

Impact of Social Media on Mental Health

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Abstract: Social media has woven itself into the fabric of our daily lives, playing a significant role in shaping our mental health, emotional well-being, and productivity. Its influence can be both positive and negative, making it an essential topic for exploration. This paper delves into the ways social media affects individuals, pointing out its advantages and disadvantages, while also suggesting strategies for maintaining a balanced and healthy online presence. One of the standout benefits of social media is its power to enhance communication and connectivity. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn enable people to keep in touch with friends, family, and colleagues, no matter where they are in the world. This global connection nurtures relationships, supports professional networking, and offers emotional backing. Plus, social media is a treasure trove of entertainment and information. Users can easily access news, educational resources, and a variety of multimedia content, which helps spread awareness and knowledge. On the flip side, spending too much time on social media can lead to a range of negative effects, such as stress, anxiety, social comparison, and sleep issues. Research shows that prolonged exposure to carefully curated online content can create unrealistic self-expectations, which can harm self-esteem. The FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) phenomenon only adds to this pressure, making users feel like they need to stay constantly updated, which can lead to anxiety and dissatisfaction. Moreover, digital dependency can hinder productivity, as people often find themselves mindlessly scrolling through social media instead of focusing on more meaningful tasks. This distraction can hurt concentration, academic performance, and work efficiency. Another significant concern is how social media affects sleep patterns. Many users have a habit of browsing social media late into the night, which disrupts their sleep cycles. The blue light from screens interferes with melatonin production, leading to sleep deprivation, which in turn affects overall well-being.

Keywords: Social media use, mental health consequences, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, cyberbullying, addiction, FOMO, digital well-being, online conduct, social comparison, psychological distress, sleep loss

INTRODUCTION

With billions of users utilizing social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for connection, sharing, and content consumption.

Social media has numerous advantages, like connecting people and giving access to knowledge, but its effects on mental health are a subject of growing concern. Positive aspects of social media include the ability to express oneself, build a sense of community, and offer emotional support. Studies have revealed that some patterns of behavior or excessive use, however, might have unfavorable effects like melancholy, anxiety, and a drop in self-esteem. Regular exposure to carefully chosen content, such as perfected pictures and lives, might lead people to make unfavorable comparisons between themselves and other people. This "comparison trap" may result in FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), or feelings of inadequacy. Social media can also lead to bad sleep, cyberbullying, and a predisposition to value virtual connections over in-person ones, all of which can worsen loneliness. Social media's effects on mental health differ from person to person, but it's obvious that both the good and bad parts need to be recognized and controlled.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies highlight the negative impact of social media on mental health, particularly in terms of fostering connection, emotional support, and social capital. Mehl and Deters (2012) explored the effect of sharing Facebook status updates, demonstrating that increased interaction through updates can reduce feelings of loneliness. Similarly, Gray et al. (2013) emphasized that strong online social networks ease the transition to college life, helping students adapt more easily. Gonzalez et al. (2004) underscored the role of positive emotions and social support in maintaining adherence to treatment plans for individuals with AIDS, highlighting that optimism and strong social networks contribute to better health outcomes. Maulik et al. (2011) demonstrated that social networks influence the utilization of mental health services following major

life events. Khalaf et al. (2021) also noted that ethical and moderated social media usage can boost self-esteem and promote better mental health outcomes.

On the contrary, several studies point to the negative effects of excessive social media use on mental health.

Bashir and Kaur (2015) examined the dangers of addiction, depression, and anxiety among teenagers due to prolonged social media use. Kalpidou et al. (2011) highlighted that increased Facebook use is associated with poorer social and academic outcomes, particularly for first-year college students. Kim et al. (2009) explored the bidirectional relationship between problematic internet use and loneliness, emphasizing that excessive online engagement often leads to further feelings of isolation. Moody's research revealed that while some users alleviate loneliness through internet interactions, others experience increased loneliness, depending on the quality of their online connections. Kraut et al. (1998) and Murphy (2010) discussed the "Internet paradox," where increased connectivity through the internet often reduces real-world social interaction and lowers psychological well-being, particularly among adolescents. Bano and Sachdeva (2021) investigated the impact of excessive social media use on secondary school students in Delhi, revealing that girls were particularly vulnerable to mental health threats due to prolonged social media exposure. Similarly, Iftikhar and Hussain (2021) analysed the effects of social media on university students, highlighting adverse impacts on sleep patterns, self-satisfaction, anxiety, and depression. Their findings, validated using the Depression,

Scores on the Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS), as well as the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), demonstrate that there are very negative effects of addiction to social media use.

There's definitely a lot of talk about how much some people get hooked on social media and how that can affect their minds. Bashir Mohammed (2021) explored the distinction between active and passive use of social media, emphasizing that passive consumption (e.g., scrolling through others' content) often exacerbates feelings of inadequacy and procrastination. Some research done by Bossard in 2021 and also by Plackett in the same year found that interventions such as taking a break from social media can help reduce some bad feelings like

depression and anxiety and increase overall happiness. A study on social media addiction (2021) found a negative correlation between excessive usage and academic performance, with self-esteem mediating the relationship between social media addiction and mental health outcomes. Interventions aimed at reducing social media addiction proved effective in improving students' mental health and academic efficiency.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the relationship between social media use and mental health.

Wanke (2021) did a study looking at how health workers' mental health fared during this pandemic. That work showed how much social media really shapes how health workers feel. They really explored how communications on social media platforms help (or hurt) mental health. A longitudinal analysis of Twitter data (2021) revealed that social media use increased significantly during stay-at-home mandates, with sentiment scores declining over time, reflecting increased psychological distress. Similarly, a study on the mental health of young Australians during the pandemic (2021) found high levels of anxiety and depression, with 40% reporting severe distress. Increased social media usage was noted, with many participants using these platforms to seek support for suicidal thoughts and self-harm.

There's been a lot of focus too on discrimination along racial lines and its strong connection with social media. Social media plays such a big part these days in the lives of young people. Recently a paper published in *Journal of Youth and Adulthood* (2022) looked at how exposure to racial discrimination through social media affects younger people of color. The study found that both at the personal level and by seeing others go through rough times on social media do spread the seeds of a connection with major depression and drinking issues. Engagement with issues of racial justice really seems to impact health and well being in those ways.

Also, lately we've seen more and more smart learning methods sift through social feeds to catch warning signals for mental health problems early. Mighty algorithms listen deep into the digital chatter to look out for trouble before it gets too loud and frustrating. A study on human-centred machine learning (HCML) explored thematic discourse analysis to identify five discourses shaping the narrative of

human subjects in research. Deep learning models were developed to detect depressive symptoms by analyzing language in social media, offering a promising avenue for early intervention.

Overall, the literature reflects this mixed story about social media and mental health. There are two very different accounts of what this influencer does to people's minds. While moderate and purposeful use can foster social support and emotional well-being, excessive and unregulated usage may lead to addiction, anxiety, and depression. Therefore, a balanced and ethical approach to social media use is necessary to maximize its benefits and mitigate its risks.

There's been quite a lot of research too about the relationship between social media and mental health, and what we've learned is that there are benefits but there are also downsides. Studies such as Mehl and Deters (2012) have shown that publishing Facebook status updates can alleviate loneliness by fostering interaction and engagement. Similarly, Gray et al. (2013) showed how strong online social networks help new college students settle into college life. Researchers like Gonzalez and others have also explored this topic. (2004) emphasized that individuals with AIDS who receive social support through online platforms are more likely to adhere to treatment plans. Beyens (2021) reviewed 25 studies between 2019 and 2021, revealing that the association between social media use and mental health is often weak or inconsistent, although a few studies highlighted significant negative impacts.

Several studies have explored the relationship between social media addiction and mental health impact. Bossard (2021) and Plackett (2021) stressed that interventions such as social media abstinence improved mental health and reduced the negative consequences of excessive use. Bashir Mohammed (2021) elaborated on the distinction between active and passive social media use and concluded that passive use tends to result in procrastination and feelings of inadequacy. A social media addiction study (2021) found that self-esteem mediated the relationship between addiction and mental health outcomes and that interventions aimed to reduce addiction were effective in boosting mental health and academic performance.

The psychological impact of social media use was further exacerbated with the outbreak of the COVID-

19 pandemic. Wanke (2021) considered mental health in healthcare workers in the pandemic period, emphasizing social media exposure's role in psychological distress. Longitudinal analysis of Twitter posts (2021) revealed that as the pandemic expanded, sentiment scores for social media were more negative, which showed increasing psychological distress. The pandemic mental health of young Australians (2021) study indicated high levels of depression and anxiety, and 40% of the respondents had severe psychological distress. Social media usage was on the rise, with most of the participants using these websites to seek assistance for suicidal thoughts and self-injury.

More focus analyzed the operation of racial discrimination on social media and its psychological effects. The Journal of Youth and Adolescence (2022) research affirmed that exposure to racial discrimination online resulted in the mental health problem of adolescents from different racial backgrounds. The study determined that the individual and vicarious social media discrimination mediated racial justice civic engagement and depressive, alcohol use disorder.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning have increasingly been applied to identify mental health conditions from social media data. Work such as Multimodal Mental Health Analysis in Social Media (2021) highlighted the use of computational models to identify depressive symptoms through the analysis of tweets and social media updates. The study noted that unobtrusive identification of mental health symptoms from social media data was potentially a valuable early intervention measure. Similarly, Human-Centered Machine Learning (HCML) studies (2021) examined the use of thematic discourse analysis to identify whether scientific papers describe human subjects as forecasting mental health outcomes on the basis of social media data.

Additionally, teenage social media usage has been extensively studied, particularly its impact on mental well-being and happiness. Schønning et al. (2021) conducted a scoping review of teen social media use and reported that most studies focused on the pathological aspects of social media, while there were fewer studies on whether or not there is scope for good. The findings showed that different social media interactions influence mental well-being and health differently. Additionally, Khalaf et al. (2021) pointed out that while ethical and moderate use of

social media can enhance self-esteem and result in good mental health, excessive use results in anxiety, depression, and poor academic performance.

Another significant area of study is the impact of social media on sleep patterns and its resulting influence on mental well-being. Iqbal (2021) studied the link between excessive use of social media and non-sleep patterns in university students, such as increased anxiety, depression, and decreased self-satisfaction. The findings were validated using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) and revealed that sleep disruptions caused by social media exacerbate mental problems.

The review also specifies the influence of social media on gender-diverse and marginalized groups. Studies such as *The Mental Health and Social Media Use of Young Australians During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (2021) pinpointed that gender-diverse participants were the group with the largest detrimental impact on mental health due to increased time on social media. Moreover, a study on *Exposure to Social Media Racial Discrimination and Mental Health Among Adolescents of Color* (2022) emphasized that racial discrimination on the internet, whether the target is the self or others, was a major contributor to depression and anxiety symptoms. Overall, the existing literature reflects the nuance of social media and mental health interaction. While social media can facilitate connectivity, emotional support, and expression, excessive usage without control can facilitate anxiety, depression, and loneliness. With the growing usage of social media, further study should look at how to ensure healthy digital life, develop interventions, and care for vulnerable individuals in a manner that eradicates the ill effects of social media on mental health

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To examine the positive and adverse impacts of social media on mental health in adolescence and young adults.
- To evaluate the prevalence of social media addiction and its effect on emotional health.
- To examine the contribution of social media to the promotion of self-comparison, anxiety, and depression among users.

- To examine how demographic variables like age, gender, and screen time affect mental health outcomes.
- To explore the possibility of social media as a platform for mental health care, such as peer networks and awareness campaigns.
- To offer evidence-based recommendations to policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals to enhance adolescent and young adult well-being in the digital age.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research is based on a mixed-method strategy, using surveys and interviews to examine the effect of social media on mental health.

1. Participants:

- The research focuses on adolescents (13–19 years) and young adults (20–30 years) who frequently engage with social media.
- A total of about 50 respondents will be picked through random and stratified sampling to allow for diversity in terms of age, gender, and background.

2. Data Collection:

- Online Surveys will provide data regarding the use of social media, emotional impact, and mental health issues.
- Semi-structured interviews of sampled participants will allow for richer insight into personal experience with social media.

3. Data Analysis:

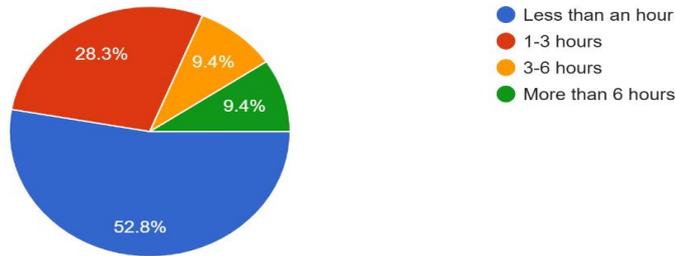
- Statistical analysis will be employed to discover patterns and correlations between mental health and social media usage.
- Recurring themes in users' experiences, for example, self-esteem problems, anxiety, or support-seeking behaviour, will be recognized by qualitative analysis.

4. Ethical Issues:

- All participants will have their informed consent obtained.
- Confidentiality and anonymity will be assured strictly.
- The study will be conducted with adherence to ethical principles for participants' welfare.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

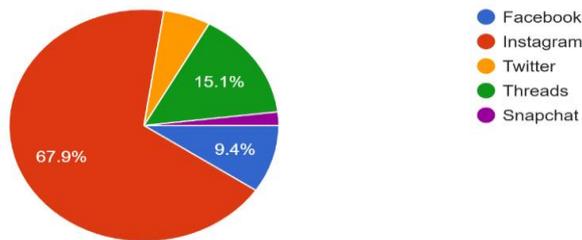
How many hours do you spend on social media daily
53 responses



The breakdown of daily social media use indicates that over half of the respondents (28 individuals) use less than an hour a day on social media, and a minority (5 respondents) used over 6 hours a day. A moderate number (15 respondents) use between 1 and

3 hours, indicating consistent but managed use. The presence of heavy users (more than 6 hours) raises concerns about potential social media addiction, while the lower usage category indicates better time management among a majority of users.

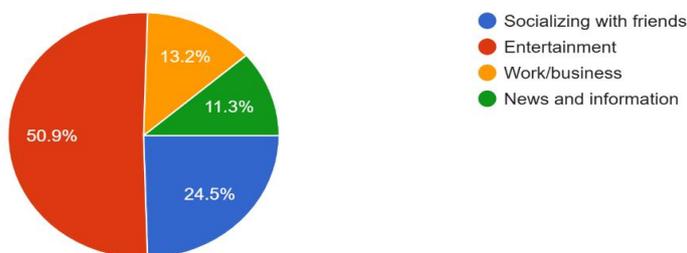
Which Social media platform do you use most?
53 responses



The study indicates that Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube are the most popular social media platforms, with Facebook and Twitter having less engagement. This change indicates that contemporary users are more inclined towards visual and interactive content as opposed to text-based

social media. The prevalence of WhatsApp also indicates a preference for one-to-one communication as opposed to public sharing. Sites such as Facebook, which used to reign supreme in social networking, appear to be losing popularity among younger users.

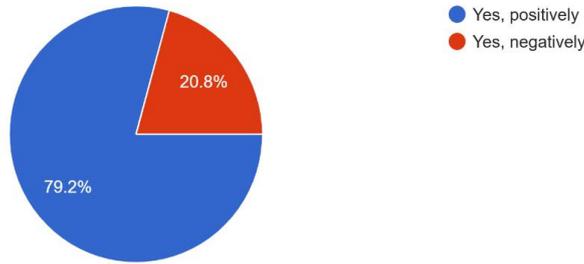
What is your primary purpose of using social media?
53 responses



When questioned regarding the main purpose for social media, most of those surveyed stated that it was entertainment and communication, followed by news, business, and educational objectives. This is an indication that social media continues to be a main

source of recreation as opposed to being used as a productive tool. The results show that although these sites can be used for professional or learning development, they are largely viewed as a means of relaxation and social connection.

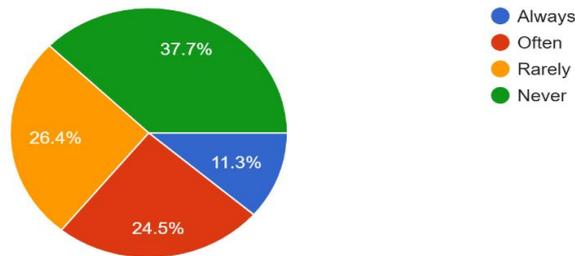
Do you feel social media affects your mood?
53 responses



A significant percentage of respondents confessed that social media influence their mood, with some expressing negative feelings like stress and anxiety, while others reported an increase in positivity. This mixed response suggests that the emotional impact of social media depends on the type of content

consumed and the way individuals engage with these platforms. Those who experience stress might be exposed to negative news, online conflicts, or unrealistic beauty standards, while positive experiences may come from supportive communities and uplifting content.

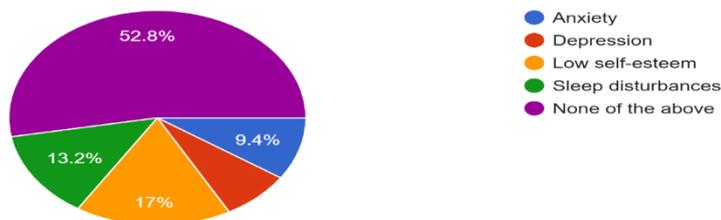
How often do you compare yourself to others on social media?
53 responses



The findings indicate that a large majority of individuals compare themselves to others on social media, which may lead to issues with self-esteem and mental health. Those who constantly compare themselves to influencers or peers might feel inadequate, developing lower self-confidence and

heightened anxiety. Yet others said that they do not compare themselves seldom or never, indicating that they have a more healthy social media consumption model and are less impacted by comparison culture online.

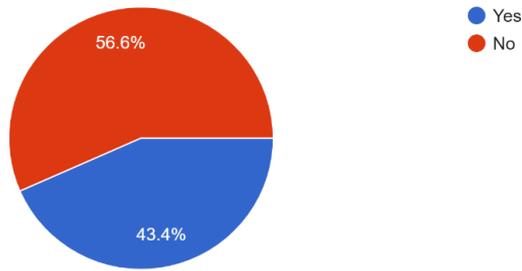
Have you experienced any following due to social media use?
53 responses



Subjects had different emotional responses to social media posts. While others enjoy being happy and connected, some get frustrated, isolated, or self-doubting because of what they read in social media. Such disparity implies that social media can be a two-

edged sword: it can offer positive validation and enjoyment or negative psychological impact depending on use. Promoting careful consumption and subscribing to inspiring content producers might mitigate negative outcomes.

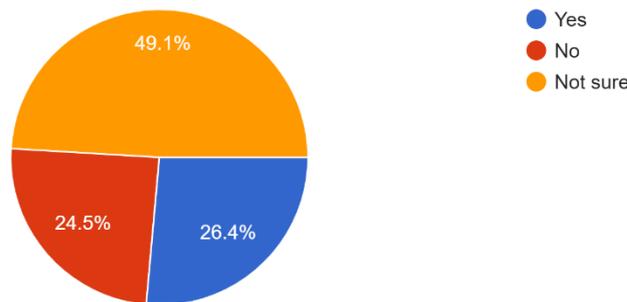
Have you ever taken a break from social media due to impact on your mental health?
53 responses



The statistics show that most of the respondents have gone on breaks from social media because of its effect on their mental well-being. This implies a realization of the ill effects of overuse of social media, such as stress, social pressure, and digital exhaustion. Yet, some of the respondents still use

social media even after realizing its detrimental effect, which may imply a potential addiction or dependence on these sites for everyday interaction. Incentivizing periodic social media detoxes may be healthy for overall health.

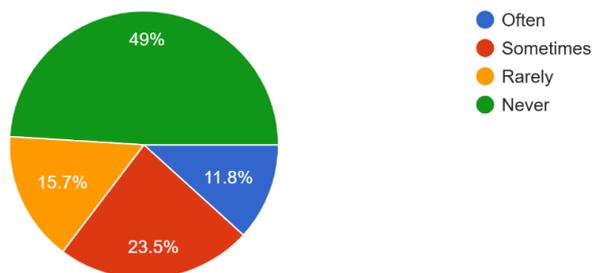
Would you consider reducing your social media usage for better mental health?
53 responses



Most participants confessed suffering from FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) because of social media. It is a situation where users feel obligated to remain constantly up to date on social happenings, trends, and peer activity. Fearing to be left out, users end up frequenting social media compulsively, heightening

anxiety and digital addiction. Others also exhibited signs of social media dependency, whereby they cannot cut down on its use despite acknowledging its harmful effects. Self-regulation mechanisms and digital detox tactics can assist in coping with this problem.

Has social media ever distracted you from important tasks?
51 responses

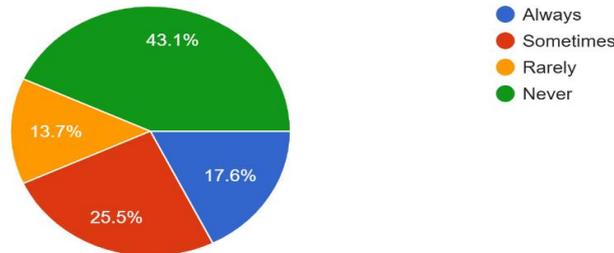


A high percentage of participants confessed that social media distracts them from tasks of value, like learning or work. This points to a universal problem where attention is diverted by social media, hence causing procrastination and productivity loss.

Endless scrolling through engaging material often leads to poor time management, and it becomes challenging to concentrate on responsibilities that are important. Setting screen times or productivity software limits would minimize these distractions.

Do you use social media right before sleeping?

51 responses



The information indicates that most of the respondents sleep after using social media, which is worrying since too much exposure to screens before bed has been known to interrupt sleep patterns. The blue light from screens can also disrupt the production of melatonin, which makes it difficult to fall asleep and lowers the quality of sleep. Individuals who regularly watch stressful or thrilling content at night are also likely to feel restless, anxious, or unable to relax. Minimizing nighttime screen use and adopting offline relaxation strategies can enhance sleep quality.

when they are aware of its adverse consequences. Distractions caused by social media are common, disrupting work, academic performance, and sleep patterns mostly among individuals who scroll late into the night, which messes up their sleeping patterns and their general health. While positive content and social connections benefit some users, others feel emotional distress, frustration, and a heightened fear of missing out (FOMO), which makes it hard to disconnect.

FINDINGS

The research findings reveal that social media has a profound impact on mental health, influencing mood, self-esteem, productivity, and emotional well-being. While a majority of respondents use social media in moderation, a significant portion exhibits excessive engagement, with some spending over six hours daily, leading to concerns about digital addiction and unhealthy screen time habits. Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube are the most common platforms, mostly for entertainment and communication, while professional and academic use is minimal. The research points out that a significant problem is social comparison, with many participants describing themselves as inadequate or self-conscious on account of idealized versions of life presented online. This further leads to anxiety, stress, and a sense of social pressure.

These discoveries emphasize the necessity of responsible social media use, as long-term use without moderation can negatively impact mental wellbeing, productivity, and actual-world relationships. Adopting healthy digital practices, content moderation, and detox from social media will allow users to find harmony between digital and real-world experiences. Social media is an effective means of communication and networking, but its psychological implications need to be regulated so that it increases, not detracts from, mental wellbeing.

Recommendations of the Study

In addition, a significant majority of the respondents have stopped using social media temporarily because of their mental health issues, but they still use it even

In order to counteract the ill effects of social media and foster mental health, it is important to facilitate responsible social media use. Individuals must be made conscious of their screen time, establish daily time limits, and employ apps that monitor their digital intake. Equally, advocating digital detox activities—like allocating "social media-free" periods—can contribute to stress relief and promote the practice of engaging in offline pursuits like reading, exercising, or socializing in person.

The other central strategy is heightening awareness about social comparison, as unrealistic representations on social media can be detrimental to self-esteem. Users need to be informed about the artificially constructed nature of online profiles, subscribe to genuine influencers, and embrace a growth mindset to reverse negative self-perception. Regulating social media use prior to sleep is also necessary for improved sleep hygiene. Refraining from phone use at bedtime, activating "Do Not Disturb" mode, and practicing soothing activities can promote overall well-being.

Using social media for productive purposes can also help shift its impact from entertainment to educational and professional growth. Platforms like LinkedIn and online learning communities provide meaningful engagement, benefiting career development. Managing FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) is equally important—users should focus on real-life experiences rather than constantly keeping up with others online, practicing self-validation, and limiting exposure to superficial content.

Promoting healthy online interaction is another good practice. Social media must encourage positive interactions, constructive discussions, and caring communities. In addition, educational campaigns on the psychological effects of social media must be conducted in schools, workplaces, and communities, with governments and institutions partnering with mental health professionals to foster digital well-being.

Finally, parental involvement and digital literacy among children are needed in ensuring online responsibility. Parents must oversee children's social media use, and schools must incorporate digital literacy initiatives. Social media platforms also have to take their part by developing responsible algorithms, providing customizable feeds, and promoting fact-checked, positive content to eliminate misinformation and toxicity. By doing these, people and institutions can collectively contribute towards a healthier digital landscape.

CONCLUSION

This research indicates the twofold influence of social media on psychological well-being with both negative and positive influences. Although it accelerates communication, entertainment, and education, excess use creates anxiety, stress, self-comparison, digital dependence, and sleeping

disorders. Several users experience FOMO and distractions that limit their productivity and happiness.

But careful use—like restricting screen time, consuming positive content, and taking social media breaks—can offset these dangers. Social media companies also have a responsibility to encourage healthy digital behaviour. And so, social media's effect is ultimately a function of how it is utilized, and embracing a balanced use model means that it remains a means of connection, not a cause of distress.

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APA FORMAT LINKS

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