

Understanding the Adverse Effects of Social Media on Children with Intellectual Disabilities: Parental Insights and Preventive Strategies

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Citation: Alanazi, A. & Alqazlan, S. (2025). Understanding the Adverse Effects of Social Media on Children with Intellectual Disabilities: Parental Insights and Preventive Strategies, *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(4), 841-852. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i4.2954>

Published: December 07, 2025

ABSTRACT

Background: This research emphasizes the background issue of social media-based adverse effects on children with intellectual disabilities in Saudi Arabia, along with parents' perceptions and possible solutions for mitigating such issues. **Results:** The results derived from the survey method used with Saudi parents indicated that social media had negative emotional, physical, and psychological impacts on children suffering from intellectual disabilities. Parents' perceptions are also negative of these children's excessive usage of social media. **Conclusions:** It is concluded that parents must guide these children to limited and positive usage of social media for exchanging information and educational achievements. Parents are also required to keep their children monitored and use the co-surfing of social media accounts to prevent children from cybercrimes, fake relationships, and data privacy issues.

Keywords: Social-Media, Children with Intellectual Disabilities, Academic Achievements, Parents, Health Issues, Harassment, Cybercrimes

INTRODUCTION

Social media sites involve opportunities and risks to maximize benefits and minimize harm from the Internet to children. Social media is not a boon for every age group because people with intellectual disabilities cannot find convenient ways to browse social media channels. Social media brings several risks and threats to children with intellectual disabilities, who may face financial and sexual exploitation (Borgström, Daneback and Molin, 2019). Additionally, Cyberbullying is the most vulnerable side of social media, which may adversely impact children with intellectual disabilities. These children are a vulnerable group in society and should be protected from online and offline bullying. To mitigate this risk, it is essential to provide proper support to children with intellectual disabilities. Victimization and bullying through social media platforms are more prevalent in the modern world, affecting children's self-esteem, confidence, and self-image (TASCC 2023). They often feel depressed and conscious of their own bodies and respect.

Children with intellectual disabilities face various barriers, including the inability to understand the content, others' attitudes towards intellectually disabled children and their sexuality, and dependency on others to use social media handles (Bridges et al., 2020). These children cannot read and understand texts on news feeds or social media. Other users on social media perceive these children as different or separate from them; thus, they possess unusual and negative attitudes toward them. In addition, children with intellectual disabilities require additional support, which makes them dependent on their surroundings and the attitudes of parents and professionals

(Bridges et al., 2020). Therefore, it is not safe for children with intellectual disabilities to use social media without any support and guidance, which will protect them from any risks or threats. These children require support from their parents and family members to develop a positive perspective towards their life and social media usage. Parents play an essential role in keeping children aware of cyberbullying and other crimes on social media platforms. They can remove barriers for their children and increase social interactions in the real world. Family members and parents can propose and guide children with safe approaches to social media participation (Twigg, Duncan and Weich, 2020). They should be aware of intervention and prevention programs to develop a sense of using social media with higher safety. Other solutions have also been proposed for children with intellectual disabilities, in which they are offered unique training in self-determination to use social media safely and with a positive risk-taking mindset. When children with intellectual disabilities receive full support from their parents and professionals, they feel positive and safeguarded from cyber victimization and emphasize more on connecting in a safe and supportive environment (Beighton & Wills, 2019).

Aim

The main aim of this study was to identify the adverse effects of social media on children with intellectual disabilities, effective solutions proposed in their responses, and parents' roles and perspectives towards keeping their children safe from the negative impact of social media.

Objectives

- To evaluate the adverse effects of social media on children with intellectual disabilities.
- To analyze possible solutions for safeguarding intellectually disabled children from the negative aspects of social media.
- To identify parents' perspectives towards the adverse effects of social media and their role in protecting children from social media adversities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present literature review was conducted on children with intellectual disabilities, their social media usage, and their negative impact. Further, parents' perspectives and available possibilities of solutions for reducing and eliminating the negative impact of social media usage on children with intellectual disabilities have also been critically reviewed by general studies. The type of review undertaken in this section is a narrative literature review wherein the existing research's data are presented in a narrative but critical manner by determining different views of different scholars.

Harrison et al. (2021) systematically reviewed research articles published between 1990-2019 and revealed the impact of social media usage by children with intellectual disabilities. The findings of this study emphasize that social media has a deep and hidden negative side for every group in society, especially children with intellectual disabilities. It is a double-edged sword for children with intellectual disabilities because of the widening cybercrime on the Internet and online platforms. However, McHugh and Howard (2017), using semi-structured interviews with ten parents further elaborated that cyberbullying and sexual and financial exploitation are significant issues and risks that are more vulnerable in the case of children with intellectual disabilities. Cyberbullying significantly affects children's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect. Apart from the above, another study by Caton and Landman (2022) conducted a focus group as well as an interview with teachers and parents and determined that students with learning and intellectual issues while using excessive social media experience bullying and victimization because of online safety issues while making relationships and friendships with unknown and fake people. The interpretation derived from the above literature data supported the assessment and inference that children with intellectual disabilities experience huge issues while using excessive social media because of the lack of prevalence of criminal activities on online platforms and engaging in fake relationships that collectively hamper the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of these children.

According to Chadwick (2019), a few children with intellectual disabilities are aware of possible solutions that can safeguard them from cyber victimization and sexual abuse on the internet. They need proper education and forthright discussions on internet safety and the publicness and permanency of social media. Glencross et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of credible studies. The findings asserted that social media could also be used to support these children and enable them to improve their self-esteem and confidence. In the contemporary world, Facebook and Twitter are widely used to educate children about cybercrime and Internet abuse. These platforms effectively support and educate children with intellectual disabilities in the right and safe ways to use social media.

Parents are highly responsible for monitoring social media usage by their children, and they should guide them about whom to follow or interact with on the Internet to avoid cyberbullying and other cybercrimes. Conversely,

Abi-Jaoude et al. (2020) also conducted a systematic review and stated that children should follow systematic rules to limit their social media usage. The interpretation of the above findings indicates that social media also positively affects children with intellectual disabilities by educating them about criminal activities raised on online platforms to keep them aware and prevent them from being exposed to the risks of being victimized by such crimes.

From different viewpoints, Dyer (2018), using secondary data analysis, found that parents play a vital role in protecting their children from the negative aspects of social media. Their perspective towards social media is important for protecting children from the adversities of social media channels. Parents believe that setting boundaries and restricting children's social media usage is the most effective way to control and measure their children's productivity, attention span, and interactive capabilities. It is suggested that parents allow the use of smartphones and browse social media until they become problematic. Another study by Manimekalai, Poulpunitha, and Nandhakumar (2020), using a cross-sectional survey by deploying an electronic questionnaire, revealed that in most cases, most cybercrimes happen with those who regularly surpass one to two hours. Another article by CHADD.org (2023) revealed that for parents to handle children with intellectual disabilities, it is necessary to pay proper attention towards information sources on online media platforms to prevent children from accessing unauthentic information accessing (CHADD.org, 2023). However, the article by LDACA.org (2023) emphasizes that parents must use lifestyle-changing techniques and behavioral therapies to deal with the academic issues experienced by their children with intellectual disabilities (LDACA.org, 2023). In this way, their trouble and academic issues might be managed effectively by reducing social media consumption through significant changes in their behavior.

Thus, it is interpreted that the role of parents in protecting children with intellectual disabilities is inevitable because positive parents are an effective strategy that parents should apply to prevent their children from being suppressed by negative aspects of social media. It was found that the literature provided valuable information and detailed elaborations regarding intellectually disabled children's social media usage and related impacts, as well as solutions to the impact. However, the literature gap is analyzed from past studies that did not provide detailed information, especially about children with intellectual disabilities and the adverse effects of social media. Previous studies have provided general information about social media, its impact on children with intellectual disabilities, and parents' role in protecting their children from the harmful effects of social media platforms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy sets a belief about how research would gather, analyze, and use data. Research philosophy is classified into three main types: positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism. Positivism was applied as a research philosophy in this study. Positivism refers to the belief that research is about conducting scientific studies from the social world. Since this research investigates the harmful effects of social media on children with intellectual disabilities and the proposed solutions and parents' perceptions based on predefined hypotheses and research questions, applying positivism can be regarded as suitable. Positivism also develops hypotheses and research questions that can be analyzed and evaluated. In addition, the research has used the survey method to collect data, and applying positivism in this regard has been considered the only practical solution because positivist philosophy is preferably applied with a quantitative method such as structured questionnaires, surveys, and statistics to ensure reliability and representativeness (Ryan, 2006).

Research Approach

This research approach sets a pathway in line with which primary research must be conducted. Inductive and deductive approaches are typically applied in two research approaches. The inductive approach is considered suitable for qualitative data, whereas the deductive approach is considered relevant to secondary data. Therefore, a deductive approach was applied in this study. A deductive approach is based on testing pre-established facts or theories by developing a hypothesis and then designing a suitable research strategy (Vogel et al., 2011). The application of the deductive approach is suitable with positivism, as it allows the formulation of a hypothesis and statistical testing of quantitative data with expected results to a considerably accepted probability level. In addition, the deductive approach requires a questionnaire to be used so that a comprehensive understanding of the data can be achieved. The survey was conducted by sharing a questionnaire with the participants; hence, the

Research Design

In this study, an exploratory research design was employed. When there have been no studies or very few studies completed in a specific field, a study would typically use an exploratory design because this lowers the possibility that it will be able to anticipate the outcome (Könings, Gruwel and Merriënboer, 2010). Through an

exploratory design, this research primarily focused on gaining familiarity and insights into the research problem in the preliminary stage of the investigation. Research that explores the adverse effects of social media on children with intellectual disabilities, as well as potential solutions to these problems, has not received much attention. This also demonstrates that this research area is in its initial stage; hence, collecting any data that may contribute to this subject area through an exploratory strategy can be considered adequate and relevant (Alam, 2002).

Data Collection Technique

The data collected in this study were obtained from primary sources using a quantitative approach. Primary data are information obtained from first-hand sources and not from any previous work. This research has considered a quantitative approach suitable because investing in the adverse effects of social media on children with intellectual disabilities can be well understood from the viewpoint of parents only. This would require a large sample population; hence, collective quantitative information or analysis and interpretation would be a more relevant and reliable approach (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). A survey method was used to collect preliminary quantitative information. The survey collects information directly from the sample population through their responses to questions. Using the survey method makes it easier to collect data from a more representative sample of the population (Kelley et al., 2003). In addition, it resulted in a more significant increase in the statistical power available to analyze the data acquired in an effective and accurate manner.

Sampling Size and Method

In this research, 200 potential candidates were approached to participate in a survey, of which 180 agreed to participate in the survey process. During the survey process, nine respondents withdrew their consent; therefore, the final results were obtained from 171 participants who were parents of children with intellectual disabilities. The selection of samples was based on a probability sampling method in which candidates were selected randomly and every potential candidate for the survey had an equal chance of being selected. Probability sampling helped ensure that the results of this study did not involve unreliable or biased results (Tansey, 2009).

Research Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study to determine the social media's impact on children who have an intellectual disability and parents' perceptions, as well as a possible solution, was a surveying questionnaire. The questionnaire is the most valuable instrument reflecting the standardized manner of gathering information from a large sample size (parents within the present study) to acquire their opinions, views, and unbiased perceptions for assisting research-centered queries. The questionnaire has also contributed towards managing survey-based quantitative data collection in a cost-efficient manner and the certainty of the findings because of fairness and quantification of the results. In the present study, the questionnaire has been utilised that comprised relevant queries and statements to be measured on a 5-point Likert Scale to understand explicit and accurate perceptions and viewpoints of the participants about the social media usage of intellectually disabled children, related impacts, and possible interventions within the setting of Saudi Arabia (Busaad&Alnaim, 2021).

Data Analysis

The process of displaying and describing data in a generalized and methodical manner is referred to as data analysis. This practice involves utilizing logical and statistical methods to obtain desired results. This study applied descriptive analysis because it has been considered the most appropriate method for analyzing primary quantitative data. When conducting data analysis using the descriptive approach, it is necessary to use both current and historical data to determine the relationships and trends between the two sets of data. As it describes trends and associations without going into more depth, descriptive analysis facilitates effectiveness while producing meaningful findings from the data (Thompson, 2009).

Reliability and Validity

In order To ensure the reliability of the research results, the principle of internal consistency was followed, in which the questionnaire results were randomly split into two halves to ensure that a strong correlation existed within these two sets of data (Hajjar, 2018). In addition, construct validity has also been applied to research, which measures the research results with pre-existing theories and knowledge and then attempts to find interrelations between them (Cane, Connor and Michie, 2012). The research instrument, that is, the survey questionnaire, was also validated by obtaining Approval No research and ethics committee (Approval No: 02-09-44). In addition, the instrument's reliability was tested through pilot testing. For instance, pilot testing in this study was conducted by sending a survey questionnaire instrument to 10 participants, and by assessing the retrieved outcomes, it is inferred that the questions are relevant, appropriate, reliable, and ethical to carry out an extended survey process with the participation of all the selected sample population. In this way, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire

instrument were appropriately checked and verified before conducting a primary data investigation for the immediate research project.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations ensure that research is conducted relatively and socially acceptable (Pardo & Siemens, 2014). Ethics were ensured by adhering to informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of the sample population. Before conducting the survey, each participant was asked to share their agreement through an online consent form. These participants were not bound to stay tied throughout the research process, as they were allowed to withdraw from the survey process at any time. In addition, the data collected from the participants were stored in a password-protected system, and none of the information that might reveal the details of the participants was enclosed. Thus, the ethical aspects of anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

RESULTS

1-The Negative Social and Economic Effects of Social Media on Children with Intellectual Disabilities

Table 1

Statement	Agreement					Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree			
It led to a decline in the internal family relations between fathers and children, and between the children themselves	86.6	4.33	0.9	96	46	21	6	2
It contributed to the isolation of the individual from his family surroundings, and the neglect of his duties and responsibilities towards his family.	86	4.3	0.9	93	46	24	7	1
It expanded the children's freedom to engage in a variety of personal relationships that may be suspicious and ambiguous	81.8	4.09	0.99	74	55	28	12	2
It increased children's desire for luxuries, which increased the family's financial burdens	84.6	4.23	0.87	79	61	25	4	2
Weakened interest in the values of time and savings for children	85	4.25	0.87	83	56	25	6	1
Established the consumption pattern at the expense of the children's production pattern	81.2	4.06	0.88	61	69	31	10	0
						2.84	4.21	0.9

The above-presented table highlights the perception of parents on the negative social and economic effects of social media on children with intellectual disabilities. The results of descriptive statistics show that the mean value of "It expanded the children's freedom to engage in a variety of personal relationships that may be suspicious and ambiguous" is 4.09. It shows that the majority of parents strongly believe that social media has increased the freedom for children to interact with others globally. It may also lead to the formation of ambiguous relations. It can further be stated that among all the variables, the average value of the variable "It led to a decline in the internal family relations between fathers and children, and between the children themselves" is the highest (4.33), which depicts that social media has increased the screen time of children with intellectual disabilities as these children find this virtual world fascinating. As children spend most of their time on their phones, the quality of their relations with their parents has declined that showing the strong negative aspect of social media. Moreover, the high standard deviation (0.9) of the variable shows that views of parents on declining internal family relations vary highly from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The data findings are further elaborated with a more detailed evaluation of secondary data which covered the information gap by revealing that social media has a strong negative effect on children carrying intellectual disabilities (Glencross et al., 2021; Caton and Landman, 2022). In this support, the secondary findings illustrated that these children tend to get exposed to suspicious social groups and networks with which they form relationships like friendships without knowing and understanding them. Thus, they experience the risk of being cheated, blackmailed and tortured by unknown people on social media platforms (Caton and Landman, 2022; Glencross et al., 2021). Thus, freedom of using social media raises risks for these children to get into unknown and suspicious relationships.

2. The Negative Educational Effects of Social Media on Children with Intellectual Disabilities

Table 2

Statement	Agreement					Standard deviation	Mean	Percentage
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Partly agree	Agree	Strongly agree			
It reduced the parents' authority to supervise and follow up on their children	0	18	39	52	62	1	3.92	78.4
It has become a source of children's moral values	1	14	41	45	70	1.01	3.99	79.8
It devoted entertainment and family compassion	3	18	32	62	56	1.04	3.88	77.6
It generally led to a decline in the educational attainment of children due to their great preoccupation with these means .	2	17	44	44	64	1.06	3.88	77.6
It especially contributed to preoccupying children from doing their homework and reviewing their lessons	1	19	33	52	66	1.04	3.95	79
Eye fatigue, back and neck pain	0	6	17	41	107	0.81	4.46	89.2
						0.09	4.01	80.26

The second table highlights the perception of parents on the negative effect of social media on the education of children with intellectual disabilities. The average value of the variable "It generally led to a decline in the educational attainment of children due to their great preoccupation with these means" is 3.88, with a standard deviation of 1.06. The variable's mean value is highly inclined towards an agreement which shows that most parents believe that children are highly occupied with social media and are less interested in studies. It can further be stated that the mean score of the variable "Eye fatigue, back and neck pain" is highest (4.46), which denotes that increased usage of social media among children with intellectual disabilities has increased the cases of back and neck pain among them which is hampering their engagement with education. The variable's standard deviation is 0.81, which depicts high variation in the opinion and views of the parents. It can further be analyzed from the results of Table 2 that the average value of "It especially contributed to preoccupying children from doing their homework and reviewing their lessons" is 3.95. The statistically high mean value of the variable indicates that social media usage among children with intellectual disabilities has lowered their educational performance, as these children do not review their lessons and do homework daily (Wright, 2017). In the present world, access to the Internet has become very easy, which has increased the use of social media applications among children. Social media has emerged as a major distraction in children's lives. Children access social media almost daily, reducing their interest in school and education (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016). The secondary data analysis further provided detailed illustrations that a huge amount of time was invested in social media activities and raised distractions to hamper the educational scenarios of children suffering from intellectual disabilities (Salmerón *et al.*, 2021). However, contradictory information is also noted with support of the social-learning theory that imitation and observation of social-media-based peers help children learn new things from them that might be in an educational context. Furthermore, the inclusivity of all social groups and the high level of interaction also raises opportunities among children to gain valuable knowledge, learning, and education in their childhood from social media usage (Chen *et al.*, 2019).

3. Systematic Rules to Ensure that Children Deal with Social Media Positively

Table 3

Statement	Agreement					Standard deviation	Mean	Percentage
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Partly agree	Agree	Strongly agree			
Refrain from spreading privacy or offending others, while using safe and positive means of social communication	1	5	17	61	87	0.82	4.33	86.6

Emphasis on reporting any risks, extortion or exploitation emanating from social media	2	3	12	43	111	0.8	4.51	90.2
Encouraging useful posting and commenting, and beneficial participation on social media pages, while developing monetary and security issues	2	3	22	65	79	0.83	4.26	85.2
Activating family dialogue and checking data, information and contents of social media	1	7	11	60	92	0.82	4.37	87.4
The need for family members to share accounts and discussions on social media, even under pseudonyms, to ensure guidance and counselling	1	11	29	56	74	0.95	4.12	82.4
Commitment to moderation and health conditions in dealing with digital means and platforms	1	3	9	70	88	0.72	4.41	88.2
Raising our health awareness to include the haste to treat and remedy any negative health impact that appears as a result of excessive dealing with it	1	1	8	62	99	0.67	4.5	90
						0.8	4.35	87.14

Descriptive statistics are also derived for the elements concerned with the statement regarding the usage of systematic rules for confirming the positive dealing of social media by children. The summary measure is intended to denote the entire statistical dataset with one value which reflects the centralised distribution of data which is 4.35 (average mean). It clearly reflects that the degree of agreement shown by the participants has been significant means that the participants perceive standard and ideal rules as valuable assets and packages for confirming children's pertinent and safe usage of social media. It is because the finding depicted that positive responses are greater than negatives due to which negatives are ignored in general causing the derivation of positive results about standard rules maintaining the adequate dealing and handling of social media through children. The outcomes derived from the study by Lin, Vijayalakshmi and Lacznik (2019) also stressed that setting standard rules regarding the consumption of media is used to lower children's screen time. For example, the activation of social media's co-surfing by parents and children's regular monitoring of their usage of social media offers parents significant knowledge regarding the activities of children which helps in moderating and restricting their children's media consumption behaviour (Lin, Vijayalakshmi and Lacznik, 2019).

Apart from this, the statement emphasizing risk reporting and exploitation emanating from social media has received the highest degree or level of approval with the mean value ($M= 4.51$). The scientific nature of this kind of data clearly infers that because of the highest achieved mean value, participants are perceived to have a high inclination towards the aspect that standard rules used to efficiently report possible risks associated with children's usage of social media as well as the exploitation arising from excessive usage of social media by them. The secondary information retrieved from the study by Kareem (2021) also indicated that standards with respect to privacy-setting and protective measures tend to prevent children using social media from the risks of cyberblackmailing, online crimes, exploitation because of making bad friends, harassment, and bargains (Kareem, 2021). Therefore, it is inferred that rules regarding parental monitoring, privacy protection, co-surfing accounts, and regular checking of social media activities play an integral role in the positive and efficient usage of social media by children with intellectual disabilities. Along with this, the secondary data also covered and filled the information gap by asserting safe and optimal utilization of social media by setting rules of limiting social media access and making children use social media for uploading educational and useful content rather than wasting time on unproductive activities (Glencross et al., 2021; Venkatesh et al., 2012). In this way, standardized rules might assist children in positively dealing with social media.

4. Employing Social Media to Achieve Academic Excellence for Children with ID

Table 4

Statement	Agreement					Standard deviation	Mean	Percentage
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Partly agree	Agree	Strongly agree			
Encouraging children to take advantage of the learning platforms available through social media.	1	3	9	52	106	0.73	4.51	90.2
investing it in improving the academic performance of children through the data, information and activities available through it	0	1	16	56	98	0.69	4.47	89.4

Motivating children to create new pages on social media to promote academic activities	1	19	34	52	65	1.04	3.94	78.8
Teachers and lecturers adopting new strategies by directing assignments or discussions on social media platforms	1	16	26	53	75	1.01	4.08	81.6
Directing children to manage their time better, by creating a balance in the use of these means in a way that does not affect their studies, and in a way, that enhances them	1	2	14	51	103	0.74	4.48	89.6
						0.84	4.29	85.92

Descriptive statistics findings are further derived from knowing the central tendency of datasets regarding the participants' perspectives on the employment of social media for attaining excellence in the academic field for children with intellectual disabilities. The dataset's central distribution denoted by a single mean score (average of all mean scores) is 4.29, which means the highest agreement and approval level of participants that social media's acceptance and deployment are valuable for children to secure academic achievements even while they have intellectual disabilities. As the positive responses are found to be more than negative ones, the negative could be eliminated. By considering only positive ones, the usefulness of social media employment for children dealing with intellectual disabilities in attaining educational progress seems scientifically and statistically valid and significant. In this context, the secondary data by Tlili et al. (2022) revealed that social media through digital technology help disabled individuals to conduct collaborative learning via social networks. In this way, improved learning outcomes can be secured by children with disability.

Furthermore, the highest mean value was achieved for the statement regarding encouraging children to have the advantages of social media learning platforms ($M = 4.51$). This data's scientific and statistical nature reflects that social media-based online learning platforms are efficient enough to contribute towards meeting the learning needs of intellectually disabled students. Because this aspect holds the highest mean score, participants' inclination has been higher towards this statement than others. The literature data from the study by Abbas et al. (2019) reflect that students on online social media platforms enable exchange of shared ideas, conveying of education-based user-generated content, co-creation of knowledge, and sharing of educational videos through diversified digital media. Overall, it is inferred that distinct social media platforms are valuable for students (intellectually disabled ones) to attain excellent education through coordinated and collaborative learning. Secondary information further stressed that by using social networks to exchange information and knowledge, conducting active learning with the support of peers and sharing ideas, children suffering, and dealing with learning disabilities might receive relevant education and progressive learning (Tlili et al., 2022; Abbas et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2019). Therefore, social media's positive usage is required to be encouraged by parents as one of the significant possible solutions for intellectually disabled children to achieve academic excellence.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze the negative effects of social media on children with intellectual disabilities. Regarding the first research objective of the study, it can be discussed from the overall findings of the research that social media has hampered the social life of children. Parents believe that their children spend more time on social media, which negatively affects their relationships with their parents and other family members (Hussain & Tait, 2015). The results further highlight that children with intellectual disabilities who use social media for a long time face issues of fatigue and neck pain, indicating that social media negatively affects their mental and physical well-being. The previously explored literature findings support the above results by stating that children with intellectual disabilities are highly exposed to cyberbullying. These cases of cyberbullying and torture hamper the mental peace of children (Borgström, Daneback and Molin, 2019). The research results indicate that social media has hampered the educational performance of children with intellectual disabilities. Currently, children are fascinated by the virtual world and are surfing the internet almost every time. They were least interested in studies and group activities conducted at school, depicting their lower engagement with education. It can also be argued that children are highly preoccupied with social media, and must focus on reviewing their lessons. The literature also states that children cheat on exams with the help of social media. Along with this, the increased sedentary behavior of children while using social media has reduced their interest in education and hampered their educational scores and performance. Moreover, it can also be stated that high cases of fraud, hacking and data phishing have been associated with the use of social media, hampering children's social life (Yussuf & Olaoye, 2021).

In line with the second objective oriented to the research, it is discussed that specific possible solutions help safeguard children with intellectual disabilities from the harmful effects of social media. For example, based on

scientific data, it has been revealed that standard and systematic rules are important for preventing excessive consumption of children on social media platforms and their exploitation. In this regard, it is illustrated with support of primary findings and secondary supportive data that parental monitoring of children's usage of social media, co-surfing of social media accounts with children, privacy setting management and restrictions for managing limited time for social media usage are important standard rules which according to the perspectives of parents, are supportive of reducing exploitation level and risk of harm to their children with intellectual disabilities (Lin, Vijayalakshmi and Laczniak, 2019; Kareem, 2021).

On the other hand, for assisting with the third objective of the research, it is discussed that parental perspectives are positive that social media might have adverse effects on their children; however, they also perceive that they might protect their children from social media advertisements by regularly checking and monitoring them (Abed & Shackelford, 2023). Further, tracking children's social media activities helps them to keep them prevent negative social media advertisements (Biswas *et al.*, 2017). The data findings also emphasized with the assistance of secondary information that parents' perspectives are positive and that social media platforms support bringing excellent education opportunities among the children through varied sources of information, collaborative learning with social networks, and exchange of ideas as well as learning materials. Thus, they also perceive positive effects, rather than entirely negative ones, of social media usage on their children with intellectual disabilities (Tili *et al.*, 2022; Abbas *et al.*, 2019). The literature findings further disclosed that parents have a supportive role in preventing children from false advertisements on social media by discussing the content of media with their children, such as offering information revealed in the news and being the mediator between social media platforms and children by co-using mediation as well as using shared media-time (Boniel-Nissim, Efrati and Dolev-Cohen, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This immediate study aimed to determine the harmful effects of social media on children with intellectual disabilities. Further, the research was also intended to determine parents' perspectives and possible solutions for responding to social media's negative implications. Concerning the primary aim and initial objective of this study, the findings concluded that Saudi children having intellectual disabilities, while making excessive usage of social media, experience health issues like neck pain, fatigue and strain in the eyes. Along with physical impact, psychological impact has also been observed in excessive social media usage by children with intellectual disabilities. Such an impact has been due to rising cybercrimes, such as cyberbullying, torture, online threats, and blackmail. The emotional impact of social media usage has also been noted from the secondary findings that children experience emotional disturbances that affect their mental well-being while getting into fake friendships and relations with unknown people on online platforms. In line with the adverse effects of social media usage, the results also concluded that children are highly influenced by the fake world of social media, which has increased their desire for luxury, thereby increasing the financial burden on parents.

Children are highly occupied with social media and Internet surfing, which has hampered their habit of revising their lessons and doing homework. Moreover, increased chatting with online friends and posting videos decreases children's academic engagement. Moreover, parents need to be fully aware of the virtual friends of their children, which increases the risk of forming ambiguous relationships while using social media. Thus, multiple negative implications of excessive engagement in social media have been observed in children with intellectual disabilities in Saudi Arabia.

The second agenda, as well as the objective of the immediate study, is to analyze the possible solutions for safeguarding or protecting children with intellectual disabilities from the negative impact of social media. In this context, one possible solution is that these children should receive proper education regarding safe and secure social media browsing. Professionals and parents should discuss cybercrimes forthrightly with children to make them aware of them. Parents can set limits and restrict social media usage to guide their children about the safest path to use social media handles. Thus, they should propose rules and conditions for the use of social media. Parents are the first caretakers of children, and they should actively interact with their children to monitor and control their children's activities on the internet and social media. Tracking children's social media usage and related data to limit their exposure to harm is another relevant solution to prevent negative impacts. In addition, encouraging children with intellectual disabilities to pose and upload applicable media content without wasting time on other activities might also be a valuable solution to protect and prevent children from the negative consequences of social media. Specific safeguarding practices and plans will be highly effective in keeping children with intellectual disabilities protected from the negative effects of social media. Disabled children should be better informed of the resources that align with their needs and assist them in performing online activities and browsing social media platforms. Intellectually disabled children should receive proper education on safe social media usage.

Furthermore, the final or third objective of the research was to determine parents' perspectives on the negative impact on children of excessive social media usage and their role in preventing children from social media adversities. In this response, the findings concluded that regarding social media usage, intellectually disabled children's parents perceive that their health and mental well-being have been drastically affected by being highly engaged in social media activities. The findings further illustrate parents' efficient role in sharing children's social media accounts to prevent them from engaging in illegal social media activities. Further, they also contribute towards limiting social-media access, suggesting their information privacy protection, guiding them on constructive posts, and raising awareness about being safeguarded from cybercrimes.

Concerning the third research objective, it is also concluded that parents' perspectives are that social media's excessive usage and exploitation nature have a negative psychological impact on children with intellectual disabilities. However, in the educational context, parents have a positive perspective that social media platforms help their children learn new things from distinct social media groups and collaborate with them by exchanging ideas and sharing materials for learning, such as videos and knowledgeable content. The parents' role in protecting their children is vital, as they use the co-surfing of media and monitor their usage of social media platforms to restrict them and prevent them from adverse effects posed by advertisements and other risks such as exploitation, fraud, and misuse.

Parents act as mediators between social media platforms and children with intellectual disabilities to keep track of their activities and prevent them from exposing them to wrong media information by discussing media content with them. In this way, parents prevent the negative impact of social media on children from wrong social media information through advertisements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that parents become actively involved in monitoring the daily activities of their children and the number of hours they spend using social media. This is mainly because parents have control and can teach their children to limit their use of social media by telling them how it impacts their intellectual wellbeing. Parental control tools can also be used for this purpose. These tools allow parents to control specific apps and websites by directly blocking them, enforcing time limits, monitoring behaviors and online discussions, and limiting the time spent on electrical devices (Venkatesh et al., 2012).

FUTURE RESEARCH

In future research, qualitative research will be conducted, in which parents of children with intellectual disabilities will be selected as participants. Parents will provide detailed information regarding their children's behavior after using social media in the long term and provide in-depth insights into any cybercrime or other abusive incidents with their children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of the Scientific Research at Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), they also extend their gratitude to all who contributed to this research, especially the families who participated in the survey, and the relevant officials who provided facilitation in the data collection procedures

Declaration: we confirm that we have read, understood and agreed to the submission guidelines, policies and submission declaration of the journal. we confirm that the manuscript is the authors' original work and the manuscript has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Availability of data and materials: The datasets used and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request

Competing interests: In this study, the author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding.

This work was supported and funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) (grant number IMSIU-DDRSP2501).

Ethical Approval: (Approval No: EC-38-02-47).

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