

# Effects of Social Media on the Well-being of Children and Preteen

S.Sivasankara Rao<sup>1</sup>, Dr Prasadu Peddi<sup>2</sup>, Dr E.Madhusudhana Reddy<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Research Scholar, Department of CSE Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala University, Rajasthan, India.*

<sup>2</sup>*Professor, Department of CSE& IT, Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala University, Rajasthan, India.*

<sup>3</sup>*Principal & Professor in CSE, Sree Dattha Group of Institutions, Hyderabad, India.*

**Abstract**—This analysis scrutinizes studies regarding the influence of social media on the health of children and teenagers. Pertinent research was retrieved from the Medline, Embase, and PsycINFO databases. The results indicate that the most substantial health impacts of social media on this age group pertain to mental health, especially in relation to self-esteem and general wellness. Issues such as cyberbullying and 'Facebook Depression' were noted, with a link observed between social media use and self-esteem and body image concerns. However, pinpointing cause and effect remains challenging, likely influenced by the individual characteristics of the youth. There is a notable gap in research regarding the effects of social media on younger children. Further investigation is necessary to determine which individuals are most vulnerable to social media's negative impacts and to develop strategies to mitigate these risks. This would enable health care professionals to better educate parents and young people about these issues.

**Index Terms**—social media, cyberbullying, Facebook Depression,

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Analyzing the trends and implications of internet and social media use among children aged 3 to 12 years through to the year 2023 involves projecting from past data and recognizing the evolution in technology and its integration into daily life. Given the steady increase in internet usage from 2009 to 2012, we can infer a continuation of this trend, likely reaching near-universal levels among children in this age group by 2023. This would be due to broader internet access, the proliferation of child-friendly and

educational online content, and the advent of new technologies designed for younger users.

By 2023, it's plausible that virtually all children in the 3–12 age bracket are using the internet in some capacity. This ubiquity is facilitated by increased access to technology, with schools integrating digital tools into the curriculum from an early age. Greater parental acceptance of digital platforms as educational and developmental tools. Advancements in child-safe technologies and platforms, making the internet more accessible and safer for younger children.

### 1.1 Evolution of Online Activities Among Children

The evolution of online activities among children reflects a growing integration of digital tools into daily routines, especially in educational and recreational contexts. The percentage of children engaging in educational activities online is likely to remain high or even increase as digital resources become more advanced. Tools such as AI-powered tutors, virtual reality (VR) learning experiences, and interactive learning apps are reshaping how children learn, making education more engaging and accessible.

Content Consumption remains a dominant activity. Platforms like YouTube Kids and other child-focused streaming services offer music, videos, and interactive storytelling, drawing consistent engagement from young users. Social networking is also evolving, with safer and more age-appropriate environments designed for younger audiences. These platforms offer social interaction opportunities but also raise important concerns related to screen time, privacy, and exposure to social media pressures at an early age.

Online gaming continues to grow in popularity among children. Games increasingly include social components that allow interaction with peers in monitored, child-safe environments. Additionally, content creation is on the rise. Platforms and apps that enable storytelling, video making, drawing, and other creative expression encourage children to not just consume content but actively contribute to it.

### 1.2 Key Considerations for 2023

As children's online presence increases, digital literacy and safety education become critical. Teaching children how to navigate the internet responsibly, identify risks, and protect their personal information is essential to their development in a connected world. Furthermore, the impact of screen time on children's physical and mental health continues to be debated. Balancing online activities with sufficient offline interaction, physical movement, and family engagement is necessary to support healthy development.

Privacy concerns are also at the forefront. With children sharing more information online, ensuring the protection of their data through robust privacy laws and improved parental controls is a top priority. Statistics show that a significant percentage of youth are active online—over 60% of American teens aged 13–17 have at least one social media profile. With this widespread usage, it becomes increasingly important to examine the potential impacts of social media and internet use on children's health and well-being, which is the focus of this review.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this investigation is to explore the impact of social media on the well-being of children. To achieve this, we conducted an extensive review of relevant literature, searching databases such as Medline, Embase, and PsycINFO for appropriate studies. Our search strategy included using specific subject headings or keywords like 'social media,' 'Facebook,' 'Twitter,' 'YouTube,' and 'MySpace,' along with terms related to 'mental health,' 'cyberbullying,' 'self-perception,' 'health,' and 'physical well-being.' Studies that focused exclusively on adults were omitted from our analysis. A single author (HG) carefully examined all chosen articles, outlining the main themes presented in each. While there was a limited focus on children in the literature,

it was evident that the most pronounced effects of social media were related to mental health. Key themes identified included self-esteem and overall wellness, cyberbullying, 'Facebook Depression,' online risk-taking behavior, and communication strategies with youth.

### Self-worth and Wellness

Previous research was largely concentrated on the internet and its connection with self-esteem and overall well-being, at a time when social media platforms were just beginning to emerge. In that era, the internet was mainly used as a means for information retrieval, rather than for social interaction. Key studies from this period, like The Home net study, revealed that even minimal internet use, as low as 3 hours per week, was associated with increased depression levels and reduced perceptions of 'social support' (defined as the sense of being cared for), especially among young users.

In more recent investigations, attention has shifted towards social networking platforms and their impact on self-esteem and mental health. For instance, a Dutch study involving 881 young individuals highlighted that positive feedback received on their CU2 (See You Too) social networking profiles correlated with enhanced self-esteem and well-being, whereas negative feedback was associated with declines in these aspects. Additionally, a randomized controlled trial conducted among university students compared the effects of viewing one's own Facebook profile, looking in a mirror, or a control condition, revealing that self-esteem was highest when participants interacted with or updated their Facebook profiles. This finding was attributed to participants' ability to selectively present themselves by curating their profile content.

Subsequent research has highlighted connections between regular use of social media platforms, notably Facebook and Myspace, and trends towards narcissism, as well as a possible tendency towards social isolation among young individuals. Tiggemann and Slater discovered a link between internet usage, especially participation in social networking sites, and body image concerns in a study involving young participants. Furthermore, the quantity of online friends was found to correlate with increased body image worries.

In an examination of Facebook usage among college students,<sup>10</sup> a relationship was observed between self-

esteem and various Facebook behaviors. Specifically, individuals with lower self-esteem were more inclined to 'untag' unflattering photos of themselves and more likely to accept friend requests from individuals they were not closely acquainted with. Schwartz<sup>11</sup> found that increased time spent on Facebook was associated with lower self-esteem,

with self-esteem inversely correlated with the frequency of status updates and the intensity of Facebook usage. Similarly, Murphy<sup>12</sup> concluded that spending more time on Facebook and having a larger number of Facebook friends were associated with lower self-esteem levels.

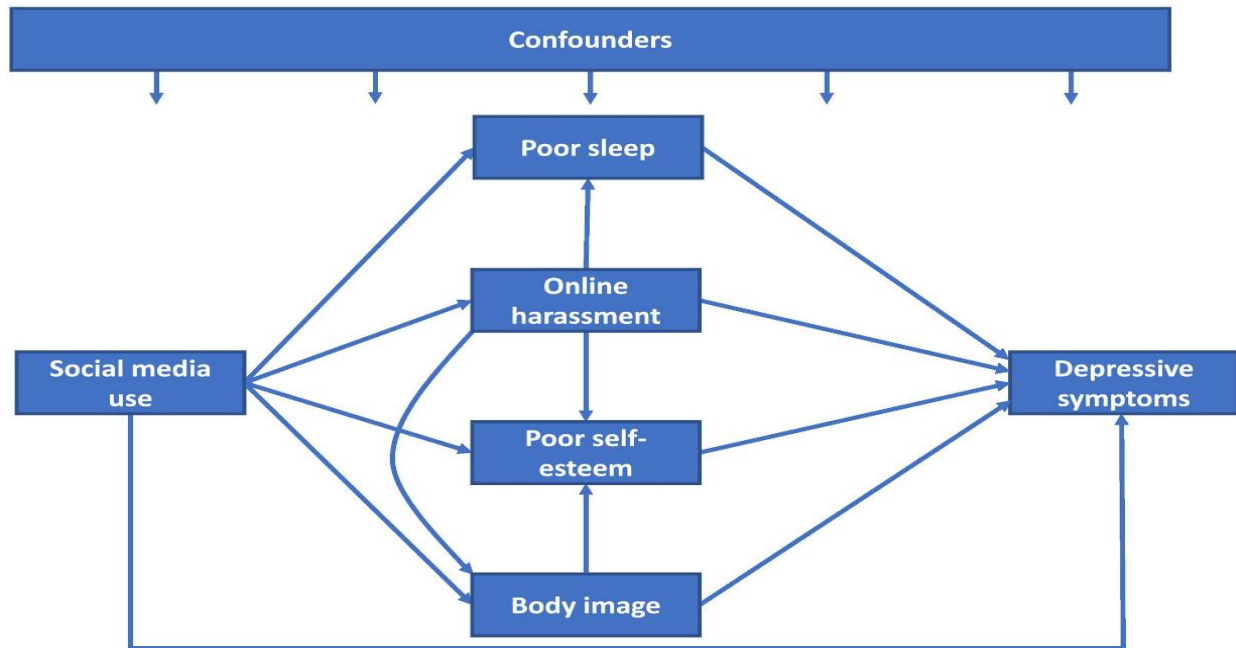


Fig: Social media use and depressive symptoms – summary of path analysis.

This diagram illustrates the complex relationship between social media use and depressive symptoms, showing both direct and indirect pathways, with multiple mediating factors and the influence of confounders. Here's a breakdown of each component and the flow of influence:

#### Main Variables:

1. **Social Media Use** – This is the starting point of the diagram. Social media use refers to the time spent engaging with platforms like Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok. It can influence mental health through exposure to unrealistic standards, cyberbullying, or social comparison.
2. **Depressive Symptoms** – This is the end outcome the model is trying to explain. Depressive symptoms include persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, low energy, and loss of interest in activities. They can also involve changes in sleep, appetite, concentration, and self-esteem.

#### Mediating Factors:

Social media use affects depressive symptoms both directly and indirectly through several intermediate variables:

1. **Online Harassment**: Online harassment refers to abusive behavior conducted through digital platforms, such as threats, bullying, or spreading false information. It can negatively impact mental health, leading to stress, anxiety, and depression.
2. **Poor Sleep**: Poor sleep refers to inadequate or disturbed rest, including difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up feeling unrefreshed. It can impair mood, concentration, and overall mental health, contributing to depressive symptoms.
3. **Poor Self-Esteem**: Poor self-esteem is a negative perception of one's own worth, abilities, or value. It can lead to feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and vulnerability to mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

4. **Body Image:** Body image refers to how a person perceives, thinks, and feels about their physical appearance. Negative body image, often influenced by social media, can lead to dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and mental health issues like depression. Direct Pathways to Depressive Symptoms:

- Social media use → Depressive symptoms
- Online harassment → Depressive symptoms
- Poor sleep → Depressive symptoms
- Poor self-esteem → Depressive symptoms
- Body image → Depressive symptoms

### 3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table: Summarizing the key factors from the diagram and their relationships

Factor	Description	Directly Affects
Social Media Use	Engagement with social platforms	Online Harassment, Poor Sleep, Poor Self-Esteem, Body Image, Depressive Symptoms
Online Harassment	Digital bullying or abuse	Poor Sleep, Poor Self-Esteem, Depressive Symptoms
Poor Sleep	Disturbed or insufficient sleep	Depressive Symptoms
Poor Self-Esteem	Negative self-perception	Depressive Symptoms
Body Image	Perception of physical appearance	Poor Self-Esteem, Depressive Symptoms
Depressive Symptoms	Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and disinterest	N/A

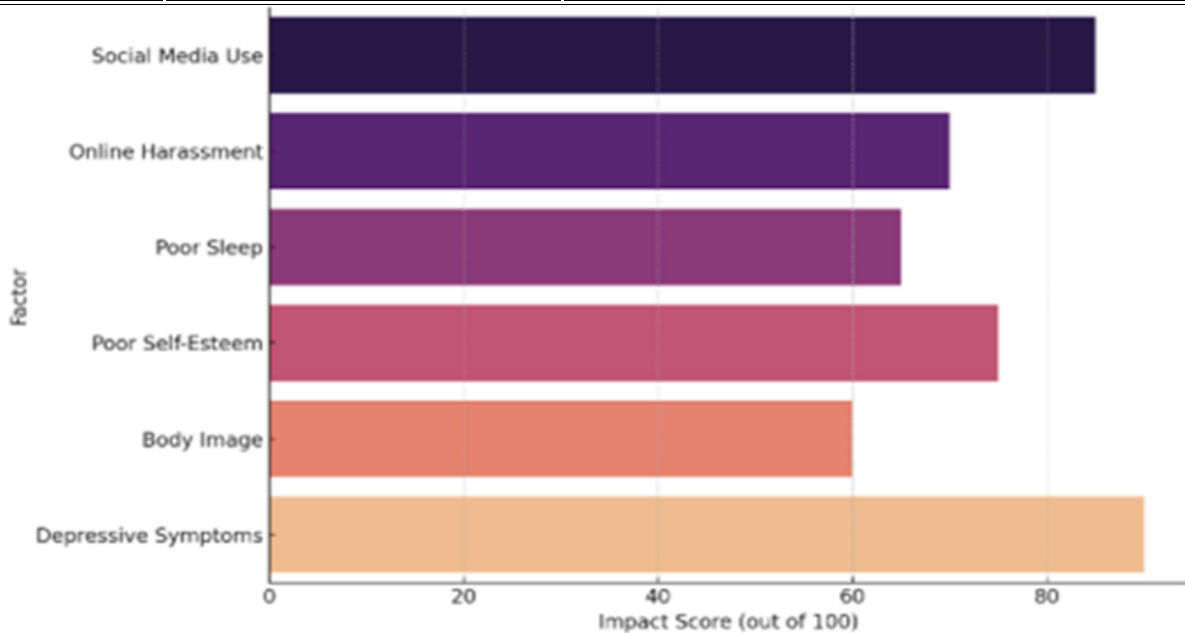


Fig: Impact of Factors Related to Social Media and Depression

The bar chart illustrates the impact scores of key factors influencing depressive symptoms related to social media use. "Depressive Symptoms" holds the highest impact score, followed closely by "Social Media Use" and "Poor Self-Esteem." "Online

Harassment" and "Poor Sleep" also show significant contributions. "Body Image" has a relatively lower but notable impact. This visualization helps highlight which variables most strongly affect mental health outcomes.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Social media has become an integral part of children and young people's lives, and its usage is continually on the rise. While it can positively impact the health and well-being of this demographic, it also presents risks to their vulnerability. These risks can be mitigated through appropriate website design, identifying those most susceptible, and devising strategies to help them navigate these risks. While some social media platforms could implement safety features to minimize risks for children, it's improbable in platforms catering to adults due to the constraints of these controls.

However, there's a notable lack of research in this area, particularly concerning the impact of social media on younger children. Consequently, there's a dearth of guidance available for parents and educators on the appropriate use of social media with children. Studies in adults have established a link between self-esteem and social media use, suggesting potentially significant health implications for children as well. This literature review aims to raise awareness among caregivers about the potential benefits and hazards of children and young adults engaging in social media networking. It also calls for researchers to enhance theoretical understanding in this domain, increase societal awareness, and provide practical guidance to stakeholders such as healthcare practitioners, parents, and platform developers.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Messina ES, Iwasaki Y. Internet use and self-injurious behaviors among adolescents and young adults: An interdisciplinary literature review and implications for health professionals. *Cyberpsychol. Behav. Soc. Netw.* 2011; 14: 161–8.
- [2] Australian Bureau of Statistics. 4901.0 – Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities, Australia, Apr 2012. 2012.
- [3] AACAP. Facts for families' pages – Children and social networking. [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org). 2011. Available from: [http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/Facts\\_for\\_Families\\_Pages/Children\\_and\\_Social\\_Networking\\_100.aspx](http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Facts_for_Families_Pages/Children_and_Social_Networking_100.aspx) [accessed September].
- [4] Kraut R, Patterson M, Lundmark V, Kiesler S, Mukhopadhyay T, Scherlis W. Internet paradox: A social technology that reduces social involvement and psychological well-being? *Am. Psychol.* 1998; 53: 1017–31.
- [5] Gonzales AL, Hancock JT. Mirror, mirror on my Facebook wall: Effects of exposure to Facebook on self-esteem. *Cyberpsychol. Behav. Soc. Netw.* 2011; 14: 79–83.
- [6] Gross EF, Juvonen J, Gable SL. Internet use and well-being in adolescence. *J. Soc. Issues* 2002; 58: 75.
- [7] Valkenburg PM, Peter J, Schouten AP. Friend networking sites and their relationship to adolescents' well-being and social self-esteem. *Cyberpsychol. Behav.* 2006; 9: 584–90.
- [8] APA. Social networking's good and bad impacts on kids. 2011. Available from: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2011/08/social-kids.aspx> [accessed 6 August 2015].
- [9] Tiggemann M, Slater A. NetGirls: The Internet, Facebook, and body image concern in adolescent girls. *Int. J. Eat. Disord.* 2013; 46: 630–3.
- [10] Tazghini S, Siedlecki KL. A mixed method approach to examining Facebook use and its relationship to self-esteem. *Comput. Human Behav.* 2013; 29: 827–32.
- [11] Schwartz M. The usage of Facebook as it relates to narcissism, self-esteem and loneliness. Pace University. 2010.
- [12] Murphy AA. The relationship between Facebook usage and age, social anxiety, self-esteem, and extraversion. Walden University. 2012.
- [13] Le Heuzey MF. Social media, children and pediatricians. *Arch. Pediatr.* 2012; 19: 92–5.
- [14] Pujazon-Zazik M, Park MJ. To tweet, or not to tweet: Gender differences and potential positive and negative health outcomes of adolescents' social internet use. *Am. J. Mens Health* 2010; 4: 77–85.
- [15] Impact of social media on the health of children and young people, Deborah Richards,1 Patrinya HY Caldwell2 and Henry Go1, *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health* 51 (2015) 1152–1157
- [16] The evolution and impact of long short-term memory networks. *Journal of Nonlinear Analysis and Optimization*. Vol. 15, Issue. 1: 2024 ISSN :1906-9685(2024).2584-2589.