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Digital Reminiscence Engagement and Psycho-Social Consequences among Generation Z

Mishaal Fatima

Student, Department of Sociology

University of Gujrat, Pakistan

Email: mishaalf40@gmail.com

Ummel Baneen

Associate Lecturer, Department of Sociology

University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan

Email: ummel.baneen@uog.edu.pk

Zeeshan Arif

Student, Department of Sociology

University of Gujrat, Pakistan

Email: Zeeshanarif192004@gmail.com

Abstract

Digital reminiscence engagement fluctuates the nostalgic feelings and the moods among the individuals using digital media. The study used quantitative research design. Digital reminiscence engagement, social consequences, and psychological consequences were the study variables measured on 4-point likert scale to collect data. Sample was drawn by using sample size determining formula ($n=300$) and data was collected through the structured questionnaire. The study employed Kendall's tau-b correlation and multiple linear regression to test the relationship between digital reminiscence and psycho-social outcomes. Results revealed that digital reminiscence engagement is a significant positive predictor of both psychological consequences ($\beta = .419$, $p < .001$) and social consequences ($\beta = .488$, $p < .001$). The findings highlighted that algorithmically surfaced nostalgia, far from offering neutral emotional comfort, functions as a potent psycho-social trigger with measurable effects on Gen Z's mental health and social behavior.

Keywords: Digital Reminiscence, Engagement, Generation Z, Data Sharing, Psycho-social Consequences, Social media, Algorithmic Memory

Introduction

Digital reminiscence engagement is a new valuable dimension of online experiences because it combines both the sense of nostalgia with social comparison in a manner that enhance mood or enhance the sense of dissatisfaction. It defined as the re-experience and engagement with past material of a person, including old photos, memories, or throwback posts posted on social networks (Xu et al., 2023). Reminiscing past events bring comfort and positive feelings to individuals, yet, this activity also may cause negative comparisons of past and present situations and affect emotional well-being (Jungselius and Weilenmann, 2023). The latter groups generation z aged 1997-2012 and digital natives who have been brought up on phones and social media and spend more time interacting with these patterns than any other generation before them and hence is uniquely debilitating in the university attend in that it directly contributes to the self-destructive psych-social well-being, relationships, and overall mental health that they



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walk into the adult realm (Dimock, 2019). Upon becoming universal, said digital forces are altering how young people compare themselves and their standing in the world, and it is increasingly becoming necessary to understand better their results not only in a timely but also in a necessary way ((Taylor & Armes, 2024). Digital reminiscence engagement, use of algorithmic trigger engagement with one's previous digital memories (Uhls et al., 2017). The scrolling of old information has been made possible through digital products like memories or on this day, usually causing reminiscence that could be an emotional buffer to daily perturbations, feelings of depression (Jang et al.). Yet, social comparison displays these nostalgic thoughts such as comparing one current self to one idealized version of the self in the past or the success of a friend after that psychological impact that swings precipitously, to either up happiness or descent into suffering (Arenz et al., 2023). The platformization of memory has altered the opportunities of self-presentation of generation z. Algorithms rediscover what is or was previously chosen by previous generations, whereas gen z lives with an effect of an explicitly online phenomenon known as algorithmic serendipity wherein digital platforms, at their own whim, are known to represent what they choose to remember and evaluate (Van Dijck, 2013). Such algorithmic triggering is not just such that they offer the passive storage functions of archives in which they are part of narrative. An algorithm that places a highly engaging (and visual), memory of three years ago on the top of the user feed, provides some temporal context (Jacobsen, 2024). Notably, recent reports point to dysfunctional social media behaviors of reminiscence that lead to the formation of a self-confirming loop in which the initial nostalgia turns into dissatisfaction even faster when one spends more than three hours daily on social media and when cultural ideals of social success impose additional pressure (Arunkumar & Subramani, 2025).

Review of Literature

Algorithms to curate content (archived photos and retrospective posts) enable digital reminiscence, a process by which persons revisit and re-experience past events. This is a distinctive feature of contemporary psychological experience, which has serious and complicated implications on the psycho-social health of generation z, unlike the traditional forms of reminiscence, digital reminiscence is not an individual practice, but rather a social and comparative one. The effects that described the terms of perceived self-continuity in the sense of a continuous linear relationship between the past and present selves of an individual. Lee-Won et al. (2023) established that a sense of self-continuity is positively linked to nostalgic engagement on social media, which entails engaging with older social media posts. This, in its turn, foretells better emotional well-being. Their experiment, involving the U.S. and South Korea revealed the similarity of their findings in both national settings, which proved the presence digital nostalgia have a positive impact on psychological outcomes. In addition, Jain et al. (2025) coined the term second hand digital nostalgia, which is enabled by such platforms as YouTube, Netflix reboots, and TikTok aesthetics. A number of social and cultural factors, such as peer visibility and social norms, influence this form of vicarious nostalgia. Although historically nostalgia has been regarded as a method of stress relief (with its application making about 63 percent of generation z consumers experience less anxiety), that in case of social comparison, nostalgia actually leads to a shortage of self-perceived achievement, instead of providing psychological comfort. Cho et al. (2024) also examined this dynamic, revealing that social media nostalgia may promote self-continuity and increase the level of emotional well-being when consumers use the services like on this day or retro posts where users reconnect with the past positive



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moments. Nevertheless, this emotional material has the potential to generate further social comparisons because users will evaluate their present to their past, or even construct romanticized images of the past, which contrasts with a perceived inadequately present. Actually, Valkenburg and Peter (2011) proposed an integrated perspective on the role played by the online media in terms of influence, which they referred to as a two-sided sword on the growth of adolescents. On the one hand, online communication offers an opportunity to create long-distance friendship and to learn the unspoken part of yourself, on the other hand, it preconditions the development of unhealthy social comparisons and anxiety, particularly due to the over-self-disclosure. This framework plays an essential role in the comprehension of how digital reminiscence may act as both a connective and a comparative stressor at the same time. In addition, this study conducted by Verduyn et al. (2017) in which another significant difference by exploring passive consumption as applied to digital reminiscence. Passive consumption refers to browsing through nostalgic or historical media without interactivity, and is linked to much poorer long-term well-being than active use. By passively re-visiting memories that are not mutually social-supported, users make themselves feel lonelier, and less connected. Likewise, Butcher and Toh (2025) discovered that the kind of past engagements that young users experience in terms of digital memory feature, old messages or photos, cause considerable identity reflection. This process may enhance the existing perceptions of inadequacy or loss especially when used with social comparison. Generation Z is particularly susceptible to this phenomenon, and more than any other generation, their history of life is captured and stored in databases and constantly reappeared in online sources. Continuing on this dynamic, Appel et al. (2016) investigated the notion of Facebook envy a widespread emotional response to situations in which the user is comparing past accomplishments with the perceived accomplishment of others on social media. They showed in their study that re-experiencing their previous accomplishments, in a social environment where they are contrasted with more recent successes of others, does not result in happiness or contentment. Rather, it causes sadness and withdrawal of emotions, both of which result in a drop in life satisfaction in the long term.

Data Methods

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design. The target population comprised undergraduate Generation Z students enrolled at the University of Gujrat, Hafiz Hayat Campus, across four departments of faculty of sciences and social sciences (Sociology, Education, Botany, and Chemistry). Using the Taro Yamane formula ($n = N/1+N(e)^2$, $e=0.05$), a total sample of 300 students was derived. Proportionate stratified random sampling was applied within each department, yielding department-level samples. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire comprising 72 items across six sections, including socio-demographic background and four main variable scales rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 4=Strongly Agree). A pre-test on 50 students outside the sampling frame confirmed instrument clarity. Overall reliability was Cronbach's Alpha = 0.822, with individual scale alphas ranging from 0.704–0.769, all meeting the ≥ 0.70 threshold. Data were analyzed in SPSS version 21 using descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests, Kendall's tau-b non-parametric correlation, and multiple linear regression.



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Results and Discussion

Table 01 Descriptive Statistics of Digital Reminiscence Engagement, Psychological Consequences and Social Consequences

Variables	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Digital reminiscence engagement	48.00	20.00	68.00	47.4800	7.40218	54.792
Frequency of engagement	18.00	6.00	24.00	15.5500	3.45359	11.927
Digital data sharing	18.00	6.00	24.00	15.7033	2.95371	8.724
Trigger for reminiscence	17.00	7.00	24.00	16.2267	2.91151	8.477
Psychological consequences	42.00	27.00	69.00	47.2700	6.81262	46.412
Anxiety	18.00	6.00	24.00	15.6333	3.42413	11.725
Self-esteem	17.00	6.00	23.00	15.4167	3.04202	9.254
Life satisfaction	18.00	6.00	24.00	16.2200	3.14078	9.864
Social consequences	41.00	29.00	70.00	48.6667	6.60158	43.581
Perceived social support	18.00	6.00	24.00	16.4733	3.15422	9.949
Online social connectedness	18.00	6.00	24.00	16.0233	2.95724	8.745
Offline social avoidance	16.00	7.00	23.00	16.1700	2.74217	7.519

The results show that the range of the digital reminiscence engagement is 48.00, minimum value is 20.00 and the maximum value is 68.00 with a mean value of 47.4800, standard deviation of 7.40218 and variance of 54.792. Similarly, the range of frequency of engagement is 18.00, minimum of 6.00, maximum of 24.00, mean of 15.5500, standard deviation of 3.45359 and a variance of 11.927. The results also reveal that the



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range of digital data sharing is 18.00, minimum value is 6.00 and maximum value is 24.00, mean value is 15.7033, standard deviation value is 2.95371 with a variance of 8.724. In line with this, trigger for reminiscence range has a range value of 17.00 and a minimum of 7.00 with a maximum of 24.00 and a mean of 16.2267 with a standard deviation of 2.91151 and a variance of 8.477. In terms of psychological consequences, the values show its range of 42.00, its minimum of value of 27.00 and its maximum value of 69.00, the mean is 47.2700, standard deviation of 6.81262 and variance of 46.412. Specifically, the range for anxiety is 18.00, minimum is 6.00, and maximum is 24.00, with a mean of 15.6333, standard deviation of 3.42413, and variance of 11.725. The findings show that self-esteem has a range of 17.00, minimum of 6.00, maximum of 23.00, a mean of 15.4167, standard deviation of 3.04202, and variance of 9.254. For life satisfaction, the range is 18.00, minimum is 6.00, and maximum is 24.00, with a mean value of 16.2200, standard deviation of 3.14078, and variance of 9.864. Lastly, the results reveal how the spectrum of social consequences is 41.00 with minimum and maximum of 29.00 and 70.00 respectively, having a mean of 48.6667, standard deviation of 6.60158 and 43.581 variance. The results of the Perceived social support are within the range of 18.00, minimum of 6.00, maximum of 24.00, a mean of 16.4733, SD of 3.154222 and variance of 9.949. Likewise, the minimum Online connectedness is 6.00, standard deviation is 2.95724, maximum is 24.00, mean is 16.0233 and the variance is 8.745. Thus, the results show that the minimum and the maximum value of the range of the Offline social avoidance is 16.00 and 23.00 respectively with a mean of 16.1700, standard Deviation of 2.74217 and the variance.

Table 02 Kendall's tau-b Correlation Among all Variables

Variables	Digital Reminiscence Engagement	Psychological Consequences	Social Consequences
Digital Reminiscence Engagement	1		
Psychological Consequences	.434**	1	
Social Consequences	.384**	.405 **	1

Relationship between Digital Reminiscence Engagement and Psychological Consequences ($\tau=.434$) taken collectively showed that both active comparison and involvement of recollection of digital behavior has a quantitative impact on the change in an internal psychological state of a user. The fact that social consequences are correlated with the psychological consequences ($\tau=.405$) shows that these effects are related to each other. This moderate to strong association supports the concept of a spreading effects of internal psychological tension where tension is identifiably linked with social friction or adverse social outcomes. This indicates that digital, involvement has complex effects, and it affects inter-personal relations and mental health of a person simultaneously. The results are that the online environment is powerful and interwoven. These relationships have a constant meaning, and this repeated nature implies that there is a complex feedback loop, although, correlation does not imply causality. It appears that digital behaviors, especially digital reminiscence causes a cascade of psychological anxiety which is further translated into social life. To the benefit of this study, these



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findings emphasize the notion that the impacts of using digital media are not independent but rather a collection of interrelated psychological impacts that require an approach to digital health that is holist.

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting of Digital reminiscence engagement and Psychological Consequences of the Gen Z

Table 03 Regression Analysis of Psychological Consequences of the Gen Z

Predictors	Unstandardized coefficient B	Std. error	Standardized coefficient Beta	t	Sig.
Digital reminiscence engagement	.386	.046	.419	8.499	< .001
(Constant)	12.089	2.139		5.651	< .001

R= .694^a, R Square= .482, Adjust R Square= .479, std. Error of the Estimate =4.91866, df= 2, F = 138.297

The results of a multiple regression analysis indicate that the selected digital interaction is also significantly correlated with psychological outcomes in the gen z sample. The R² of .482 indicate that 48.2 holdings the variance of psychological consequences could be clarified by digital reminiscence engagement which implies that model will be rather foretelling, and the predictor has been found to be significantly related to psychological consequences (p =.001). the relative size of the standardized regression coefficients indicates that model is to a greater degree predictive and the predictor. In general, the finding substantiates the significance of digital interactions as a primary predictor of psychological aftermaths on gen z. This investigation is a piece of quantitative evidence that used in further research and development of a digital well-being model.

Table 04 Regression Analysis of Digital reminiscence engagement and Social Consequences of the Gen Z

Predictors	Unstandardized coefficient B	Std. error	Standardized coefficient Beta	f	Sig.
Digital reminiscence engagement	.400	.052	.488	7.670	<.001
(Constant)	23.857	2.440		9.778	<.001

R = .532, R Square= .283, Adjust R Square= .278, std. Error of the Estimate =5.610, df= 2, F = 58.506

The regression analyses suggest that digital engagement behaviors have a considerable impact on the well-being of the gen z population, but their effect on the well-being of the population differs by domain. In terms of psychological effects, both social comparison and digital reminiscence engagement are important positive predictors, implying that the often use of those behaviors correlates with a higher psychological effect. Conversely, considering social consequences, digital reminiscence engagement was found to be statistically significant as the only origin of this variable was a highly significant positive predictor of social consequences (β =.488, p <.001). This implies that the interaction with



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electronic memories is a main influencing factor affecting the social implications of this generation. Social Comparison is not so due to the fact that in this particular model, the Social Comparison was determined as not being statistically significant ($p = .24$ which is larger than the normal level of .05).

Table 05 Chi-Square test of digital reminiscence engagement and psychological consequences

	Value	df	Asymptotic significant
Person Chi-square	2437.992	1443	<.001
Likelihood ratio	750.772	1443	1.000
Linear by linear association	114.954	1	<.001

A Pearson chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between digital reminiscence engagement and psychological consequences. The analysis revealed a statistically significant association between the two variables, $X^2(1443) = 2437.99$, $p < .001$, $N=300$. These result suggest that levels of digital reminiscence engagement are significantly related to psychological consequences and the null hypothesis of independence is rejected.

Table 06 Chi-Square Test of Digital Reminiscence Engagement and Social Consequences

	Value	df	Asymptotic significant
Person Chi-Square	2185.693	1258	< .001
Likelihood ratio	80.771	1	< .001
Linear by linear association			

A Pearson Chi-Square test of independence was executed to evaluate the relationship between digital reminiscence engagement and social consequences ($N = 300$). The analysis indicated a statistically significant association between the two variables, $X^2(1258) = 2185.69$, $p < .001$. Concurrently, the linear-by-linear association test revealed a strong, significant linear trend between digital reminiscence engagement and its social consequences, $X^2(1) = 80.77$, $p < .001$.

However, interpretation of the primary Pearson statistic requires caution due to a violation of the test's distributional assumptions 100.0% of the cross-tabulation cells (1,330 cells) obtained an expected count of less than 5, reflecting a highly sparse data matrix due to the large number of categories ($df = 1258$).

Conclusion

The digital past is fluidity, a living aspect of social reality of the user nowadays, as opposed to a stagnant account. This paper has demonstrated that the design of modern social media platforms is not only enabling our memories, but the architecture is also organizing, showing and monetizing them, in a manner that may have a dramatic effect on the psycho-social health of Generation Z.

The study illustrates that digital recollections cease to be neutral and solely nostalgic. Through platform-mediated reminiscence, students easily fall into the trap of doing the time comparison when comparing the present reality with past ones of themselves, which have been filtered and shared with the endorsement of others. Reliable effect shown by the statistics analysis ($R^2=.482$) shows that the two behaviors are not occurring in a vacuum, but rather, they are compounding feedback loop of dissatisfaction. As the students become easier to the influence of their online life and the success of their counterparts simultaneously, the mental health influence of this phenomenon felt in a



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declining mental health.

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