Digital Kindness and Mental Health in Afghan Instagram and Facebook Users

Dijital Nezaket ve Afgan Instagram ve Facebook Kullanıcılarında Ruh Sağlığı

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Abstract

This study explored how digital kindness relates to mental well-being, particularly in Afghanistan, focusing on active users of Instagram and Facebook, and including affect balance as a mediator. Using a descriptive-correlational approach, data were gathered from 400 active users of social media in Afghanistan, who were between 18 to 35 years old. Participants were selected purposively, and validated Persian-Dari versions of the Digital Kindness Scale, Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MH-C-SF), Positive and Negative Affect Schedule - Short Form (PANAS-SF) were administered. Using data analysis with Pearson Correlation Coefficient, it has been evident that there exists a significant positive relationship between digital kindness and mental well-being at $r = .667$, $p < .01$. Likewise, a significant positive relationship between digital kindness and affect balance has been found at $r = .581$, $p < .01$. Using Structural Equation Modeling, it has been confirmed that this significant association between digital kindness and mental well-being partially exists through the effect of affect balance, where direct effects exist between digital kindness and mental well-being at $\beta = .503$, $p < .001$, along with indirect effects at $\beta = .164$, $p < .001$. Thus, the findings indicate that digital kindness is a strong correlate of mental well-being in Afghan youth, and this association is partially explained through emotional balance.

Keywords: Digital Kindness, Mental Well-Being, Positive Emotions, Social Media, Positive Psychology.

Öz

Bu araştırma, dijital nezaketin (çevrimiçi yardımsever davranışları algılama ve gerçekleştirme) ruhsal iyi oluşla olan ilişkisini, Afganistan özelinde, Instagram ve Facebook'un aktif kullanıcıları üzerinde odaklanarak ve duygusal dengeyi (olumlu ve olumsuz duygular arasındaki fark) bir aracı değişken olarak dahil ederek incelenmiştir. Betimsel-ilişkisel bir yaklaşım kullanılarak, Afganistan'da yaşları 18 ile 35 arasında değişen 400 aktif sosyal medya kullanıcısından veri toplanmıştır. Katılımcılar amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilmiş ve Farsça-Dari diline uyarlanmış ve geçerliliği onaylanmış "Dijital Nezaket Ölçeği", "Ruh Sağlığı Sürekliliği Kısa Formu (MHC-SF)" ve "Olumlu ve Olumsuz Duygu Durumu Ölçeği Kısa Formu (PANAS-SF)" anketleri uygulanmıştır. Pearson Korelasyon Katsayısı kullanılarak yapılan veri analizi, dijital nezaket ile ruhsal iyi oluş arasında anlamlı bir pozitif ilişki olduğunu ($r = .667$, $p < .01$) ve benzer şekilde dijital nezaket ile duygusal denge arasında da anlamlı bir pozitif ilişki bulunduğunu ($r = .581$, $p < .01$) ortaya koymuştur. Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi kullanılarak, dijital nezaket ile ruhsal iyi oluş arasındaki bu anlamlı ilişkinin kısmen duygusal denge aracılığıyla gerçekleştiği doğrulanmıştır; dijital nezaketin ruhsal iyi oluş üzerinde doğrudan etkisi ($\beta = .503$, $p < .001$) olduğu gibi, duygusal denge aracılığıyla dolaylı bir etkisi ($\beta = .164$, $p < .001$) de bulunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, dijital nezaket davranışlarında bulunmanın, Afgan gençlerinin ruhsal iyi oluşuyla güçlü bir şekilde ilişkili olduğu ve bu ilişkinin kısmen duygusal denge aracılığıyla gerçekleştiği sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital Nezaket, Ruhsal İyi Oluş, Olumlu Duygular, Sosyal Medya; Pozitif Psikoloji.

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid growth of social media such as Instagram and Facebook has changed the way people communicate, show feelings, and feel mentally across societies. These social media platforms are not just for chatting, but also a place where people act in many ways—ranging from harmful actions like online bullying or mean comments, to good actions like helping others, showing care, and encouraging friends (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). Among these behaviors, a new trend called digital kindness has attracted the attention of researchers in positive psychology and online communication. Digital kindness refers to things people do online to make others feel good, such as sending nice messages, replying kindly, helping people in need, and sharing positive content (Lysenstøen et al., 2021). International studies have shown that engaging in kind behaviors, whether in the offline world or online, can improve happiness, life satisfaction, and feeling that life has purpose (Fredrickson, 2001; Rowland & Curry, 2019). According to the Fredrickson's idea that positive emotions help people grow and build personal resources, positive emotions resulting from kind behaviors broaden individuals' thought-action repertoires and strengthen their cognitive, social, and psychological resources over time(Fredrickson, 2004). Consequently, it is expected that digital kindness may also contribute to users' mental well-being through the enhancement of positive affect, social connectedness, and a sense of meaning (Zhang et al., 2022).

While social media adoption has surged among Afghans in recent years, little is known about how online behaviors like digital kindness relate to mental well-being in this distinct cultural setting. The digital world, in this sense, provides global reach in a context that is marked by stress, social pressure, and life difficulties to Afghan youth who are active users of social sites such as Instagram and Facebook. The contextual issues might influence the strength of the association between social media on mental health greater in relation to its possible risks and opportunities in relation to mental health in the said context. In this context, social media use may show a stronger correlation with individuals' mental and emotional states and in life—as both something which could make people feel anxious or isolated and something that could help other people and connect to other people online. Although there have been numerous studies in Western societies that have investigated the psychological consequences of social media use (Lutz et al., 2020; Verduyn et al., 2017), there are still limited studies in relation to developing countries like Afghanistan. Furthermore, most studies have primarily emphasized the negative consequences of social media use (e.g. Internet addiction or depression caused by social comparison) instead of its positive aspects or effects; that is, kindness online. Therefore, the present study aims to fill this scientific gap by investigating the relationship between being kind online and feeling mentally well among active Afghan users on two major platforms—Instagram and Facebook. Drawing on the theoretical framework of positive psychology and models of online prosocial behavior (Erreygers et al., 2018), this study seeks to demonstrate how simple daily acts of helping or encouraging others online can play a significant role in enhancing mental well-being within a unique social and cultural environment, such as Afghan society.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The Concept of Digital Kindness and Online Prosocial Behaviors

The concept of digital kindness involves various acts that are performed in social media platforms, which aim to make people feel good, heard, and cared for by the people they interact with within these platforms (Lysenstøen et al., 2021). Such acts involve actions like posting nice comments, posting understanding comments, especially if someone needs help, and posting good pieces. Digital kindness can be seen as

part of helpful online behaviors, a concept first introduced by Erreygers et al. (2018), which refers to things people do online to help others or make a positive difference on the community. Recent studies have shown that individuals who engage in such behaviors feel more valued, meaningful, and satisfied with life (Rowland & Curry, 2019). Indeed, online acts of kindness can work in similar ways of prosocial behaviors in the offline world—namely, strengthening social connections, increasing positive affect, and supporting mental health (Zhang et al., 2022). In the Afghan social and cultural setting, where traditional ways people support each other have weakened over time due to social problems, migration, and financial difficulties, the positive actions in digital spaces can help replace in-person interactions and as an important way to rebuild shared support and hope.

Fundamental Theories of the Study

Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

The Broaden-and-Build Theory, first proposed by Barbara Fredrickson (2001), is a an important theory in positive psychology. It says that positive emotions not only create good feelings in the moment but also help people think differently and respond better and build personal strengths over time for handling stress. Within this framework, digital kindness can create positive feelings, as users who give or receive these actions feel meaningful, connected, and valued, which helps improve mental health (Fredrickson, 2004). Research has also shown that even observing the presence of kindness online can produce similar positive emotions (Fryburg et al., 2021). The process between online kindness and the enhancement of mental well-being can thus be formally proposed as the following: Digital Kindness × Positive Emotions; Positive Emotions enhance the sense of connectivity, improving mental health over time.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) suggests that people use media to meet certain needs. In the context of social networks, this theory helps explain why people use in online interactions. Individuals may use social media to feel accepted by others, show who they are, or help other people (Whiting & Williams, 2013). From this perspective, digital kindness can be seen as a response to inner needs such as connection, caring for others, and personal growth. When these needs are met through kind and helpful actions, they have a positive effect on mental health (Morris et al., 2018).

Literature Review

In fact, a body of recent research has explored the correlation between online prosocial behaviors and mental well-being indicators, and it suggests that these activities are effective at promoting positive emotions, life satisfaction, and feelings of meaning in life for users. For instance, Erreygers et al. (2018) in a series of studies with European students, participation in online prosocial acts was associated with more meaning, life satisfaction and positive affect, and Lysenstøen et al. (2021) framed digital kindness as an independent factor of online social behavior and showed that this form of communication simultaneously increases feelings positive self-worth and mental calmness. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2022), in a Korean youth sample found that digital kindness plays a significant role in high levels of the aforementioned positive well-being dimension, and this impact is mediated by perceived social connectedness whereas Rowland and Curry's (2019) research indicated that we can increase happiness and subjective well-being through serial doing kindness behaviors between baseline and follow-ups.

These results together suggest that, in developed countries, online positivity may stand to take on a parallel psychological role as offline prosocial behaviors and have potentially significant salutogenic effects. In the Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, there is a paucity of research on L2 motivation but studies conducted so far are encouraging. For example, Morris et al. (2018) found that positive socialmedia use, including encouraging and supporting others, correlates with psychological well-being indicators, and a cross-national study by Weber et al. (2022) revealed that the effects of social media on mental health depend on the type of user interaction; social and supportive usage yields positive outcomes, while comparative or passive usage may be detrimental. In Afghanistan, there are very few direct studies conducted; nevertheless, in a survey conducted among Afghan youth, it was found that social media use has a positive correlation with a sense of belonging as well as social support; yet, overuse or exposure to negative contents leads to anxiety as well as mental fatigue. Locally conducted research also shows that cyberspaces are not only used as a recreational platform but also because they act as substitutes for a lack of physical interactions, expression of emotions, as well as the reception of social support among Afghan youth (Almaaitah & Bayraktar, 2025). Combining these findings, there are indications that online kindness is potentially linked to higher levels of positive affect states as well as mental wellness in every cultural setting. Yet, there have not been any systematic investigations conducted thus far on the direct correlation between cyberspace kindness activities and mental wellness among Afghan social media users. Thus, the present study will be conducted on the two most frequently accessed platforms in Afghanistan: Instagram and Facebook, attempting to address through empirical-statistical research whether online kindness has the potential for mental wellness in the Afghan setting.
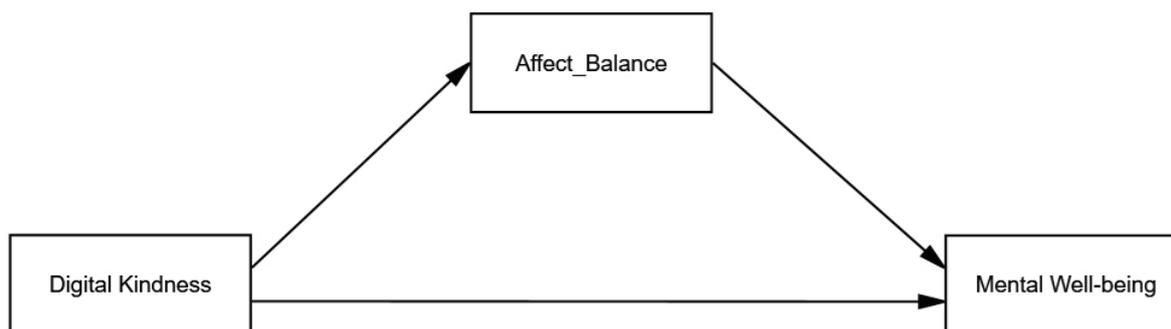

Figure 1. The Proposed Conceptual Model of the Study

Method

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational design to examine the relationship between digital kindness and mental well-being among active Afghan social media users on Instagram and Facebook. Since the aim was to identify relationships between variables without manipulation, a survey method was employed using standardized questionnaires, with data analyzed through correlation, multiple regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM) (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sampling

The target population was all active users of Instagram with around 5.3 million members, and Facebook with around 2.1 million members, all being social media active until 2025, with a dominant age group between 18 to 35 years. The targeted sample using a purposive, non-probability sampling method involved 400 participants who fulfilled the criteria for selection, which included those who have an active account in any social media account, the duration for use a minimum of one year, and they have been active in social media for a least a period of one hour per day. The required sample was determined using Cochran formula for 95% confidence levels. For the purpose of increasing representation, a focus was put on including both men and women, with a view to incorporating participants originating from various parts of Afghanistan, which included Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-i-sharif, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, Bamyan, as well as Ghazni. Given the online and purposive nature of sampling, the participants are not a statistically representative sample of all Afghan social media users, but rather represent a segment of active, accessible, and willing users.

Data Collection Instruments

Digital Kindness Scale

Digital kindness is assessed by a scale adapted from the Online Prosocial Behavior Scale (OPBS), designed by Erreygers et al. (2018). This adapted scale, called the Digital Kindness Scale, has a two-component subscale format with a total of 10 items: performing online prosocial behavior (5 items) and receiving online prosocial behavior (5 items). The scale is a 5-point frequency format, answered from 1 (Never) to 5 (Every day), providing a total possible score range from 10 to 50. The Persian-Dari version is translated by a forward and backward procedure. Its content validity is verified by three academic experts. In this study, the adaptation showed excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93).

Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF)

Participants mental health status was measured through the "Mental Health Continuum-Short Form" developed by Keyes in (2002). The scale contains a total of 14 items in which the aspects of mental health of three dimensions are included: Emotional Well-being (3 questions), Psychological well-being (6 questions), and Social well-being (5 questions). Participants were asked to what extent they have been exposed to each item in a month through a 6-point scale from "0 - Never" to "5 - Every Day." The full score of the scale is achievable through a total of 0 to 70 points. The scale has been pre-tested to be valid in the Persian-Dari version. In addition to that, its internal consistency was also high with a value of Cronbach's alpha = 0.94 in our study.

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Short Form (PANAS-SF)

The Positive and Negative Affect scale was administered using the Short Form of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, which is the PANAS-SF. This was adapted from the Original form of this scale designed and developed by Watson et al. (1988). This questionnaire comprises 10 items where 5 are related to positive affect (interested, excited, determined) and 5 to Negative Affect (upset, nervous, afraid). The questions aim to measure to what extent the respondent has/had this feeling for the last month through a Likert Item of 5 points that varies from 1 (Very slightly or not at all) to 5 (Extremely). The scores for this type of questionnaire range from 5 to 25 for both positive and Negative Affect respectively. The

Persian-Dari version of this questionnaire was kept prepared through the Forward and Back translation procedure. The content validity also was checked through this procedure. The Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was 0.86 for the positive and 0.73 for Negative Affect.

Data Collection and Analysis

The online questionnaire was powered through Google Forms. Prior to the measurement, all respondents were always informed about the purposes of the study and the guarantees of data confidentiality. Data analysis was carried out by means of SPSS 26 and AMOS 24. The analysis involved descriptive statistical analysis (means, standard deviation, frequencies), Pearson correlation to examine the correlation between variables. Multiple regression analysis to examine the extent to which digital kindness is associated with mental well-being. And Structural Equation Modeling to evaluate how well the theoretical mediating model fits. The level of significance was $p=.05$.

Ethical Considerations

The study was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Kabul University (Protocol Number: 05/ETC/FPES/2025; Date of Approval: September 29, 2025). Prior to their participation, all respondents were directed to read the first page of the online survey, wherein they were made aware of the purpose of the study, the procedures employed, and the importance of confidentiality. Respondents were also made aware of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. In sending and submitting the online questionnaire, it was deemed that implied informed consent was given. Anonymity was guaranteed through setting up the online data collection tool (Google Forms) to not collect any identifiable information (e.g., name, email, IP addresses). The collected data will only be used for scientific purposes, which will add to the knowledge base regarding online behavior and mental health in the Afghan context. There were no incentives given for the participants, and the risk was low since only psychological scales were administered.

<div align="center">

Results

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The data obtained from the sample consists of 400 completed surveys with valid data. The data are presented in Table 1. The demographic characteristics of the sample indicate that most participants were young adults (Age 18-34) (85%) with at least a bachelor's degree, which is representative of the demographic characteristics of all active social media users in Afghanistan according to DataReportal (2024). suggesting our sample has relevance to this population. The sample was balanced with 52% of respondents being female and 48% being male. Among the respondents, Instagram alone was the most preferred social media platform (40%), while 34% prefer equally the use of both, and then followed by the use of Facebook alone at 26%. The average amount of time spent on social media activity was 3.2 hours per day. Thus, the selected study participants in Afghan users are mainly constituted of young and educated individuals.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants (N=400)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	208	52.0%
	Male	192	48.0%
Age Group	18-24	177	44.2%
	25-34	207	51.8%
	35+	16	4.0%
Main Platform	Instagram Only	160	40.0%
	Facebook Only	104	26.0%
	Both equally	136	34.0%
Average Daily Use	—	3.2 hours	—

Descriptive statistics for all the study's variables are shown in Table 2. The respondents scored moderately on digital kindness ($M = 28.67$, $SD = 6.09$) and mental well-being ($M = 34.33$, $SD = 9.28$). The mean values for positive and negative emotions rated from 1–5 scales were found at 3.02 ($SD = 0.59$) and 3.15 ($SD = 0.49$) respectively. The balance obtained from the positive and negative emotions shown by the participants had a slightly negative mean value ($M = -0.14$, $SD = 1.05$); hence, it may be interpreted that there was an excess in negative emotions in the respondents' feelings. The values shown in all cases demonstrated adequate normality with values within the recommended -2 and +2 for skewness and -5 and +5 for kurtosis, respectively.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Among Variables (N=400)

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Reliability(α)
Digital Kindness	12	47	28.67	6.09	0.04	0.08	0.93
Mental Well-being	8	59	34.33	9.28	-0.12	-0.21	0.94
Positive Affect	1	4.80	3.02	0.59	-0.13	0.37	0.86
Negative Affect	1.60	4.80	3.15	0.49	0.09	0.64	0.73
Affect Balance	-3.80	3.20	-0.14	1.05	-0.13	0.58	—

Note. PA and NA measured on 1–5 scale; Affect-Balance = PA − NA.

Pearson Correlation test results showed positive and significant links between digital kindness and mental well-being, $r = .667$, $p < .01$; and between digital kindness and affect balance, $r = .581$, $p < .01$. Positive and significant links were noted between mental well-being and affect balance, $r = .575$, $p < .01$ as shown on Table 3.

Table 3. Correlations Among Variables (N=400)

| Variable	1	2	3
Digital Kindness	—		
Mental Well-being	.667**	—	
Affect_Balance	.581**	.575**	—

Note. **$p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Path analysis was conducted using AMOS 24 software to test the significance of the mediating factor of affect balance between the relationships of digital kindness and mental well-being. Good fit index of the model $\chi^2/Df = 1.85$, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98, and RMSEA = 0.04. The significance of the indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. A substantial direct association was found between digital kindness and mental well-being ($\beta = .503$, $p < .001$). Digital kindness was significantly associated with affect balance ($\beta = .581$, $p < .001$). Affect balance was positively related to mental well-being ($\beta = .282$, $p < .001$). The relationship between affect balance and mental well-being, as a mediator, was found to be substantial ($\beta = .164$, $p < .001$). The total effect of digital kindness on mental well-being was significant ($\beta = .667$, $p < .001$), while 33.7% of affect balance variance was explained, and 49.8% of mental well-being variance was explained (Table 4).

Table 4. Standardized Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Outcome	Predictor	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Affect_Balance	Digital Kindness	.581***	—	.581
Mental Well-being	Digital Kindness	.503***	.164	.667
Mental Well-being	Affect_Balance	.282***	—	.282

Note. ***$p < .001$

Figure 2 shows the final structural model with standardized coefficients to illustrate the significant paths and substantiate that the relationship between digital kindness and mental well-being is partially mediated by Affect_Balance.
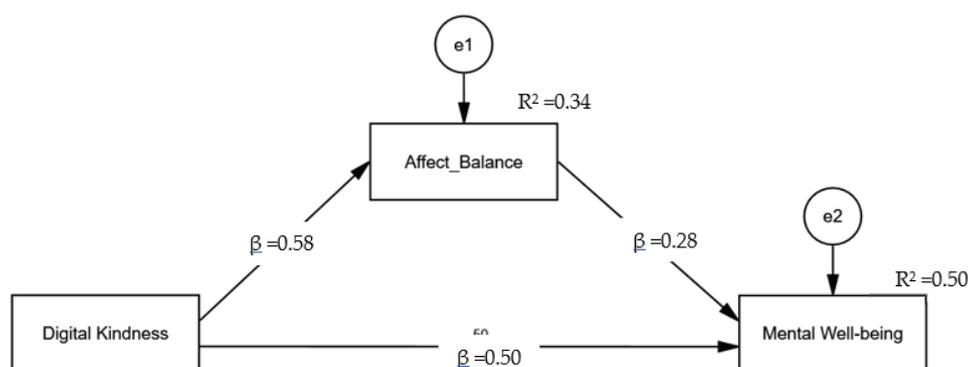
Figure 2. Structural Equation Model for the Relationship Between Digital Kindness, Affect_Balance, and Mental Well-being (Standardized Coefficients).

Discussion

The findings of this particular study will serve as potent empirical support for the strong positive correlation between kindness online and mental well-being among active Afghan social media-using populations and will thus have answered the first research question of this proposed study affirmatively. The strong positive correlation between kindness online and mental well-being (i.e., r = .667) indeed resonates and builds upon the international body of research with regard to prosocial online behaviors (Erreygers et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2022). From an epistemological point of view, such an association can be explained with reference to strong empirical support offered by Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build theory of well-being. Indeed, it can be argued that engagement in digital kindness, such as sending supportive messages or sharing encouraging information, is associated with the experience of short-term positive emotions such as warmth, satisfaction, or joy in one individual. As proposed in the theory, having such short-term positive emotions is linked to broader one's short-term thought-action-couple networks, thus encouraging one's exploration in general or social conduct in particular. Specifically, such an increase is consistent with the development of long-term constructive psychological resources such as social affiliation or robustness, both of which can be seen as substantive dimensions of well-being from an MHC-SF perspective in particular (Keyes, 2002). Indeed, direct support is offered with regard to such an assumption in the present path analysis results, suggesting an indirect relationship between digital kindness and well-being via affect balance in particular (β = .164 for the indirect relationship).

The findings also resonate with the Uses and Gratifications Theory by Katz et al. (1973): Afghan users seem to actively use social networking sites to satisfy basic psychological needs for relatedness, competence (through helping others), and meaning. In a collectivist society exhausted by decades of war, displacement, and economic adversity-where, in effect, the conventional structures of support are so often torn apart-digital spaces become critical alternative sites for social contact. Acts of kindness online directly align with the fulfillment of these needs for altruism and social incorporation, and correlate with increased life satisfaction and psychological well-being, as indeed has been seen in other collectivist cultures (Morris et al., 2018). One of the more intriguing findings that touched upon a particular nuance had to do with the emotional landscape of the participants. Unlike previous assumptions that suggest a bipolar range on a spectrum between positive or negative emotional experience within relation to human beings, it appeared that this particular group of participants evidenced a concurrent experience of both moderately-to-highly positive affect (M=3.02) and moderately-to-highly negative affect (M=3.15), leading to a somewhat negative experience balance score for this group (-.14). This co-activation may suggest that Afghan youth experience a complex emotional landscape that possibly comes by virtue of navigating a world that has been experiencing a great degree of socio-political upheaval during their lifetime. It may suggest that an experience that involves a great degree of hope, feeling connected to one another, or feeling joyful may co-occur with a certain underlying or hidden anxiety or fear experience. This analysis further underlines the principle of "quality over quantity" in social media use. Whereas the frequency of daily use was negligibly related to well-being directly, such quality of interaction, as manifested in the engagement with digital kindness, showed a strong association with well-being. This dichotomy supports the differential susceptibility model of media effects, Valkenburg & Peter (2013), which says that not all psychological effects of social media use are the same but rather depend critically on the nature of the user's activities. Proactive, other-focused use is well-being enhancing, whereas passive, comparative, or conflict-oriented use is likely to be stress-enhancing-a dynamic particularly salient in a fragile context.

From a cultural point of view, these studies can be considered highly important, especially if social interaction in Afghanistan is encompassed. In this war-torn nation, there is a scarcity of traditional psychosocial help. Digital kind gestures go beyond directions of appropriate online conduct. Digital kind gestures may represent a form of prosocial engagement with potential value in an otherwise challenging social interpersonal space. Such an intervention could be encouraged within digital literacy initiatives, especially if centered upon prosocial initiatives aimed at youth.

Conclusions

This study offers strong empirical validation for the role of digital kindness as an important positive correlate of mental well-being for the younger segment of Afghan social media users of Instagram and Facebook. The study's results verify and expand the applicability of positive psychology constructs to the digital behavior of a population that is non-Western and living within a state of crisis in the region. Most notably, the present study demonstrated the partial mediation effect of affect balance for the relationship between digital kindness and well-being, confirming the proposed process based upon Broaden-and-Build Theory by Fredrickson to explain the observed relationship between digital kindness behavior and well-being outcomes through the balance of positive affective states with negative states. A secondary research theme, vital to the study, has also been brought to light. This is in terms of the co-occurrence of moderately high   and negative affect in the participants. This complex emotional state may therefore imply that for young Afghans, well-being in the face of chronic adversity is not just the opposite of negative affect, but is in fact intertwined in a complex fashion with anxiety/stress, and experiences of connection/happiness/good deeds facilitated by the internet.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Examine the subjective dimensions, motivations, and cultural nuances of digital kindness in Afghanistan by using the framework of mixed methodologies, case studies, and/or digital ethnography research.

2. Conduct longitudinal research to investigate issues of temporal priority and long-term consequences of digital kindness.

3. Explore other mediation and modulation variables, such as perceived social support, experience of meaning, offline prosocial behavior, and trauma-related content.

4. Examine the strong positive correlation with negative affect in more detail. Research should assess the degree to which this is due to the artifact, emotional granularity, and a certain style of coping.

5. Include other popular social platforms (e.g., TikTok, Telegram), and include other demographics such as various age levels, rural areas, and the Afghan diaspora, which would improve generalization.

6. Design and test experiments to test their association with potential improvements in levels of well-being and thwarting online negativity.

Limitations

1. Cross-Sectional Design: The study design does not lend itself to making causal conclusions. The associations are correct, both logically and conceptually.

2. Self-Report Bias: There is the possible threat of bias in self-reported data in terms of common method variance and/or social desirability bias.

3. Sampling Limitations: The study employed an online, purposive, non-probability sampling method. Therefore, the participants are not a statistically representative sample of all Afghan social media users, but rather represent a segment of active, accessible, and willing users. While attempts were made to include participants from various regions, it is likely that individuals with limited internet access, lower digital literacy, or those residing in highly insecure areas are underrepresented. Consequently, the findings should be generalized to the broader population with caution.

4. Platform Specificity: The results only apply to Instagram and Facebook. Behavior and impact could vary on other platforms, especially those that are newer or more private.

5. Cultural Specificity of Constructs: Though there was translation and validation of scales, the construct knowledge of "kindness" and "well-being" might have culturally distinct associations within Afghanistan's ethnically and linguistically varied communities.

Declarations

Complaints: editor@intwellbeing.com

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