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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE EFFECT OF DIGITAL SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT ON STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Digital Social Entertainment and Media is a broad term that covers multiple aspects which people use to interact with each other. The aim of this study was to explore the perception of students in higher education on the effect of digital social entertainment on their well-being. The study was a qualitative, questionnaire based included close-, case-based and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was administered to 112 University students who are studying at the University of Wolverhampton. The results showed that 93% used social media and most common reason was to contact family/friends. Most students responded to social media communications after midnight and 77% said they felt relaxed after watching a period of television for more than one hour. Music was also high ranked as a mean to improve mood. Most participants indicated that they would close all social media connections when affect their emotional well-being. This study concluded that DSEM is a common source affect lives of many people to different levels and extent, however the 57% of participants had positive experience on scale of 4 and 5 out of 5. They described it as the mean to remain connected to their loved ones, as important source for their learning and motivates people to change e.g. go to the gym. Fewer participants (29%, on scale of 4 and 5 out of 5) reported negative effects due to online pressure, bullying and reduction in face-to-face communication. Further larger scale study is required to confirm these findings.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital social entertainment and media (DSEM) have many positive and negative effects on people's well-being which is explored in this project. DSEM is a broad term that covers multiple aspects, which people use to interact with each other. Many studies have been conducted to understand the role of media on people's well-being, however most were for a purpose of classification rather than effect. Most covered violence, portrayal of social norms, sex scenes and social chatting networks. Television is a main source where images and messages are shared into the world and history (Zillmann and Bryant, 2014). DSEM has become a common cause for many psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions among university students and has affected their mental well-being (Bagroy et al., 2017).A recent study by Couch *et al*., (2016) explored the perception of 142 obese people of the thin ideology through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. The participants discussed that the media portrays the thin ideology as a social norm compared to the obese.

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The authors concluded that this presentation leads to loss of confidence and self-belief, social isolation and possible mental health issues (Couch *et al*., 2016). Couch *et al*., (2016) also found another negative and dangerous effect on vulnerable groups such as teenagers and young adults leading to binge eating, anorexia, smoking, drugs, dieting and excessive exercise to reduce weight (Couch *et al*., 2016). Another study by Forsyth *et al*., (2013) included a literature review regarding the recent research about the relationship of internet and smoking on teenagers and adolescents. The study showed that especially children are affected by these imageries and it is the cause to create the habit of smoking (Forsyth, Kennedy and Malone, 2013). In another study by Bicen and Cavus (2010), 52 undergraduate students in Cyprus to identified most preferred social media website; Live Spaces and Facebook were the most preferred social media networks (Bicen and Cavus, 2010). However, the study sample size was small and had more males (90%) than females (10%) so cannot be generalised. Brodsky *et al*., (2013) studied the effect of background music as a risk factor for distraction among new young drivers (n=85) over six trips in an instrumented learners' vehicle. The results showed that all drivers had made at least 3 driving errors (Brodsky *et al*., 2013).Another study explored the effect of information seeking activities and online

social entertainment on reading literacy levels of 87,735 fifteen-year-old students. It showed that students who used the internet for information-seeking activities had better reading literacy levels compared to students who spent more time doing online social entertainment activities (Lee and Wu, 2013). A study by Lumlertgul *et al*., (2009) explored the perception of 30 students on whether using case-based scenarios in movies helps medical students to learn professionalism. The students had developed critical thinking and moral reasoning skills. However, there are other factors that could have affected students to portray professionalism that may not have been recorded (Lumlertgul *et al*., 2009).

In addition, Walworth *et al*., (2008) studied the effects of live music therapy sessions on quality of life indicators, medications administered and hospital length of stay for patients undergoing elective surgical craniotomy procedures (n=27) (Walworth *et al*., 2008). There was evidence that using patient-preferred music therapy improved their quality of life. In a recent study by Whaite *et al*., (2018) a sample of 1768 young adult aged between 19-32 were studied for Social Isolation (SI) with increased social media usage. The participants were assessed for social isolation using a 4-item Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System scale, and personality using the 10-item Big Five Inventory (Whaite *et al*., 2018). The results were that 42% had "low SI", 31% had "medium SI", and 27% had "high SI". Gerson *et al*., (2016) assessed personality traits using a Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory questionnaire and identified that different personalities can lead to eudaimonic and subjective well-being. Positive results were seen with Facebook intensity and subjective well-being whilst negative results were seen with Facebook social comparison and subjective well-being (Gerson, Plagnol and Corr, 2016). Bagroy *et al*., (2017) used the Mental Well-being Index in over 100 universities to assess patterns that can relate to university size, demographics and academic prestige. Lower Mental Well-being Index resulted in universities with more females with more diverse background (Bagroy *et al*., 2017). In addition, Valkenburg *et al*., (2006) used a structural equation modelling friend networking sites for 881 participants aged 10-19 years who had an online profile on a Dutch networking site to assess their self-esteem and well-being. The results showed indirect links between self-esteem and well-beingand better self-esteem in those who usually received positive comments than those receiving negative comments (Valkenburg *et al*., 2006). In this study the effect of DSEM on adults in higher education was explored to find out the effect on the overall well-being of the participating individuals. The study question was 'Does digital social entertainment affect students' emotional well-being in higher education?'

Aim

The aim of this project was to explore the perception of students in higher education on the effect of digital social entertainment on their well-being through administration of short questionnaires. The effect of entertainment such as television (TV) and music were also included.

Design

This study was cross-section design, questionnaire based. The questionnaire included a variety of question styles such as closed-ended (yes/no), multiple options list, case-based scenarios and open-end final question. The questionnaire was divided into two parts; part 1 (questions 1-4) to collect demographic data on gender, age, year in the course and ethnicity. Those four areas where considered to be the main variables to be used to analyse the DSEM questionnaire responses. The second part of the questionnaire (questions 5-31) asked questions relating to social media and entertainment (Appendix 1). Ethical approval was granted on 30/10/2017 for this study from the Ethics Committee at the University of Wolverhampton.

Sample

The sample size was 112 university students from all year groups and courses at University of Wolverhampton. Ethical clearance was granted before the commencement of data collection. Students who returned the completed questionnaire were considered as consented to participate. Withdrawal after returning the completed questionnaire was not possible to act upon as the questionnaire is anonymous. Participants who left the room or returned uncompleted questionnaire were not identified or penalised as participation was voluntarily. Participants were approached at the university library, classrooms, food area, study area and that were currently studying at university. Current student at the University of Wolverhampton from any gender, aged 18 years old and over, capable to consent, and understand, read and write in English were invited to enrol.

Method

The current literatures on the topic of social media, television (TV), music and other forms of entertainment effects on people's well-being were reviewed to inform methodology and the questionnaire design. Questionnaire methodology was chosen because of its low cost, simplicity and timely response. However, questionnaires do have their disadvantages such as return rate and completion.

Table 1. Sample demographics

Item	Percentage
Gender	
Male	45%
Females	54%
Did not disclose	1%
Age	
18-23 years old	70%
24-30 years old	21%
31-35 years old	3%
36 years and over	6%
Year in the course	
First	10%
Second	10%
Third	34%
Fourth	41%
Post graduate	5%
Ethnicity	
White British or European	18%
Asian/Asian British	55%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	12%
Other ethnicities(4 from Kurdish origin, 1 from Iranian origin, 5 from middle Eastern origin, 2 from Mauritian origin, 2 from Chinese origin and 3 were of mixed race; 2 White/Asian and 1 White/Black).	15%

The questionnaire was printed out as paper copies. The questionnaire was anonymous, only year of the course, age, gender and ethnicity was collected.

It was handed to students at the end of scheduled classes, at the University of Wolverhampton library, study area, food area after providing them with study information sheet inviting them to participate. The return of completed questionnaire was considered as the participants implied consent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 112 completed questionnaires. The results were analysed using Microsoft Excel™, the answers counts were entered into spreadsheet then graphed. The sample demographics can be seen in Table 1.

use computer, 1% use music player, 36% use notebook, 3% use PlayStation, 3% use other devices and 6% use no devices. The age distribution can be seen in Table 3. Only 39% used Virtual Private Network (VPN), from these 9% were males and 30% were females that used it. There were 70% participants used earphones, 8% used headphones, 8% used both headphones and earphones; and 14% did not wear headphones. The gender distribution showed 38% males and48% females used earphone/headphone. Table 4 shows more information regarding the length of time participants spent connected to social media. The 93%used social media stated that they use it to find information, to keep in contact with family and friends,

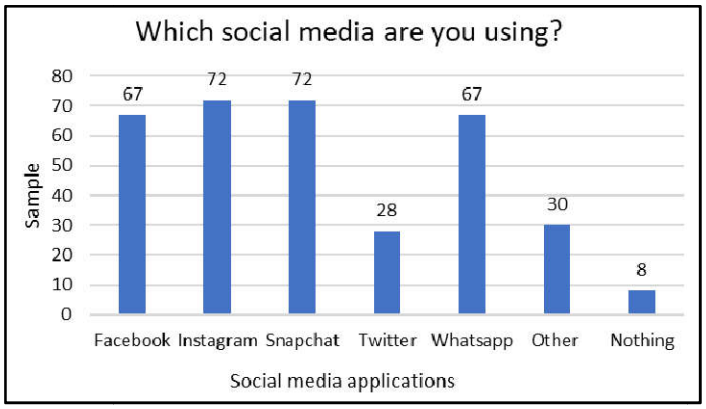

Figure 1. Social media applications

Table 1. Social mediaby variable

Variables	Facebook	Instagram	Snapchat	Twitter	Whatsapp	Other	Nothing
Year in university course							
Year 1	5%	3%	5%	2%	4%	0%	2%
Year 2	5%	7%	9%	4%	5%	0%	0%
Year 3	18%	24%	17%	10%	15%	7%	3%
Year 4	30%	27%	31%	8%	32%	18%	3%
Postgraduate	3%	4%	2%	2%	4%	2%	0%
Ethnicity							
White	12%	10%	7%	7%	5%	3%	5%
Asian/Asian British	29%	37%	42%	10%	36%	13%	3%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	8%	6%	7%	2%	9%	5%	0%
Others ethnicity	12%	12%	8%	6%	10%	6%	0%
Gender							
Male	3%	25%	24%	9%	25%	12%	3%
Female	30%	38%	40%	15%	35%	15%	5%
Did not wish to disclose gender	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Age groups							
18-23 years old	41%	48%	52%	14%	41%	15%	5%
24-30 years old	13%	12%	12%	7%	14%	8%	2%
31-35 years old	3%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
36 or more years old	3%	2%	2%	3%	5%	4%	1%

Table 2. Device use distribution by age group

Device	18-23 YO	24-30 YO	31-35 YO	>36 YO
Phone	64%	19%	3%	6%
Computer	52%	12%	2%	4%
Music Player	1%	0%	0%	0%
Notebook	28%	5%	0%	0%
Play-station	28%	5%	0%	0%
Others	3%	0%	0%	0%
Nothing	4%	2%	0%	1%

Participants were asked to list all social media applications they are using. The highest rated application were Instagram and Snapchat followed by Facebook (Figure 1). Other applications used were Viber, Messenger, LinkedIn, Skype, Pinterest, Tumblr and YouTube. Tables 2 present the social media use by gender, age, year of course and ethnicity. From the 112 participants the results show that 92%use phone, 69% to play games, to share photos and videos with others, to meet new people, when bored, professional contacts or news and entertainment. The next question aimed to see if people perceived social media to decrease their face to face communication; 21% strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 30% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed.

Table 4. Length of time participants spent connected to social media

Item	Percentage
Did not use it at all	7%
–Do not find it useful (n=7)	
–It is waste of time (n=8)	
–Did not feel safe to use them (n=6)	
–Lowers my self-esteem (n=4)	
–Does not facilitate my needs(n=4)	
–I am older than those using them (n=4)	
Less than 1 hour per day	21%
Between 2-5 hours daily	54%
More than 5 hours daily	18%

To find out if people perceived social media to be more convenient than face to face communication: 28% strongly agreed, 32% agreed, 22%disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed. Participants were asked how often people speak to family and friends using social media; 71% selected every day, 18% selected once or twice a week and 4% selected once a month and 7% selected never. Participants were asked if they have a negative experience after being engaged in social entertainment such as sad movies or disagreement with a friend. From those, 41% selected scale 3where 1 being the least effect and 5 being the most effect (Figure 2).

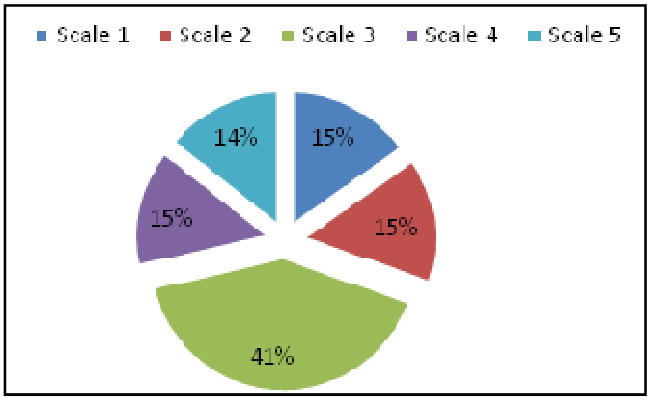

Figure 2. Negative experiences on social media

In addition, participants were asked if they have a positive experience (including comedy movies or fun conversation with a friend), how does this experience affect them on a scale 1-5 (1 being the least effect and 5 being the most effect) (Figure 3).

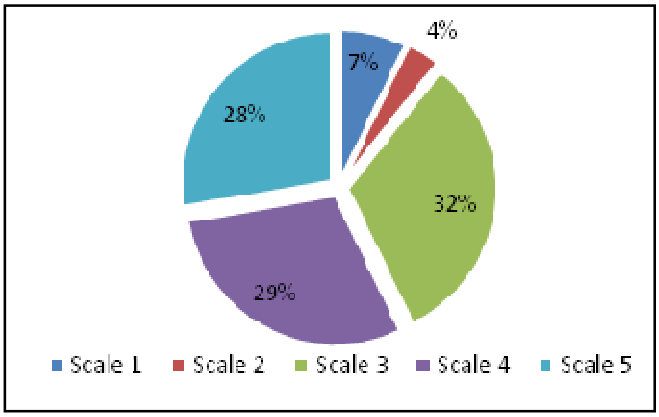

Figure 3. Positive experiences on social media

Sixty-eight percent said that social media was important for their learning and 32% said that social media does not help them with their learning (Table 5).

Table 3. Social media and learning

	18-23 YO	24-30 YO	31-35 YO	>36 YO
Important for their learning	46%	16%	2%	5%
Does not help them with their learning	24%	5%	1%	2%

To find out about what media source people use to read the news, 63% said they watch television, 32% said they read newspaper, 70% said online news, 14% said apple news, 21% said radio, 13% said "I don't read the news" and 5% used other sources. The other sources they used to read the news were social media application sites. In addition, to find the effect of television after a period watching it; 7% felt energetic, 69%said they were relaxed, 10% felt stressed and 18% said it had other effects (angry, tired, do not watch TV, depends on the show, time to study, lazy, ok, bored. Participants were asked how many hours they listen to music; 41% said less than 1 hour, 39% said 2-5 hours, 12% said more than 6 hours and 8% said never. To find out the effect of music and if it helps students study better, 46% said yes (13% White, 24% Asian/Asian British, 5% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British)and 55% said no (5% White, 31% Asian/Asian British, 7% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British). To find out if people listen to loud music while driving; 47% said yes (33% of 18-23 years old, 11% of 24-30 years old, 2% 31-35 years old, 1% >36 years old)and 54% said no(37% of 18-23 years old, 11% of 24-30 years old, 1% 31-35 years old, 5% >36 years old).

The participants were asked "if music makes them feel good, on a scale 1-5 where 1 being very little effect and 5 being better again; 17% selected scale 1, 9% scale 2, 21% scale 3, 26% scale 4and 27% scale 5 was selected. When compared, 8% of males and 9% females selected scale 1. For scale 5, it was selected by 9 males (8%) and 20 females (18%). The participants were asked "if some music makes them feel sad, on a scale 1-5 where 1 being very little effect and 5 being make you sad; 26% selected scale 1, 22% selected scale 2, 29% selected scale 3, 13% selected scale 4and 11% selected scale 5. To establish the level of the effect of social media on motivating people to go to the gym, 57% said it does motivates them (42% of 18-23 years old, 11% of 24-30 years old, 1% 31-35 years old, 4% >36 years old) and 43% said it does not(28% of 18-23 years old, 11% of 24-30 years old, 2% 31-35 years old, 3% >36 years old). The participants were asked if they up late because of social media; 30% said rarely (less than one day a month), 49% said that sometimes (one day a week) and 21% said always (every day). To find out if people respond to social media communications after midnight, it was found that 60% said yes and 40% said no. There were 23% males and 37% females said yes and 21% males and 18% females said that they would not respond after midnight. Out of those answered yes, 27% would respond every night, 11% would respond once a week, 2% would respond when urgent, 5% would respond if they are awake and 5% would rarely respond. Furthermore, the participants were asked if they had bullying ever on social media. From the 112 participants 21% said yes and 80% said no (Table 6). From the 23 people who said they were bullied on social media, they were asked if they had reported the bullying. Only four people said yes. Nineteen people did not report the bullying (5 people said they were "scared", 1 person said "nothing can be done", 1 person said they "were too young", 2 people said "it happens a lot", 3

people said "Too much effort" and 7 did not comment). Additionally, those were bullied on social media were asked if they go back in time would they report the bullying; 10 people said yes, and 13 people said no.

Table 4. Experience with bullying

	Yes	No
White	5%	13%
Asian/Asian British	13%	43%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	3%	9%
Others ethnicity	1%	14%
Male	13%	31%
Female	7%	47%

When they were asked to further explain; two people said that, "they now have better social awareness", 4 people said "they are now more educated", 1 person said "by reporting it I would feel safer", 1 person said "I am now a grown up". The 13 people who said they would not report it if went back to time because; it is "too much effort", "it does not affect me anymore", "resolved at the time", "still scared" and "do not want to share". The final question was on what the participants do if social media affected their emotional well-being. There were 12 themes identified and listed at table 7.

Table 7. Actions when emotional well-being affected by social media

Theme	Frequency
Close all social media apps	33
Reduce social media activity	8
Not use it at all	7
Do another activity	3
Seek professional advice	4
Speak to a family member/friend	6
I would probably cry	1
It never affects my well-being	3
It always affects me positively	5
This is why I do not use social media	8
Do nothing	10
I don't know, I do not have this experience	24

Conclusion

The aim of this project was to explore the perception of students in higher education on the effect of digital social entertainment on their well-being through administration of short questionnaires. The sample was pragmatic (n=112) of students from the university of Wolverhampton from different courses, demographics and year in the course. This study tested the fidelity of the questionnaire which can be used in future power calculated study. As the questionnaire was handed over at random, it was impossible to equal the number of participants in age, gender, ethnicity and year in the course groups. There were very few studies found on this topic, as such the results were compared to other studies results whenever possible. The most used social media were Instagram and Snap chat (64%). The highest Snap chat users (40%) were females whilst more males than female' students used Facebook (30%). This is supported by a study of with similar finding by Bicen and Cavus (2010), which found that Facebook was preferred by male university students. Based on age and ethnicity distribution; 52% of 18-23 years age group used Snapchat, and 37% of Asian/Asian British used Instagram where Facebook was common for White, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and other ethnicities. Smart phone were used by 92% of participants, 69% use computer, 36% use notebook and 6% did not list any devices. There were 70% used earphones, 8% used headphones, 8% used both and 14% do not use any of the two. Females (48%) used headphones more than males (38%). In the study by Mazlan *et al*., (2002) females were the highest headphone users. Out of the 112 participants 39% used VPN, 9% were male and 30% were female. This shows that females are more likely to use private networks than males. The results showed that 54% of the participants used social media between 2-5 hours a day, which agrees with Bicen and Cavus (2010) study where 65% of students used internet more than 4 hours a day.

In this study 39% of participants agreed that social media reduced their face-to-face communication, 14% (9% of females and 5% of males) were negatively affected and 27% (10% of males, 17% of female) were positively affected by their experiences on social media. Finally, 30% of participants said if DSEM affected their emotional well-being they will close all applications. There was 68% of participants believed that social media was important for their learning (46% were 18-23 years old) which agrees with Al-Shdayfatfinding (students had positive views and had a positive attitude towards social media and its use in education and academia). This finding should be considered by higher education institutions to ensure multiple modes are used to account for those who do not prefer the use of social media in leaning. Sixty percent of participants responded to communications after midnight, in this study the effect of social media on sleeping patterns was not explored, however it can be considered as limitations and should be included in future research. Reading the online news (70%) or watching the news on television (63%) was more common than listening to the radio. Also, 77% said they felt relaxed after watching a period of TV (>one hour). It has been known that TV affects psychological mood, according to the programme watched people can have different moods (Psychology Today, 2018). Inthis study participants reported that TV shows can make them feel angry, tired, emotionally dependent on the show, lazy, ok or bored. Thirty nine percent of participants said they listen to music for 2-5 hours daily which agrees with Walworth *et al*., (2008) who concluded that live music therapy sessions improved quality of life. Additionally, 54% said that they do not listen to loud music while driving which indicates good awareness of the risk and agrees with Brodsky *et al*., (2013) who concluded that all drivers had made at least 3 driving errors when listening to loud music. Those findings can be used as campaign for safe drive in higher education environment. Also, to find the effect of social media on motivating people to go to the gym, 57% said it does motivate them (all age groups). This is a beneficial finding that can be used to raise awareness of obesity risks and healthy lifestyle.

The extent of Bullying on social media was explored, 21% of participants were bullied (13% of males and 7% of females; 13% of Asian/Asian British and 7% all others ethnicities), only four out of 23 reported the bullying and most common reason was that they were scared. This indicate that better secure mean of reporting should be considered by universities to provide safe environment for students to disclose their concerns. DSEM became essential for social interactions. I can affect people's lives in a positive way; it is important source for connection, inclusion, motivation and learning. However, it does have negative effects especially when used for online bullying or when compromise people ability to have effective face-to-face communication.

There is a need for further research to provide further evidence that DSEM affects well-being in the same way as it was found in this study.

Benefits and limitations of study and further research

This study has benefits, limitations and need for further research. The main benefits of DSEM effects on well-being was analysed on students' in higher education for 112 participants. This is a benefit because having a reasonable sample means the results are more reliable. Also, all participants had filled in the questionnaire there was no missing data; so this highlights that the questionnaire was easy and straightforward for respondents to fill in and follow. The questions with qualitative responses, gave options for further comments so respondents were not limited to a choice of answers, there was an option to select multiple of answers. Also, there was almost equal numbers of males and females, so it was easy to see trends. Another trend was that both positive and negative experience on social media affects participants emotionally. A final benefit is that it has assessed TV effect on adults, because many studies have studied effect on children, so for future research perhaps more could focus on adults as well.

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