

# The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health: An Analysis of the Effects on Anxiety, Depression, and Sleep Disorders in Adolescents and Young Adults

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## ABSTRACT

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, especially for adolescents and young adults. While it offers various benefits, such as ease of communication and access to information, social media use is also associated with negative impacts on mental health. This study aims to analyze the influence of social media on psychological well-being, particularly in the aspects of anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders. The method used in this research is a literature study by reviewing various previous studies related to the impact of social media on mental health. The results showed that factors such as social comparison, cyberbullying, social media addiction, and fear of missing out (FoMO) contribute to increased levels of anxiety and depression in users. Excessive screen exposure also negatively affects sleep quality, which in turn worsens the overall state of mental health. These findings emphasize the need for greater awareness to use social media wisely. Various mitigation strategies, such as digital literacy, limits on the use of social media, and stricter regulation of digital platforms, can help reduce these negative impacts. A better understanding of the relationship between social media and mental health can help individuals as well as society to utilize technology more healthily and productively.

## INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, allowing individuals to connect, share information and express themselves freely. As the use of digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Twitter increases, concerns have been raised about their impact on the mental health of their users (Barry et al., 2017). Several studies have shown that excessive social media use can lead to stress, anxiety and depression, especially among adolescents and young adults (Twenge et al., 2018). This occurs due to overexposure to content, social pressure to present a perfect self-image, and unrealistic social comparisons with others (Huang, 2020). These factors become more pronounced when social media use is excessive and not matched with awareness of its impact. Features such as likes, comments, and algorithms designed to maintain user engagement can create digital addiction and disrupt emotional balance (Andreassen et al., 2017).

This phenomenon is all the more relevant amidst the post-COVID-19 surge in social media use, where many individuals rely on digital platforms as a primary means of communication (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Studies show that individuals who spend more time on social media have a higher risk of sleep disturbances, low self-esteem, and increased feelings of loneliness (Keles et al., 2020). The longer someone accesses social media, the more likely they are to feel isolated or feel anxious about comparing themselves to others. Social media also has benefits for supporting mental health, such as providing access to a wider community of support and psychological health information (Naslund et al., 2020). Users can share their experiences, get information on ways to manage anxiety or depression, and feel more connected to others who have similar experiences. It is important to understand how social media affects psychological well-being and seek effective strategies to reduce its negative impact, particularly in vulnerable age groups (Viner et al., 2019).

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One of the main problems that arise due to the use of social media is the increased levels of anxiety and depression, especially among adolescents and young adults. The study conducted by Keles et al. (2020) found that excessive social media use correlates with increased levels of anxiety and depression, especially when individuals are overly exposed to socially distressing content or compare themselves to others. This phenomenon is often associated with “fear of missing out” (FOMO), where users feel anxious if they are not always connected to social activities seen on social media platforms (Przybylski et al., 2013). The accumulation of this anxiety can negatively impact mental well-being, leading to sleep disturbances, decreased self-esteem, and even a tendency towards social isolation (Woods & Scott, 2016).

Uncontrolled use of social media also contributes to low sleep quality in its users (Levenson et al., 2017). According to research conducted by Twenge et al. (2018), adolescents who spend more than three hours a day on social media have a higher risk of sleep disturbance compared to those who use it in a more limited duration. Blue light emitted by screens of electronic devices can inhibit the production of melatonin, a hormone that plays a role in regulating the sleep cycle (Leone & Sigman, 2020). Active engagement in social media at night, such as reading negative comments or experiencing cyberbullying, can also cause psychological stress that disrupts sleep patterns (Wong et al., 2020).

Another significant issue is the increasing cases of social media addiction, leading to negative impacts on mental health and daily life balance. Andreassen et al. (2017) developed the Facebook Addiction Scale, which suggests that compulsive social media use can be categorized as a form of behavioral addiction. People who are addicted to social media often have difficulty controlling the duration of their use, sacrifice real-world social interactions, and experience negative impacts on academic or work performance (Turel & Serenko, 2012). It can also lead to increased stress and dissatisfaction with real life due to overexposure to unrealistic social standards on social media.

The importance of researching the impact of social media on mental health is increasing as the use of digital platforms in everyday life increases, especially among adolescents and young adults. According to reports from We Are Social and Hootsuite (2021), the average time internet users spend on social media reaches almost three hours per day. This high intensity has the potential to affect psychological well-being, both in positive and negative aspects. The study conducted by Keles et al. (2020) showed that excessive social media use correlates increased risk of anxiety,

depression, and sleep disorders. If these negative impacts are not properly observed and addressed, it will impact individuals' quality of life as well as their productivity in social and academic life.

The urgency of this research is also driven by the increasing cases of cyberbullying, social media addiction, and self-image disorders that are increasingly occurring due to exposure to unrealistic social standards online. Twenge et al. (2018) found that adolescents who use social media more frequently have a higher risk of experiencing psychological distress compared to those who have time limits on their use. Social media platforms are often a space for the spread of unhealthy information, including online bullying and exposure to content that can worsen one's mental state (Leone & Sigman, 2020). This research is crucial to understanding how social media use affects mental health and finding appropriate strategies to reduce its negative impact.

This study aims to find out how social media use affects the mental health of adolescents and young adults in terms of anxiety, depression and sleep disturbances. This study also aims to find out what factors contribute to the negative impact of social media on psychological well-being, as well as how the mechanism of influence on individuals.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research method uses a literature study approach, where various scientific sources are analyzed to understand the relationship between social media use and mental health, particularly in adolescents and young adults. A literature review was chosen as it allows researchers to review existing research and identify patterns, trends and gaps in previous studies (Snyder, 2019). Data was collected from scientific journals, academic books, and research reports relevant to this topic. The researcher used thematic analysis techniques to categorize findings from different studies to gain a more comprehensive understanding (Booth et al., 2016).

This research draws on reliable sources published within the last 10 years to ensure the relevance of the findings to current conditions. The articles analyzed included both quantitative and qualitative studies that addressed the impact of social media on users' anxiety, depression, and emotional well-being (Twenge et al., 2018). Research addressing the role of social media algorithms in shaping usage patterns and their relationship with mental well-being is also a key concern in this review (Orben et al., 2019).

The analysis was carried out by identifying the main variables that appear in previous studies, like the duration of social media use, the type of interaction, and the psychological impact causes (Keles et al., 2020).

A synthesis of findings was conducted to understand how social media can affect mental health both positively and negatively. This research is expected to provide insight into the phenomenon under study and open up opportunities for further research in the future.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Impact of Social Media Use on Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health**

Social media has become an integral part of adolescents' and young adults' lives, but its excessive use is associated with an increase in mental health problems. One of the main impacts is increased anxiety due to social pressure and unrealistic expectations often found on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Huang, 2020). Content featuring idealized lifestyles can trigger social comparisons that impact self-esteem and increase social anxiety (Fardouly et al., 2018). Constant exposure to content like this can damage self-esteem, as individuals feel their lives are not worth what they see on social media. Constant online notifications and interactions can cause psychological stress that exacerbates anxiety in vulnerable individuals (Vannucci et al., 2017). Stress arising from the pressure to stay connected can lead to more serious mental health issues if not managed properly.

Depression is also becoming an increasing problem due to overuse of social media. Studies show that time spent on social media correlates with higher levels of depression, especially due to exposure to cyberbullying and social isolation (Keles et al., 2020). Adolescents who experience frequent online bullying or lack in-person social interactions are more prone to depressive symptoms, including feelings of loneliness and hopelessness (Haidt & Twenge, 2021). According to Primack et al. (2017), consumption of negative content and passive interaction patterns on social media can worsen mood and lead to a cycle of negative thinking that contributes to depression.

Sleep disturbances are also a major negative effect of the increasingly widespread use of social media among adolescents and young adults. Social media use before bedtime has been shown to inhibit the production of melatonin, a hormone that plays an important role in regulating sleep cycles, due to exposure to blue light emitted by cell phone screens and other digital devices. Research by Leone and Sigman (2020) shows that blue light can suppress melatonin secretion, thus interfering with an individual's ability to fall asleep quickly and get quality sleep. When individuals are exposed to blue light close to bedtime, they tend to have difficulty entering the deep sleep phase, which is crucial for physical and mental recovery.

The habit of endless scrolling, often known as "doomscrolling," can cause adolescents and young adults to sleep later than they should. When they are caught up in a constant cycle of content consumption, they may ignore their body's signals that it is time to rest. Research by Scott et al. (2019) showed that this behavior not only reduces sleep duration, but also negatively impacts sleep quality, which can lead to daytime fatigue and decreased productivity. Sleep-deprived individuals tend to feel more easily tired, less focused, and less able to go about their daily activities optimally. This impact can also worsen mental state, as fatigue is often associated with increased anxiety, stress and depression.

This sleep disturbance caused by social media use can worsen an individual's psychological state, increasing the risk of anxiety and depression in the long run. Research by Woods and Scott (2016) revealed that sleep deprivation can affect an individual's emotional balance and ability to cope with stress. When people don't get enough sleep, they tend to become more irritable and less able to manage their emotions, which can exacerbate symptoms of anxiety and depression. Sleep disorders can affect cognitive functions, including concentration, memory, and decision-making, all of which contribute to a decrease in overall quality of life. Poor sleep patterns can create a negative cycle where individuals feel trapped in a state of fatigue and stress, further deteriorating their mental health. It is important for individuals to be aware of the negative impact of social media use on their sleep patterns and take steps to manage social media use habits more wisely. This can include setting time limits for social media use in the evening, creating a consistent sleep routine, and avoiding screen exposure for at least an hour before bedtime. Individuals can improve their sleep quality with a more conscious approach to social media use, which can further contribute to better mental health and overall well-being.

Excessive social interaction on social media can also create emotional dependency that worsens mental health (Barry et al., 2017). Reliance on social media to interact with others can lead to individuals becoming overly attached to digital platforms and struggling to disengage from them. Reliance on social validation in the form of likes and comments can affect one's mood, where a lack of positive responses from others can trigger anxiety and feelings of worthlessness (Andreassen et al., 2017). The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) phenomenon further exacerbates anxiety disorders, where individuals feel they must always follow trends or peer activities to avoid feeling left behind (Elhai et al., 2018). This not only increases social anxiety, but also reduces quality of life.

While social media has benefits for expanding social networks and providing access to information, its uncontrolled use can negatively impact psychological well-being. Adolescents and young adults who spend long hours on social media tend to experience increased stress, which can ultimately worsen their mental state (Woods & Scott, 2016). Some studies have also shown that individuals who reduce their social media use for a few weeks experience improved mood and emotional well-being (Hunt et al., 2018).

It is important for adolescents and young adults to develop healthy habits for using social media to avoid adversely affecting their mental health. As social media has become an integral part of everyday life, a deep understanding of balanced usage is crucial. Education on how to use social media wisely can help individuals recognize and avoid potentially harmful behaviors, such as excessive social comparison and content addiction. Research by Levenson et al. (2017) suggests that awareness of the negative impacts of social media use, such as increased anxiety and depression, may serve as a first step to reducing the risk of mental health disorders. Individuals can better understand how their interactions on digital platforms can affect their psychological well-being by providing appropriate and relevant information. This education also include introduction to effective coping strategies, such as mindfulness and relaxation techniques, which can help adolescents and young adults manage stress that may arise from social media use.

Practical steps such as limiting screen time before bed and increasing real-world social interactions are also crucial to maintaining mental health in this digital age. Research by Twenge and Campbell (2019) shows that excessive social media use, especially before bed, can disrupt sleep patterns and lead to more serious mental health issues. Individuals can create healthier routines that allow them to be well-rested and re-energized by setting time limits on social media use. Increasing social interactions in the real world can provide stronger emotional support and help build more meaningful relationships. Activities such as hanging out with friends, participating in community activities, or engaging in a favored hobby can provide a deeper sense of connection and reduce feelings of loneliness often experienced by social media users. Adolescents and young adults can not only protect their mental health, but also create more positive and fulfilling experiences interacting with the digital world by integrating these healthy habits into daily life. Individuals, parents, and educators must work together to foster healthy social media use and equip future generations with essential digital skills.

### **Factors Contributing to the Negative Impact of Social Media on Psychological Wellbeing**

One of the main factors contributing to the negative impact of social media is excessive social comparison. Social media often presents a curated image of life that does not represent reality, which can trigger feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself (Coyne et al., 2020). Individuals tend to compare themselves with others to assess their own worth and progress. Studies by Vogel et al. (2014) found that individuals who made frequent social comparisons on social media experienced decreased self-esteem and increased anxiety.

Cyberbullying and online harassment are significant factors that can negatively impact an individual's psychological well-being, especially among adolescents and young adults. As social interactions often occur through online platforms in today's digital age, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to these forms of aggression. Research by Kowalski et al. (2014) showed that the experience of being a victim of cyberbullying can lead to various mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. This mechanism of influence of cyberbullying operates through repeated exposure to negative comments, insults, or threats that can undermine an individual's sense of security and emotional well-being. When adolescents are exposed to persistent online harassment, they can experience feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, which can further deteriorate their mental state. The anonymous nature of online interactions often makes perpetrators feel undetected and they are more likely to commit aggressive acts without considering the emotional consequences for the victim. This creates a dangerous and destructive environment, where individuals feel threatened and unsafe, both physically and emotionally.

The long-term effects of cyberbullying often include social isolation and decreased self-esteem, which can interfere with an individual's social and emotional development. Research by Patchin and Hinduja (2015) suggests that victims of cyberbullying tend to have difficulty establishing and maintaining healthy social relationships, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Victims of cyberbullying often feel insulted, judged or criticized online, which can affect their view of themselves and the world around them. When individuals feel isolated, they may avoid social interactions, both online and face-to-face, further exacerbating their mental state. This can interfere with an individual's social and emotional development, especially during adolescence which is a crucial period in building self-identity and social skills.



The reduced self-esteem experienced by victims can also affect how they perceive themselves and their ability to function in social settings. These impacts can lead to more serious psychological disorders, such as anxiety disorders and chronic depression, which require professional intervention to address. Parents, educators, and society must raise awareness about cyberbullying and offer support to its victims. Educational programs that emphasize empathy, social skills, and ways to report and deal with online harassment can help create a safer and more supportive environment for adolescents and young adults. Collective efforts to address cyberbullying will protect the psychological well-being of individuals, and contribute to the establishment of healthier and more inclusive communities in the digital age.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has been a significant factor contributing to the negative impact of social media on individuals' mental health, especially among adolescents and young adults. FoMO occurs when individuals feel anxious or worried because they see their friends or acquaintances engaging in activities that appear fun, interesting or successful in their absence. Research by Przybylski et al. (2013) suggests that this phenomenon is often triggered by overexposure to social media content featuring other people's happy moments and achievements. When individuals constantly compare themselves to others, they can feel pressure to always engage in social activities, which can further lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. The inability to participate in activities that others find interesting can create feelings of alienation and increase social anxiety, potentially worsening mental health. FoMO reflects individuals' dissatisfaction with their own lives, and creates a cycle where individuals feel compelled to keep checking social media to avoid feeling left out, which can ultimately disrupt their emotional balance. FoMO worsens mental health by creating persistent anxiety and ongoing dissatisfaction, increasing the risk of anxiety disorders and depression.

The study by Elhai et al. (2018) showed that high levels of FoMO are associated with increased stress and depressive symptoms. The mechanism of influence of FoMO occurs through the compulsive urge to check social media, which often interferes with daily activities and reduces the quality of more meaningful social interactions. When individuals feel the need to constantly connect with the virtual world, they may neglect more in-depth and fulfilling face-to-face relationships, which are important for emotional well-being. FoMO can affect psychological well-being and interferes with the quality of social relationships that are crucial for an individual's emotional balance.

Research by Wong et al. (2020) highlighted that these behaviors can cause significant emotional distress, including feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and life dissatisfaction. The urge to stay connected to social media can disrupt sleep patterns, further worsening mental health conditions. Individuals caught in the FoMO cycle can experience a serious decline in psychological well-being, which can affect various aspects of their lives, including academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and physical health. It is important for individuals to develop awareness of the negative impact of FoMO and implement strategies to manage their social media use. This can include setting time limits for social media use, focusing on more meaningful social interactions, and adopting mindfulness practices to increase self-awareness. Individuals can reduce the negative impact of FoMO, improve their overall quality of life, and achieve a healthier balance between the virtual and real worlds with a more balanced approach to social media.

Another contributing factor is social media addiction, which can lead to psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression. Andreassen et al. (2012) identified that excessive social media use often has addictive patterns similar to other behavioral disorders, such as gambling or substance addiction. Users caught up in this addiction tend to feel compelled to constantly connect with social media, spending excessive time scrolling through feeds or checking for updates with no time limit. The mechanism of influence lies in changes in brain structure, especially in the dopamine reward system, which causes individuals to continuously seek social validation through likes and comments (Montag et al., 2019). Individuals become more prone to feelings of dissatisfaction and emotional instability when they do not get the expected response from online interactions (Viner et al., 2019).

The lack of boundaries between online and real life is also a cause of impaired psychological well-being. Many individuals spend excessive time on social media, at the expense of more meaningful in-person social interactions (Twenge et al., 2018). Excessive social media use can replace activities that support mental health, such as exercise, adequate sleep, and face-to-face interactions (Woods & Scott, 2016). The study by Orben et al. (2019) found that adolescents who used social media more than three hours a day had a higher risk of mental health problems. The lack of balance between online and real life worsens psychological health, as individuals miss out on opportunities to interact directly with others and engage in activities that are beneficial to their well-being.

As users of the platform increase, it is important to educate them on the risks associated with overuse, including the potential to experience depression, anxiety, and feelings of loneliness. Parents and educators should be active to monitor and limit the time adolescents spend on social media, as well as encourage them to engage in healthier offline activities, such as sports, art, or in-person social interactions. It can also be the collective responsibility of society to create a supportive environment for adolescent mental health in the digital age.

One of the main mechanisms that exacerbate the negative impact of social media is exposure to negative content and fake news. Social media algorithms are designed to prioritize content that can trigger high emotional engagement, including sensational news, rumors, and hoaxes. Research by Vosoughi et al. (2018) shows that provocative and controversial content tends to get more attention and interaction from users, creating a cycle in which inaccurate or misleading information spreads more easily. When individuals are exposed to fake news or frightening information repeatedly, they can experience significant psychological effects, including increased anxiety and fear.

Repeated exposure to this negative content not only affects individuals' emotions in the short term, but can also shape their perception of the world as a whole. Individuals may begin to see the world as a more dangerous and unsafe place, which can lead to avoidance behavior and social isolation. Exposure to negative content on social media not only impacts an individual's mental health, but can also affect how they interact with their social and emotional environment.

This mechanism of influence from exposure to negative content occurs through the psychological effects of repeated exposure to stress-inducing information. Research by Garfin et al. (2020) showed that individuals who are frequently exposed to negative news tend to experience chronic anxiety, which can disrupt their emotional balance and mental health. When individuals are constantly presented with bad news, such as reports of violence, natural disasters, or health crises, they can feel trapped in a prolonged cycle of fear and anxiety. This can lead to sleep disturbances, decreased concentration, and even physical problems such as headaches and indigestion.

A more negative perception of the world can affect individuals' decisions to go about their daily lives, such as avoiding social interactions or putting off activities they previously enjoyed. These impacts can lead to more serious mental health issues, including depression and anxiety disorders. It is important for individuals to develop good media literacy skills, which include the ability to evaluate information sources and

distinguish between accurate and fake news. Individuals can take proactive steps to protect their mental health, such as limiting their consumption of negative news and seeking out more positive and inspiring content. Individuals can reduce the adverse impact of exposure to negative content and create a healthier and more balanced experience of interacting with the digital world with a more conscious approach to social media use.

Factors such as social comparison, cyberbullying, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social media addiction, lack of boundaries in online life, and exposure to negative content contribute to the negative impact of social media on individuals' psychological well-being. Social comparison, for example, occurs when individuals compare themselves to others they see on social media platforms, who often display idealized versions of their lives. This can lead to feelings of low self-esteem, anxiety and depression, as individuals feel that they do not meet the standards set by others. Cyberbullying, on the other hand, creates a dangerous and destructive environment, where individuals can be subjected to verbal attacks or humiliation that can damage their self-esteem and mental health. The FoMO phenomenon, which refers to the fear of missing out on enjoyable social experiences, may encourage individuals to constantly check social media, which may further lead to addiction. This social media addiction often disrupts daily life balance, reduces face-to-face interactions, and disrupts sleep routines, all of which contribute to decreased psychological well-being.

The mechanisms of influence of these factors vary, but generally involve changes in the way individuals judge themselves, their social interactions, and their emotional balance. When individuals are exposed to negative content, such as bad news or demeaning comments, this can trigger prolonged feelings of anxiety and stress. Lack of boundaries on social media use can cause individuals to lose control over the time spent on these platforms, reducing time that could be spent on more productive and mentally beneficial activities, such as exercising, socializing in person, or engaging in hobbies. It is important for individuals to manage their social media use wisely in order to minimize its adverse impact on mental health. Strategies that can be implemented include setting time limits on social media use, choosing positive and inspiring content, and actively seeking healthy social interactions in the real world. Individuals can protect their psychological well-being and create more positive experiences interacting with digital platforms with a more conscious and intentional approach to social media use. Awareness of social media's negative impacts and efforts to manage its use wisely can enhance overall mental health and foster a more supportive and positive environment.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion on the impact of social media on mental health is that social media use has a significant influence on psychological well-being, especially among adolescents and young adults. Social media can have a huge negative impact if users cannot manage their influence wisely. Factors such as social comparison, cyberbullying, fear of missing out (FoMO), social media addiction, lack of boundaries between online and real life, and exposure to negative content are the main causes that worsen users' mental state. The mechanism of influence can be in the form of increased anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and decreased self-esteem. Social media, which was originally designed to increase social interaction, can actually have the opposite effect if not used wisely. It is important to recognize the negative signs of social media use and find ways to set healthy boundaries for its use. Excessive use of social media blurs the lines between online and real life, making it difficult for individuals to take a break and escape the pressures coming from the virtual world.

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