



# The Impact Of Social Media On Mental Health

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## Abstract:

This article explores the effects of social media use on mental health. Social media platforms allow individuals to maintain connections with friends and family, regardless of geographical distances. This connectivity can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation, benefiting mental health. With the widespread popularity and accessibility of social media platforms, it is crucial to examine how these digital environments affect individuals' psychological well-being.

Key words: social media, cyber bullying, mental health

## Introduction:

Social media has woven itself into the fabric of our daily existence, fundamentally altering the way we connect, communicate, and disseminate information. With its pervasive use, concerns have arisen regarding its potential effects on mental health. Yet, social media has also played a pivotal role in destigmatizing and promoting awareness of mental health issues. It serves as a platform for individuals to share their personal narratives and access vital resources, empowering those grappling with mental health challenges. This article delves into the intricate relationship between social media and mental well-being, shedding light on both its positive and negative repercussions. On one hand, some scholars argue that the utilization of social media and smartphones can enhance work performance<sup>1,2</sup>.

The evolution of social media has been nothing short of remarkable. It has not only reshaped how we communicate and interact but has also left an indelible mark on political discourse, consumer behavior, and how businesses and individuals engage with their audiences. From the early days of online forums to the contemporary dominance of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, social media has profoundly altered the landscape of society. The history of social media traces its roots back to the nascent days of the internet, where online forums and bulletin boards provided the initial platforms for discussions on a myriad of subjects. These early digital arenas facilitated text-based conversations and the exchange of information, laying the foundation for the ever-evolving social media landscape we know today.

Several studies have uncovered a robust connection between extensive social media usage and an elevated susceptibility to depression, anxiety, feelings of isolation, self-harm, and even contemplation of suicide. Research indicates that taking a hiatus from social media for several days can result in substantial enhancements in overall well-being, reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

The prevalence of idealized self-presentation on social media platforms often triggers more frequent and exaggerated upward social comparisons<sup>3</sup>. Users tend to meticulously construct and project idealized versions of themselves, conforming to societal ideals, and are inclined to share positive content over negative<sup>4</sup>. Experimental investigations have revealed that participants exposed to social media exhibit heightened levels of anxiety<sup>5</sup> and depression<sup>6</sup> compared to participants in control groups. However, certain longitudinal studies have failed to establish a definitive link between social media use and adverse mental health outcomes<sup>7,8</sup>.

## **Impact of Social Media on Mental Health:**

### **1. Social Comparison and Self-Esteem**

Humans have a natural tendency to compare themselves to others, as proposed by Festinger in his 1954 social comparison theory. This innate drive stems from our desire for accurate self-assessments<sup>9</sup>. However, recent studies have shown that excessive social media use among children and young adolescents can lead to a decline in positive self-worth and an increase in negative self-worth. Additionally, consistent findings indicate that upward social comparisons, where individuals compare themselves to those they perceive as superior, can negatively impact subjective well-being across various life domains. McComb's research highlights the detrimental effects of social media comparisons on mental health, self-esteem, subjective well-being, and body image<sup>10</sup>

Prior research has delved into the various consequences of social media usage, including its impact on body image, subjective well-being, psychological well-being, self-esteem, and feelings of envy. Sociocultural models of body image suggest that individuals who frequently compare their physical appearance to others are at increased risk of developing body image issues, such as body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors<sup>11</sup>. The widespread availability of digital tools, including filters and photo editing software, has further exacerbated the issue of content manipulation and the propagation of unrealistic and unattainable beauty standards<sup>4</sup>.

### **2. Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying constitutes a distinctive variant of bullying, emerging as a relatively recent phenomenon. It can be defined as unjust and aberrant behavior, wherein cyberbullying perpetrators transgress social norms and interpersonal codes, encroaching upon the personal rights of their victims. These victims, through no fault of their own, experience severe consequences that imperil their mental well-being and educational progress. Consequently, examining cyberbullying through a justice-psychological lens and elucidating it via inter-individual disparities in the belief in a just world becomes pertinent<sup>12</sup>.

Research has indicated that cyberbullying is most prevalent among young people in higher education<sup>13</sup>. Additionally, cyberbullying experiences tend to exhibit remarkable stability, persisting even as young individuals transition from school to university<sup>14</sup>. The distinct nature of cyberbullying lies in its repetitive characteristics, fueled by the ease with which digital messages, videos, memes, or images can be disseminated, stored offline, and revisited at a later time. Moreover, these materials often endure online and prove resistant to deletion, perpetuating their impact once uploaded<sup>15</sup>.

### **3. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)**

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is an emotional response rooted in the perception that others are leading more fulfilling lives or that significant opportunities are slipping away. It can engender sensations of restlessness, discontent, depression, and stress. The rapid proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the past decade has reshaped global social and communication norms, prompting scholars to scrutinize the adverse consequences of this transformation. Turel et al. (2019) characterize this phenomenon as the 'dark side of digitization,' contending that it has blurred the lines between individuals' social, personal, and professional spheres<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, scholars have shown growing interest in examining how these technologies impact employee behavior, particularly in relation to phenomena associated with the darker aspects of social media, such as the Fear of Missing Out<sup>17, 18</sup>.

### **Conclusion:**

The impact of social media on mental health is multifaceted, with both positive and negative consequences. While it can provide a sense of connection and support, it also poses risks to mental well-being through negative social comparisons, cyberbullying, and FOMO. It's crucial for individuals to approach social media mindfully, set boundaries, and seek help when needed to maintain a healthy balance between their online and offline lives. Additionally, society and social media platforms should work towards creating a safer and more supportive online environment.

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