

The Effects of Social Media on Mental Health

Noman Shaikh*

Abstract

This study explores the complex link between social media use and consequences related to mental health. The study explores both positive and negative effects, noting the possibility for psychological well-being through fulfilling online connections, in recognition of the complex nature of this relationship. It tackles the issues around excessive usage of social media at the same time, highlighting the need for awareness and unbiased viewpoints. To maximize user experiences, the study promotes a holistic strategy and social media literacy. To help develop a more comprehensive knowledge of the complex relationship between social media use and mental health, the report recommends more investigation through qualitative and quantitative studies.

Keywords: Social media, mental health, social media use, media literacy, online engagement

INTRODUCTION

The ubiquity of social media in the lives of adolescents poses a challenge for practitioners seeking to evaluate associated risks, adding a novel dimension to their considerations. While empirical evidence supporting the connection between social media and mental health is limited, the perceptions of this link are profoundly shaped by both adolescent and professional viewpoints. Risks such as privacy concerns, cyberbullying, and adverse impacts on education and mental well-being are associated with the extensive use of social media among this demographic [1]. Nevertheless, the ethical use of social media holds the potential to foster connection, meaningful conversations, bolster self-esteem, promote health, and facilitate access to crucial medical information.

Dual Perspectives

Despite accumulating evidence pointing to the negative effects of social media on adolescent mental health, there remains a scarcity of empirical research exploring how teenagers conceptualize social media, particularly as a repository of knowledge, and how they leverage broader modern media discourses for self-expression [2].

Sleep Disruption and Negative Outcomes

Teenagers' extensive use of cell phones and other media has resulted in chronic sleep loss, which has a detrimental effect on their cognitive function, academic achievement, and socioemotional health. Empirical, cross-sectional, and longitudinal research findings consistently show a relationship between teenagers' use of social media and smartphones and higher levels of mental distress, self-harming behaviors, and suicidality [3].

*Author for Correspondence

Noman Shaikh
E-mail: work.noman.shaikh@gmail.com

Research Scholar, MCA, Thakur Institute of Management Studies, Career Development & (TIMSCDR), Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

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Clinical Strategies

Clinicians are encouraged to work in partnership with young people and their families to address these issues and reduce the hazards related to youth usage of social media and smartphones. In the

context of teenage mental health, open, nonjudgmental, and developmentally appropriate approaches, such as education and hands-on problem solving, can be useful tools for addressing the complex problems brought on by social media [4].

Because of our innate social nature, humans depend on other people to survive. As a result, while a lack of social interaction can negatively impact mental health, having social ties can help reduce stress, worry, and depression. The emergence of social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter during the past 10 years has completely changed how people interact and communicate. Facebook is currently the largest social networking site with over one billion active users. It is anticipated that this number will rise significantly in the next years, especially in developing countries [5].

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is considerable agreement that social media use and teen depression are related, although there are differences in research, especially when it comes to the effects of social media usage. The data supporting this correlation are deemed to be of low overall quality. While some research indicates that social media use may increase the likelihood of self-harm, loneliness, and a decrease in empathy, other studies either demonstrate no damage or reveal possible benefits for some individuals [6].

Because of the speed at which technology is developing, social media is becoming an increasingly important part of the lives of young people. This presents both opportunities and concerns. New studies are illuminating the ways in which particular social media exchanges could affect young people's mental health.

Adolescents use social media in a variety of ways. They can participate actively by publishing, liking, sharing, and communicating, or they can participate passively by lurking and only viewing the material of others. Talking to people while putting off important chores is an example of goal-directed activity that is not always distinguished from procrastination by the binary classification of active and passive use. Differentiating between different sorts of usage requires an understanding of the motivations driving behaviors, such as social connection or keeping up with friends' lives [7].

But assessing and appreciating the wide range of uses for digital technology is a difficult task. Understanding the purpose behind behaviors, like keeping up with friends' lives or participating in social interactions, is crucial for distinguishing between different types of usage.

It is important to distinguish between social and nonsocial usage, and lumping all digital activities together into one predictor of enjoyment could lead to inaccurate results. In summary, although there is a basic link between teen depression and social media use, a more detailed knowledge of the complex nature of these relationships and their effects on mental health is necessary [8]. Is social media good or bad?

Complex Impact

Teens are impacted by social media in a variety of ways, both positively and negatively. When the consequences of digital technology are oversimplified, the variety of goals and results that are connected to it is overlooked.

Measurement Challenges

The lack of standardized measurements for technology usage impedes empirical understanding. Assessing the genuine influence on the well-being of teenagers is made more difficult when reliance is placed on erroneous self-reports.

Nuanced Approach Needed

A more nuanced approach is required, as seen by the limited association between self-reported and objectively recorded usage [9, 10]. Teenagers use technology for a variety of purposes, so a thorough evaluation is necessary.

Divergent Study Findings

Studies reveal conflicting findings, with some indicating a minor but significant detrimental impact on mental health. The variety of digital methods employed by social media makes it challenging to generalize its overall influence.

Individual Susceptibility

Understanding individual characteristics is crucial to determining why some adolescents may be more susceptible to certain social media behaviors. Personalized approaches are essential for adaptive responses to social media use.

Varied Teen Perceptions

Teenagers' views on social media vary, with 31% considering it primarily beneficial and 24% seeing it as unfavorable. Positive perceptions include connecting with friends and learning new things, while negatives involve increased bullying and diminished face-to-face interactions.

Relationship Between Offline and Online Risks

This recurrent subject casts doubt on the idea that navigating the digital age successfully is too difficult due to its complexity. Comprehending these associations is crucial for an all-encompassing strategy concerning digital literacy.

Adaptive Strategies

Research suggests that evidence-based therapies and parenting principles remain effective in supporting teenagers in the digital age. Adaptive strategies are crucial for addressing the dynamic challenges posed by social media use.

Positive Aspects

Positive aspects of social media use include connecting with friends, learning new things, and meeting people with similar interests. These aspects contribute to the 31% of teenagers who view social media as primarily beneficial.

Negative Aspects

Negative perceptions of social media include increased bullying, diminished face-to-face interactions, and the potential for developing inaccurate assumptions about others' lives. 24% of teenagers view social media as unfavorable due to these negative aspects.

METHODOLOGY

Our goal in doing this systematic review was to learn more about how social media, in particular, affects the psychosocial functioning, physical health, and general well-being of young adults and adolescents. In order to do this, we searched the literature from January 2000 to May 2023 across five databases: MEDLINE, PubMed, Google Scholar, CINAHL, and Scopus. English-language reviews, cross-sectional research, longitudinal surveys, and articles that looked at how technology affected the target group were included. Case reports, non-comparative research, and publications that omitted the relevant results were all disregarded.

We retrieved information on the author, publication year, study design, sample size and age range, outcome measures, and important findings or conclusions from the 36 papers that fulfilled our inclusion criteria. We used a narrative synthesis to analyze the data, summarizing and presenting the results in a logical and intelligible manner.

According to study results, teens' and young adults' usage of social media is linked to both favorable and unfavorable outcomes in terms of their psychosocial functioning, wellbeing, and physical health. While some research revealed a correlation between social media use and higher degrees of loneliness, sadness, and anxiety, other studies found a correlation between social media use and better social skills, self-esteem, and social support.

Furthermore, the research showed that variables, including age, gender, social media platform, and length of use affect how social media is used. For instance, some studies found that female adolescents and young adults are more likely to experience negative effects of social media use, while others reported that males are more susceptible to negative outcomes. Additionally, the studies suggested that the negative effects of social media use are more pronounced among individuals who use social media excessively or for prolonged periods.

In terms of specific social media platforms, some studies found that Instagram and Snapchat are associated with higher levels of body dissatisfaction, anxiety, and depression, while others reported that Facebook and Twitter are linked to increased social support and self-esteem.

Overall, the findings of this systematic review highlight the complex and multifaceted relationship between social media use and psychosocial functioning, health, and well-being among adolescents and young adults. Further research is needed to better understand the underlying mechanisms and factors that contribute to these relationships and to develop effective interventions and strategies to mitigate the negative effects of social media use and promote positive outcomes.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the relationship between technology usage, particularly in the form of social media, and adolescent depression is intricate and not definitively established. Existing studies suggest a correlation, but the overall data quality is considered low, necessitating a nuanced perspective that acknowledges the diverse applications of technology. The predominant cross-sectional nature of research underscores the need for longitudinal studies to comprehensively grasp the factors influencing adolescent development. It is crucial for professional organizations to guide parents, educators, and institutions based on reliable and consistent information regarding youth and digital technology. Imposing restrictions on teens' access to technology may prove ineffective if these tools are integral for social interactions and the development of digital and relational skills. Emphasizing mental health support during crises and ensuring access to diverse friendships and services emerges as a priority for enhancing teen well-being.

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