

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON HEALTH BEHAVIORS AND LIFESTYLE CHOICES OF ADOLESCENTS IN THE UAE

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of adolescents' daily lives, influencing their health behaviors and lifestyle choices. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is among the countries where social media is widely used by adolescents. However, little research has been conducted on the impact of social media on their health behaviors and lifestyle choices. Understanding the role of social media in shaping adolescents' health behaviors and lifestyle choices is crucial for developing effective interventions to promote healthy behaviors and prevent health problems among UAE adolescents.

AIM

To evaluate the effects of social media usage on adolescents health behaviors and lifestyle choices in the United Arab Emirates

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METHODOLOGY

- A cross-sectional study was performed among adolescents of ages 13 to 19 throughout the UAE schools who are exposed to social media.
- The study was conducted through an online self-administered questionnaire composed of 31 questions, and was available in two languages.
- The inclusion criteria were English and Arabic-speaking schools only.
- Data analysis was performed using SPSS 28.

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RESULTS

- This study included a total of 596 participants with 522 having access to social media. (Figure 1)
- The study found that more than half of the participants felt that social media had a positive impact on their social relations and hobbies. However, a minority of the participants found that social media negatively affected their academic performance and physical activity. The most negative impact was on the adolescents' sleep, with 60.5% of participants reporting negative effects. (Figure 2)
- The chart shows that entertainment had the highest influence on 68% of the population, followed by fitness with 48.3%, beauty with 46.6%, and education with the least relative influence at 43.3%. (Figure 3)

FIGURE 1
PERCENTAGE OF ADOLESCENTS WITH ACCESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA

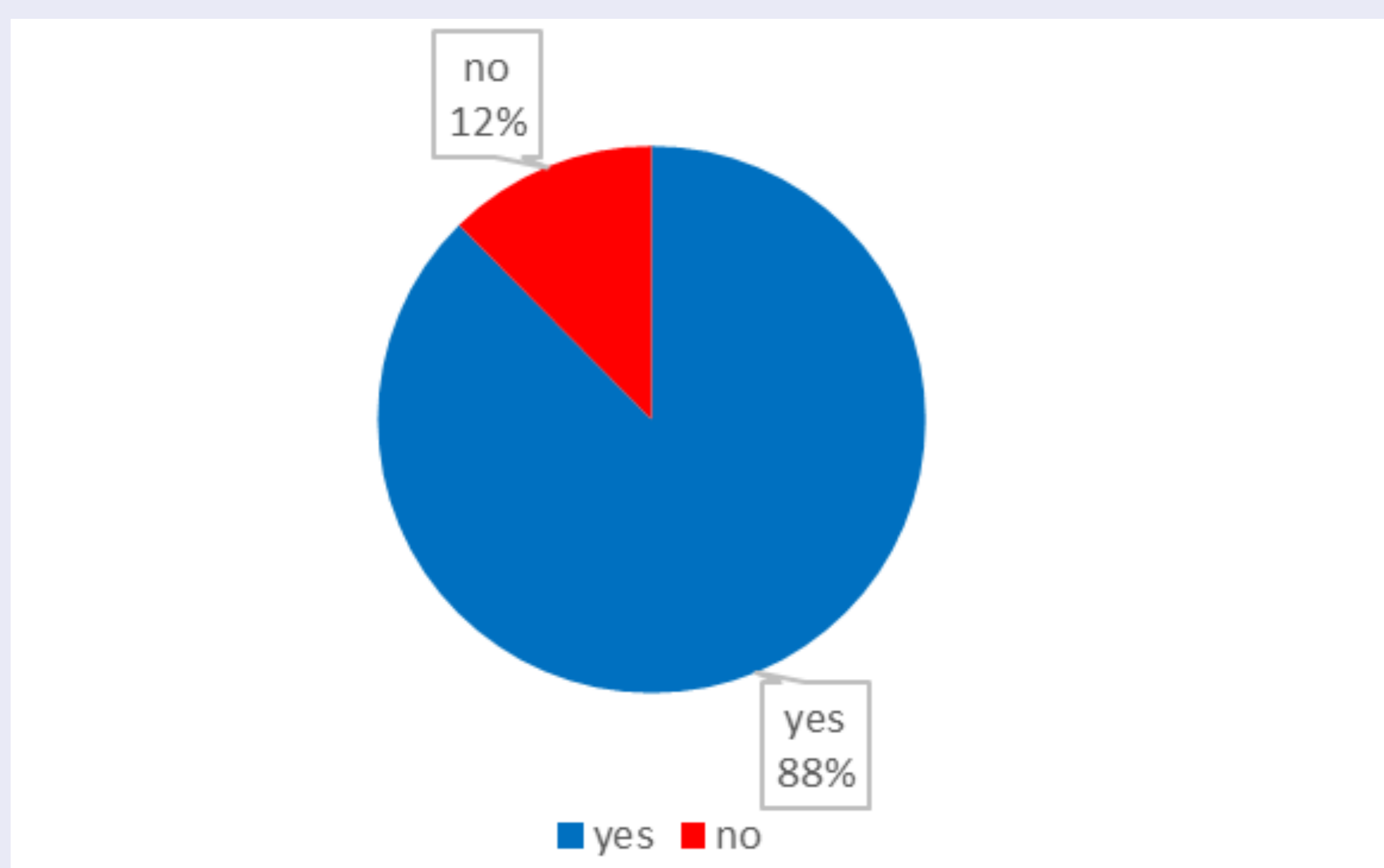


FIGURE 2

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON HEALTH BEHAVIORS

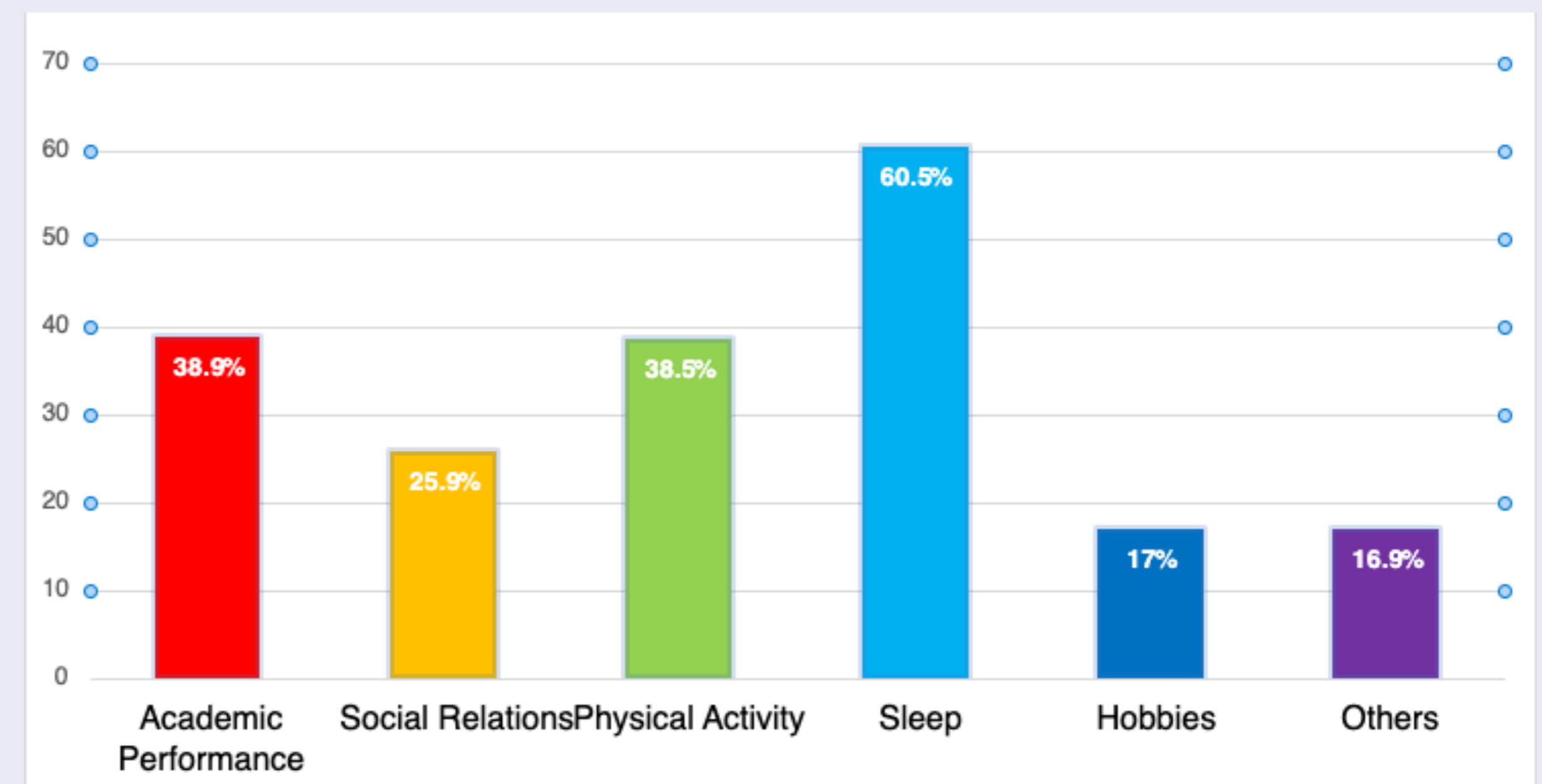
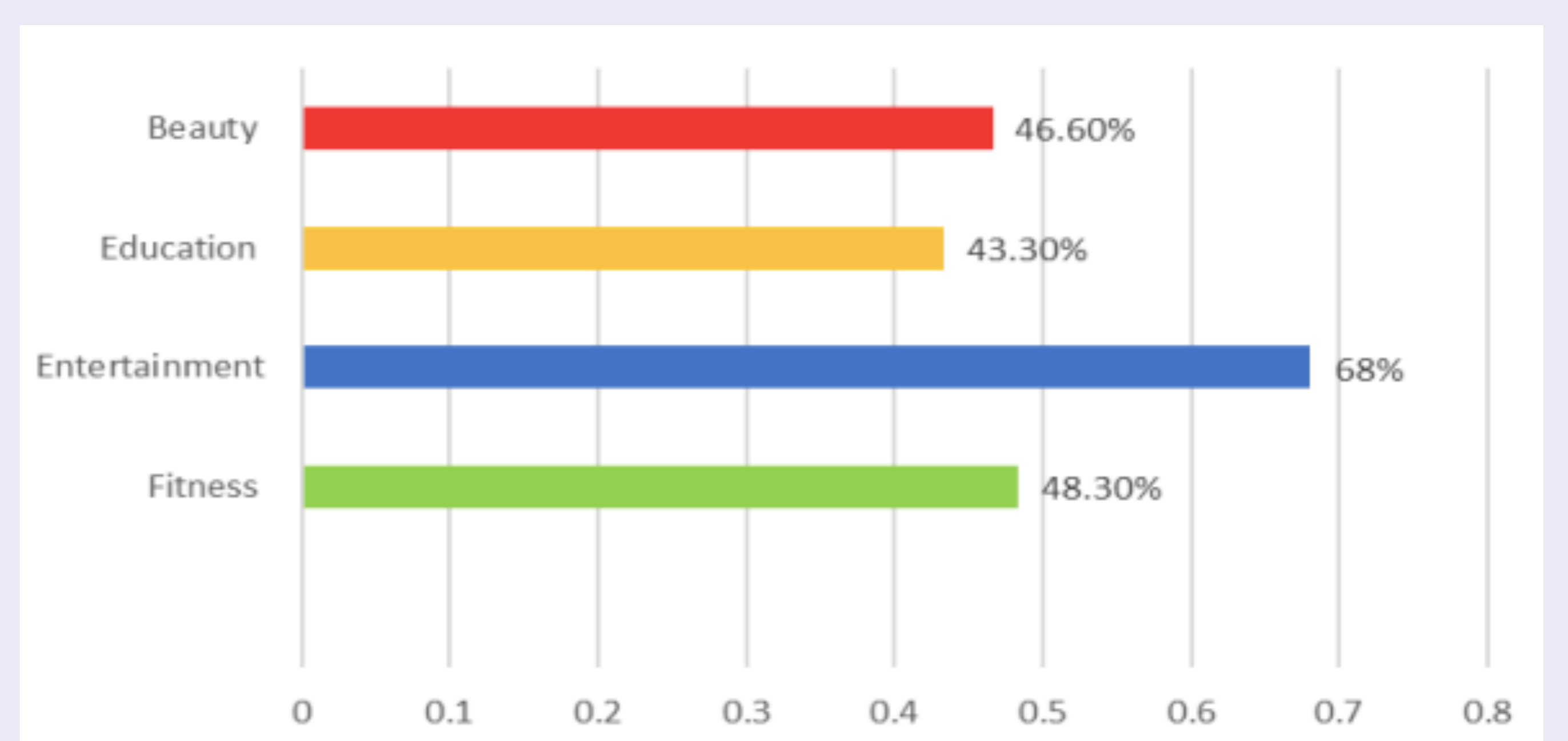


FIGURE 3

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON LIFESTYLE CHOICES



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DISCUSSION

- Adolescents in their early teenage years tend to view social media influencers as their role models and compare themselves to them.
- Parental monitoring plays a critical role in guiding adolescents' social media usage.
- Male adolescents are less likely to compare themselves to social media influencers than females, indicating a gender difference in the impact of social media.
- Adolescents who report negative effects of social media usage are more likely to procrastinate and experience poorer academic performance than their peers who use social media positively.
- Parents who do not monitor their children's social media use are less likely to allow their younger siblings access to social media, having experienced the negative consequences of social media firsthand.
- There is a need to raise awareness on the positive and negative implications of social media usage to promote safe and responsible social media use.
- Parental monitoring and guidance are crucial in navigating adolescents' social media use during young adulthood.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is imperative for parents to understand the harmful effects social media has on their children, both physically and mentally. We, therefore, recommend that schools provide this education for parents and their children.
- There is a need for more research on social media's negative effects and the appropriate age for exposing children to it.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study confirms that social media exposure has a greater impact on adolescents' health behaviors and lifestyle choices than limited exposure. Therefore, it is important to monitor and educate adolescents about social media to prevent its misuse.

REFERENCES

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