullying/Cyber Psychological Stress: There are many negative experiences from being online, and due to the protection of anonymity online, people are more likely to act inappropriately. People who troll, publicly scrutinize and cyberbully (especially in fields that have public-facing individuals such as professional athletes) can inflict extreme amounts of psychological stress on that person; ultimately destroying self-confidence and causing avoidance of public performance.

8. Combined Effect of Relationships and Social Media

When adding social media to the mix of romantic relationships, the complexity of the relationship becomes even greater from a psychological perspective than we have ever experienced in the past. Social media assists in long-distance emotional communication, but also introduces an entirely new level of surveillance and insecurity. The act of "phubbing" (a combination of phone and snubbing), which refers to giving your attention to your phone instead of your partner, can diminish intimacy with each other in ways that cannot be compensated for by virtual intimacy. While not exclusive to true emotion, it impacts the actual relationships people build with others because it increases the likelihood of jealousy and miscommunication among individuals due to the use of social networking platforms that can provide a huge forum for people to publicly validate each other through "likes," "comments," and "status updates." Most of the time the emotional turmoil created via digital media will overflow into the real world causing relational conflict that diminishes performance in both school and work settings.

9. Implications for Practice

Interventions at both an individual and organizational level are needed to mitigate the negative consequences of dual influences on young people, as well as utilize potential positive influences. Some of these changes may be made through (1) the use of digital literacy curriculum by educational institutions that go beyond learning only basic computer skills through digital literacy classes that teach their students how to critically evaluate digital media messages and to understand the triggers used by social media platforms, as well as time management strategies to track how much time they spend on their devices; (2) the inclusion of emotional intelligence and communication skills into the workplace or workplace training and academic courses to assist students and employees develop the skills to build healthy, safe and mutually supportive relationships with others and to create a conflict resolution process; (3) the encouragement of the establishment of technology-free zones and designated periods of time to be unplugged from digital devices so that people can decrease their mental strain, allow for greater focus on completing work duties, and restore their natural circadian rhythms sleeping at the appropriate time; and (4) the implementation of specialized psychological counseling services, such as the incorporation of sports psychology for athletes, so there is someone available for the athlete to turn to when they experience public online scrutiny and relational dysfunction, and to ensure their mental health aligns with their physical training.

10. Conclusion

This conceptual assessment shows that social media involvement and the caliber of one's interpersonal interactions are now major factors in determining an individual's performance, rather than just a single talent. While relational conflict monopolizes crucial cognitive resources, supportive connections serve as an essential emotional buffer, supporting the resilience and intrinsic drive required for high-level accomplishment. Similar to this, social media's performative design often leads to digital distraction, upward social comparison, and sleep disturbance even while it offers effective networking and educational resources. Importantly, these two realms overlap, and offline performance is frequently negatively impacted by digital instability. In the end, performance optimization in the modern digital era necessitates a comprehensive strategy. In addition to strict digital literacy and self-control to lessen the cognitive toll of hyper-connectivity, emotional intelligence must be developed to handle complicated interpersonal interactions. Longitudinal treatments aimed at preparing people to prosper in this changing socio-digital ecology should be the subject of future empirical studies

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