

Review Article



The Effect of Social Media on Mental Health: A Review

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of social media has transformed the way individuals interact, share experiences, and perceive themselves. However, a growing body of research suggests that excessive social media use is linked to various mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, and stress. This review aims to synthesize the current state of knowledge on the complex relationships between social media use and mental health outcomes, with a focus on adolescents and young adults. Teenagers are especially vulnerable to the negative consequences of excessive social media use since obsessive behaviours are frequently fuelled by peer pressure and online validation. These problems were made worse by the COVID-19 epidemic, as more screen time led to more mental health disorders. The potential mechanisms underlying these associations, including social comparison, cyber victimization, and addiction-like behaviors. Our analysis reveals that problematic social media use can have far-reaching consequences, including increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as decreased life satisfaction and psychosocial well-being. Also, the review discusses the implications of these findings for the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies to mitigate the negative effects of social media on mental health.

Keywords: Social media stress, social media, anxiety depression.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become integral to our daily routines as we interact with family members and friends, accept invitations to public events, and join online communities to meet people who share similar preferences using these platforms. Social media has opened a new avenue for social experiences since the early 2000s, extending the possibilities for communication, according to recent research.¹ Social media has recently become part of people's daily activities; many of them spend hours each day on Messenger, Instagram, Facebook, and other popular social media. Thus, many researchers and scholars study the impact of social media and applications on various aspects of people's lives. Moreover, the number of social media users worldwide in 2019 is 3.484 billion, up 9% year-on-year.² Consequently social media lays substantial influence on different aspects of present digital life apart from online communication, from marketing to politics to education to health to basic human interaction.³

They visit sites of social media by logging into their account from anywhere and anytime using smart phone, laptop or desktop and engage in different types of entertainment and social activity through posts or blogs. Further social media gives the opportunity of meeting friends based on shared interest, chatting, mailing, playing games and gambling.⁴

Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik-Tok have woven themselves into the fabric of everyday life, influencing how individuals interact, form relationships, and consume content.⁶ Social media is a relatively new medium through which adolescents can manage their mental wellbeing. Indeed, young people frequently report turning to sites such as Facebook and Twitter to escape from the external pressures threatening their mental health (boyd, 2014).⁷ Social media is defined as the "interactive web and mobile platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, or exchange information, ideas, photos, or videos within a virtual network. Research highlights a difference between SM and messaging-only applications, such as WhatsApp which function as text messaging tools and thus constitute a separate domain from SM.⁸ Constant online presence and availability has become something of a status quo in the lives of the vast majority, made possible with the rise of highly accessible and user-friendly laptops and smartphones. Using social media is one of the most common activities on the Internet, with daily use reported by nine out of ten youths worldwide.⁹ Despite this, studies have linked problematic social media use to problems such as symptoms of depression and anxiety, stress, negative body image and low physical activity.¹⁰ MH is most affected by internal and external stressors during adolescence. The effect of stress in adolescents is exacerbated when accompanied by other stressors, such as the lack of sufficient internal or external



Figure 1: Various modes of social media.⁵



resources or poorly developed coping skills. Being deprived of social contacts and forced to adjust to online education, while going through a critical developmental stage, adolescents and students might suffer more severe effects of the COVID-19 pandemic-related stressors than the general population.¹¹ During the early months of the pandemic, many countries worldwide went into complete lockdown. Mental health of youth was threatened due to the shift toward distant learning, The closure of leisure environments, the decrease in outdoor activities, the impossibility to organize social events, and the Increase of distress related to the pandemic.¹² Researchers detect the symptoms of mental illness and Identify risk factors by asking participants to answer well-designed questions and report their characteristics. The challenge of these traditional methods is that it is difficult to monitor the mental health condition in real time and understand its dynamic changes.¹³ Additionally, a number of social media, video hosting and peer-to-peer networks have been criticised for contributing to psychological effects such as addiction, attention deficiency and individual and group attitudinal shift and triggered debate about inappropriate content, misinformation, disinformation, moderation and user privacy.¹⁴ Therefore, on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared this outbreak to be a pandemic due to its unprecedented and rampant behaviours. However, there has been 651,652 COVID-19 cases (including 9384 deaths) identified in Bangladesh, as of 7 April 2021.¹⁵

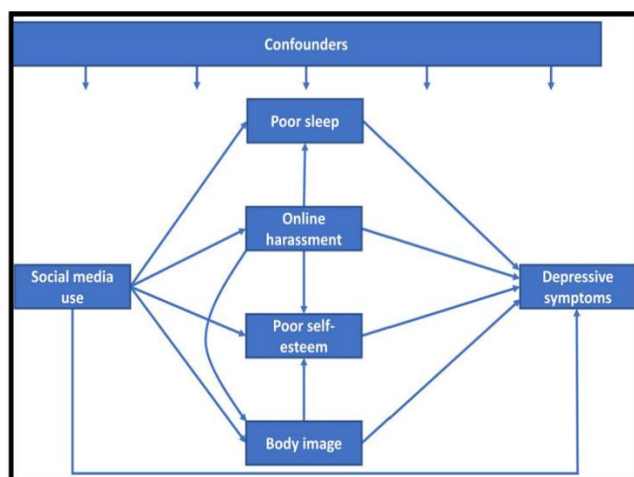


Figure 2: Hypothesis pathways between social media and depressive symptoms in young peoples.¹⁶

Social Media and Stress

Problematic social media use has been defined as the excessive use of social media leading negative effects on the user's professional, social and/or personal life.¹⁷ Use of social media has bi-directional effect for some it is a way of relaxation whereas for some it increases stress.¹⁸ Adolescents are arguably un-Der increasing stress, and while there are potential risks associated with social media, it could support their coping.¹⁹ In present era addiction of social media is incredibly increased, once an individual gets on, it is difficult to refrain from its use. Comments and likes

acts as positive reinforcement and making it more difficult to stop it.³ This diversity of activities is a scientific challenge concerning whether social media can be considered addictive as a whole, or if it is rather a question of Which parts of it that are potentially negative, as well as beneficial for the individual.⁹ Furthermore, associations between PSMU and depression, anxiety, stress, higher cognitive failures.¹⁰ The mood of users can affect their engagement behaviour. When feeling down, individuals may spend more time viewing sad content, which can skew recommendations from the algorithm to suggest additional sad content.²⁰ It has been suggested that people who have reduced off-line social experiences and are highly influenced by social media tend to have unrealistic self-perceptions. In summary, problematic SNS use has been associated with internal emotional factors like depression and Anxiety, aggression and negative body image and external social motivations.²¹ Higher levels of digital stress were associated concurrently with greater mental health and psychosocial difficulties. This is consistent with previous work describing positive correlations between aspects of digital stress and worries about inclusion and belonging on Facebook among adolescents and in social groups among adults, and anxiety and depression among adolescents and adults.²²

Social media & Anxiety, Depression

Time spent on social media, repetitive activities, addictive or problematic use associated with depression, anxiety, and psychological impairment. Nevertheless, it is not possible to establish whether a causative effect exists.²³ A recent systematic review and meta-analysis concerning the efficacy of digital interventions in bipolar disorder found positive effects on both depressive and manic symptom.²⁴ A number of studies have been conducted on the impacts of social media, and it has been indicated that the prolonged use of social media platforms such as Facebook may be related to negative signs and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.²⁵ In the neurobiological and behavioural sciences, anger is an emotion that consists of feelings that vary in intensity, from mild irritation or annoyance to intense fury and rage.²⁶ The intersection between excessive web streaming and mental health concerns has become a focal point of investigation. The immersive nature of content consumption, combined with the emotional intensity of specific narratives, has been identified as a potential contributor to heightened stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression.²⁷ Symptoms relating to anxiety often overlap with depression, especially in youths; just like depression, anxious manifestations may result from a set of internal and external circumstances. In social media, where the relational component is strong, Anxiety can derive from a perception of being connected In appropriately, from negative online peer-comparison, or from reduced emotion-regulation abilities, as online interaction can be used as a surrogate for offline physical interaction.²⁸ Specific populations studied varied considerably as well and included Paediatric migraine patients, women suffering anxiety-related premenstrual

symptoms, postpartum women, Adults experiencing moderate to severe stress, and hospitalized adults undergoing open heart surgery, as Well as patients with generalized anxiety disorder and adjustment disorder with anxiety.²⁹ Body dissatisfaction, deeply rooted in the struggle to meet cultural and gender-specific ideals, emerges as a critical risk factor for various mental health challenges, including notably prevalent depression and anxiety. Individuals grappling with negative body perceptions may experience persistent sadness, hopelessness, or excessive worry about their appearance and how they are perceived by others. The constant internalization of idealized standards can lead to a pervasive sense of inadequacy, Fueling depressive symptoms and anxiety disorders.³⁰ A study of 8- to 13-year-olds evaluated Whether cyber victimization is prospectively related to negative self-cognitions and depressive symptoms beyond other types of victimisation.³¹ From the above literature it is clear social media is the basic agent that not enhances but also nourishes the mental health problems. Excessive use of social media leads an individual to disastrous results that starts with anxiety and leads to the depression.³²

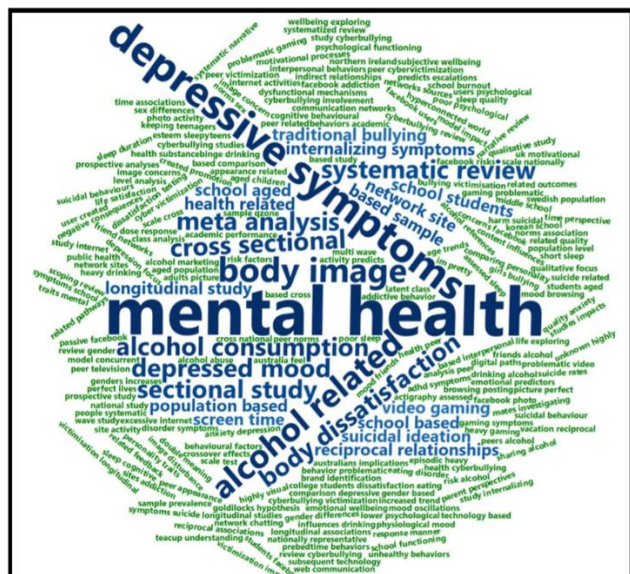


Figure 3: Word cloud from the titles of the included studies. Most frequent words, excluding variations of “adolescence” and “social media.” N = 113. Shades of Blue indicate word frequencies >2 and green a frequency of 2. The size of each word is indicative of its relative frequency of occurrence.³²

Social Media Addiction:

Excessive and pathological internet use has been recognized as an internet addiction, which shares features with substance-use disorders or pathological gambling. Common features include preoccupations, mood changes, development of tolerance, withdrawal, and functional impairment.³³ Suggesting some individuals may develop addiction-related problems because of their mobile phone use. Recent research has suggested problematic mobile phone use is a multi-faceted condition, with dependent use being one of four possible pathways, in addition to dangerous, prohibited, and financially problematic use.³⁴ All

of the above are umbrella terms, i.e., reflect generalized (without reference to specific content and technology) PIU. Among the specific types of Internet activity, the following can be considered potentially addictive: Problematic video game use, PSMU, problematic Internet pornography use, Internet gambling, and web surfing addiction.³⁵

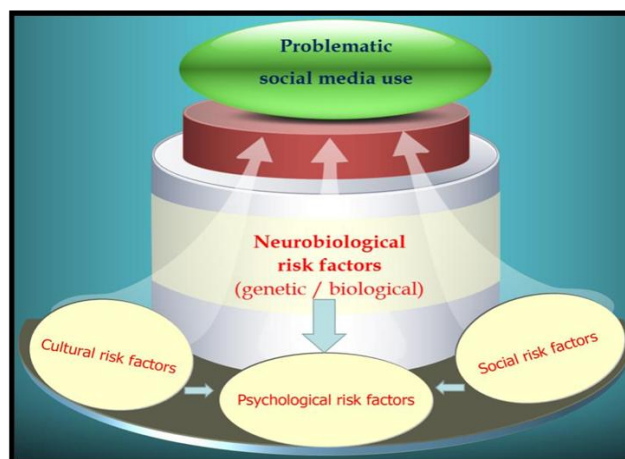


Figure 4: Component bio-psycho-social model of problematic social media use³⁵

However, disordered use of social media and gaming (defined as a pattern of repeated and excessive engagement in activities that significantly impairs an Individual's functionality or causes extreme distress; it is characterized by the inability to control behaviour despite negative consequences in various spheres of life) was found to be associated with lower social competence, life satisfaction, and psychosocial well-being, particularly among boys.³⁶ During this period, young people were forced to spend large amounts of daily time in front of screens such as tablets, smartphones, desktops, and televisions just so that they could continue to be educated.³⁷ One of the main reasons that adolescents rely on social media platforms is due to peer pressure. There is a strong desire for social acceptance and belonging that influences teenagers to participate in social media activities. Through influence from their peers, many teenagers have to conform their interests and behaviours to those of their social circles. Valkenburg and Peter emphasize that this peer pressure is particularly evident in digital environments, where the pursuit of validation can lead to increased social media usage, often negatively impacting mental health.³⁸ the constant use of the Internet and social networks leads to an addiction and obsession, which results in negative behaviour. The consequences of these habits regarding the excessive use of different smart devices and the Internet can affect both the physical and mental health of user's Issues such as anxiety, depression, impulsiveness, and aggressive behaviour can also result or be increased from uncontrolled use. Those with internet addiction have higher levels of depression, Anxiety, and impulsivity than those without such an addiction.³⁹ finally, a 5 or more hours daily of media devices use has been related to a higher risk of sleep problems when compared to a 1 h use daily.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

The impact of social media on mental health is multifaceted and complex. While social media offers numerous benefits, including enhanced connectivity and community engagement, excessive use can have detrimental effects on mental health, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Our review highlights the need for awareness and education about the potential risks associated with social media use, as well as the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies to mitigate these risks. By promoting healthy social media engagement and providing support for individuals struggling with mental health issues, we can work towards mitigating the negative effects of social media on mental health.

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