

Digital Detriments: Unraveling the Psychological Consequences of Social Media

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Abstract

This research paper investigates social media's impact on mental health. Given the rising prevalence within social media use, concern about its implications on mental health is rising. The paper presents a systematic review of the literature, synthesizing findings from empirical studies that investigate the mental health and social media use are related outcomes. The paper examines both favorable and unfavorable characteristics of social media use, including its potential for social support and connection, as well as its association with negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation. The paper also examines potential moderating factors, such as age, gender, and the type of social media platform used. Overall, the findings suggest despite the fact that social media might improve mental health, it can also be associated with negative outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations such as adolescents and young adults. The significance of these studies for population safety and potential future study avenues are discussed in the paper's conclusion.

Key words: Social Media, Mental Health, Anxiety, Depression.

1. Introduction

Our everyday lives now revolve on social media, with billions of individuals utilising multiple platforms to communicate and exchange knowledge. Although its numerous advantages, social media's potential effects on mental health are causing considerable worry. Although some research has suggested a social media platform might have a favorable effects on mental health by promoting social support and connection, others have found that it can have negative consequences such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation. This paper presents a systematic

review of the literature relating to social media's effects on psychological health, examining both positive and harmful aspects of social media use, as well as potential moderating factors.

In the States and across the world, extremely few individuals have mental illnesses access to appropriate mental health care (Patel et al. 2018). By improving the standard, accessibility, and extent of services, the broad reach and nearly universal use of social networking sites may provide innovative ways to overcome these gaps in the current mental health care system. Recent studies have looked at social media consumption trends, the impact from social media on mental wellness, and the possibility to improve therapy delivery by utilising social media's interactive and recognition features. Yet, how to balance these worries with possible advantages when it comes to the risks and potential harms that social media may have for mental health is still up for debate (Orben and Przybylski 2019).

Taking into mind its effect on psychological wellness as well as early efforts to develop strategies for healing problems with mental health via social media, we analysed current studies concerning the utilization of media platforms by people who have mental illnesses in this article. With the terms "mental health" or "mental disorder" and "social media," we sought for current peer-reviewed studies in Medline and Google Scholar. We also browsed the references of current reviews and other related studies. We talked about the risks, potential repercussions, and crucial safety precautions related to mental health and social networking.

Till 2020, there were 3.8 billion social media users worldwide, or almost 50% of the worldwide people (We Are Social 2020). Recent research show that patients with mental problems have more access to and usage of mobile technologies, such as smartphones (Firth et al. 2015; Glick et al. 2016; Torous et al. 2014a, b). In accordance with this, there is mounting evidence that individuals suffering from mental diseases use social media extensively. This covers studies that look at usage of these popular platforms across a variety of settings and condition types. Early study from 2015 found that younger individuals utilised social media more regularly than older people, with over half of a sample of mental patients using it (Trefflich et al. 2015).

According to a study that analysed data from 2017, more people with mental illnesses are now using social media. These rates are comparable (approximately 70%) among persons with major mental illness undergoing treatment and low-income groups from the broader public (Brunette et al. 2019). (Brunette et al. 2019).

Similar to this, a recent study found that patients receiving community-based psychological treatment for a significant mental illness utilised social media at rates that were greater than those of the general population, exceeding 70% of respondents (Naslund et al. 2016). Similar findings were seen among older and middle-aged adults with mental illness who sought assistance from peer support groups, where 72% of respondents acknowledged using social media (Aschbrenner et al. 2018b). Similar findings were made by another study, which revealed that 68% of those who experienced their first psychotic episode daily used social media (Abdel-Baki et al. 2017).

Those who self-identified as having a schizophrenia spectrum condition said surfing social networking websites was one of their most frequent activities while using digital devices, taking up around two hours each day, according to a survey conducted by the National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) (Gay et al. 2016). Between the ages of 12 and 21, 97% of adolescents and young adults with mood and psychotic disorders utilised media platforms, with an average daily use of more than 2.5 hours (Birnbaum et al. 2017b). According to this, 98% of adolescents (aged 13 to 18) recruited from community mental health clinics reported using social media, with YouTube ranked as the most popular platform, next by Instagram and Snapchat (Aschbrenner et al. 2019). The reasons why persons with mental disorders use social media and the benefits they think using the internet will provide have both been studied in research.

2. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the above study is to find out how social media impacts mental health. The study aims to provide a systematic review of the literature, synthesizing findings from empirical studies that investigate the link among media platforms use and results in mental health. The study seeks to examine both

positive and negative aspects of social media use, including its opportunities for social support and connection, as well as its association with negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation. The study also aims to examine potential moderating factors, such as age, gender, and the type of social media platform used. The ultimate goal of the study is to provide insights that can inform public health efforts and guide future research to promote the positive aspects while minimising its potentially harmful impacts on mental health of social media use.

3. Review of Literature

The literature on the impact of social media on mental health is vast and varied. Some studies suggest that social media use can have a positive impact on mental health, while others suggest the opposite. One of the key ways in which social media can affect mental health is through social comparison. Social comparison refers to the process of comparing oneself to others. On social media, people often present an idealistic view of oneself, that may also cause poor self-esteem and a sense of worthlessness. This, in turn, can lead to anxiety and depression. Another way in which social media can affect mental health is through the fear of missing out (FOMO). FOMO is the fear that one is missing out on something important or exciting. Social media can exacerbate this fear by presenting a never-ending stream of updates and news. This can lead to increased levels of anxiety and stress. Social media can also impact mental health through cyberbullying. Cyberbullying refers to the use of technology to harass or bully others. Cyberbullying can be particularly harmful as it can be done anonymously, making it difficult to identify the perpetrator. Victims of cyberbullying may experience anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Finally, social media can impact mental health through the disruption of sleep. Many people use social media before bed, which can interfere with the quality of their sleep. Anxiety and sadness are only two of the many mental health conditions that can result from poor sleep.

Social media platforms offer virtually continual chances for interaction and engage with people wherever you are and at any time. For persons with mental disorders who have difficulty interacting in person, this immediate availability to

conversation may be essential for encouraging social participation. Social media, for instance, may facilitate communication and interaction for these individuals because poor social functioning is a hallmark of schizophrenia spectrum disorders (Torous and Keshavan 2016). One research found that people with schizophrenia found it simpler to participate and make social relationships on social media (Miller et al. 2015). An important feature of social media, particularly for persons with profoundly stigmatising medical conditions, such as substantial mental problems, may be the ability to contact with others anonymously (Berger et al., 2005; Highton-Williamson et al., 2015).

Owing to the demands that are put on the people, such as financial challenges, work commitments, rigorous curriculum loads, and social policies, psychological issues like melancholy and anxiousness are on the rise among college students. College students have a lot of responsibilities, yet many are distracted by their mobile devices and online profiles, which keeps them from completing their chores (Cain, 2018).

The risk of illness and death is increased by depression and anxiety (Primack et al., 2017). According to the research done by Primack et al., sadness and anxiety are more likely to emerge the more time people spend on social media. Even worse, psychological disorders are linked to several other serious health conditions. Others gave examples of how continuous use of social media might result in physical symptoms, loneliness, social impairment, low self-esteem, and sleep issues. It could also cause depression and anxiety symptoms (El-Khoury et al., 2021; Hou et al., 2019; Andreassen et al., 2017). Body pains, such as discomfort in the arms, chest, back, legs, or other places, are known as somatic symptoms. There may be neurological problems such as headaches, vertigo, or fainting. These somatic symptoms might interfere with a person's daily life even though they are not always the result of an underlying medical illness (Cleveland Clinic, 2018).

Together with the rise in unfavourable using social media and anxiety are both on the rise (Vannucci et al., 2017). Anxiety was divided into two groups in one study: dispositional anxiety and anxiety-related disability. The researchers collected information from 563 adult volunteers in the United States between the age of

eighteen and twenty-two, using a cross-sectional survey. The findings showed that as social media usage grew, dispositional anxiety rose (Vannucci et al., 2017). Whereas anxiety-related impairment refers to anxiety that interferes with everyday living, dispositional anxiety was connected to momentary anxiety after utilising screen-based social media that went away on its own (Vannucci et al., 2017).

According to a different study, using social media more often results in higher stress, which can contribute to sadness and anxiety (Hendricks, 2020). According to Lyons (2020), social media use and anxiety go hand in hand. High users have greater anxiety. They turn to social media in an effort to reduce their worry as a result of this, but they just make it worse (Lyons, 2020). Researchers are not clear which causes what in a loop between worry and social media use.

Hampton et al. (2015) sought to establish a link between social media use and psychological stress. According to the findings of their study, women experience more stress than men do. Also, having a partner and a greater level of education are components that, on average, reduce stress (Hampton et al., 2015).

Additional unfavourable effects of smartphone use might include sleeplessness, jealousy, and FOMO, which is associated with anxiety (Cain, 2018). Another study notes that the surge in teenage social media use coincided with an increase in urgent problems including suicide and non-suicidal self-harm. In connection to the extent of social media usage, females suffered from poor mental health the most; spending more time on social media increased the probability of suicide in females compared to males (Vaughen, 2021). Regarding interpersonal connections, several kids expressed their irritations with constant contact since peers want a response immediately away. A person could experience stress and pressure to constantly respond. The drawback of Snapchat streaks is that some users started to complain that it occasionally seemed like a chore. There were occasionally unintended effects while breaking the streak. When it was simply a simple error, the individual who could have forgotten to send a snap could be blamed for the friendship's termination (Weinstein, 2018).

Social comparison orientation (SCO), a characteristic based on one's level of comparison to others, was proposed by Vogel et al. (2015). The amount of time spent on social media and the detrimental psychological effects that result can be attributed to SCO. Individuals with high SCO are more prone to have self-doubt and ambiguity about who they are, and they are also more likely to utilize social media at a higher rate because they are drawn to the many opportunities for online comparison. When compared to people with low SCO, high SCO persons showed "lower trait self-perceptions, worse state self-esteem, and greater negative affect balance" (Vogel et al., 2015, p. 253). Quality of life is influenced by mood and sentiments, which are connected to affect balance.

Use of social media more often is linked to more psychological suffering (Radovic et al., 2017; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). While observing other people's carefully manicured lifestyles, those with lower levels of life satisfaction are driven farther into misery. In another research, over half of the upset people tried to heavily alter their images, retake photos, erase comments, or publish new photos to make themselves appear better (Radovic et al., 2017).

Burrow and Rainone (2017) ran an experiment to see whether a person's self-esteem was correlated with the amount of likes they received on a post. It was discovered that those with a strong sense of purpose in life would not be as negatively impacted by the amount of likes on their posts. According to the study, persons with objectives and motivations are less susceptible to social acceptance since they have their own personal purpose in life. Users with poor self-esteem may develop a dependency on social media because they use it to make up for their lack of confidence, which just makes the situation worse. Another problem with users who lack self-confidence is that they may use social media in an effort to improve their psychological condition but end up unintentionally making it worse (Hou et al., 2019).

Finally, as technology is still developing, it is pointless to disparage social media's development (O'Reilly et al., 2018)! The COVID-19 Epidemic and the development of technology have both contributed to a gradual decline in face-to-face contact, despite the fact that humans are social beings that cannot survive

without some form of communication (Hou et al., 2019).

Instagram is a social media site where users may communicate with one another by sharing photos. Addiction can be a bigger issue on Instagram than on other websites. The act of shooting and publishing images on Instagram is the primary factor contributing to the potential for greater harm. Individuals are encouraged to take pictures since failing to do so will leave them without any recollections or documentation of their actions (Baer, 2014; Sperling, 2021). The temptation to take a snapshot in order to subsequently share it online could have strong addictive effects. So long as they can share it on their feed, people feel driven to participate in events. Naturally, individuals would want to modify images to their liking if they want to get a lot of likes on Instagram.

4. Research Methodology

The study will be a systematic review of the available research on social media's effects on mental health. The sample will consist of published studies that examine social media's effects on mental health. The studies will be identified through a comprehensive search of online databases such as PubMed, PsychInfo, and Google Scholar. The inclusion criteria will be studies published between 2010 and 2023, in English language, that examine social media's effects on mental health. Studies that focus on specific populations, such as adolescents or college students, will also be included.

4.1 Findings of the Study

Use of social media is linked to a higher risk of depression and anxiety, particularly in persons that use social media sites often.

- The Social media usage can result in social comparison and feelings of inadequacy, which can negatively impact mental health.
- Social media use can disrupt sleep patterns, which can have a detrimental effect on mental health.
- The content of social media, such as exposure to cyberbullying or violent imagery, can have a detrimental effect on mental health.
- The use of social media for social support and social connection can have a positive impact on mental health, particularly for individuals who may be

socially isolated.

- According to specific variables including age, gender, and pre-existing mental health disorders, the effect of social media on mental health may differ.
- The thinking, feeling, and behavioural steps that online platforms may influence are complicated and multidimensional, as are the processes by which they do so.
- In broad terms, there is a complex issue about how social media affects psychological wellness that requires additionally research and attention. Despite the fact that social media may have both positive and negative effects on psychological wellness, individuals must use it carefully and take steps to better their own psychological wellness as well as overall happiness.

4.2 Potential Mechanisms

There are several potential mechanisms through which social media can impact mental health. One mechanism is the impact on social support. Social support refers to the emotional and practical support provided by others. Social media can provide a platform for individuals to connect with others and receive support. Yet if people don't receive the support they need, it can also result in feelings of loneliness and seclusion. Another potential mechanism is the impact on self-esteem. Social media can give an idealised representation of reality, It might result in thoughts of dissatisfaction and a lack of self-worth. This can, in turn, lead to anxiety and depression. Finally, social media can impact mental health through the impact on sleep. Social media can be addictive, and individuals may spend hours scrolling through their feeds before bed. This can interfere with the quality of their sleep, leading to a range of mental health issues.

5. Conclusion

Organisations can effectively address the psychological effects of social media use, assist employees' mental health, and build a healthier digital work environment by putting these management implications into practise. In the end, this may result in greater employee wellbeing, work satisfaction, and productivity.

To minimise the potential detrimental impact of social media on mental health, several recommendations can be made. First, individuals should be mindful of their social media use and avoid excessive use before bed. Second, social media platforms should take steps to prevent cyberbullying and ensure that users feel safe and supported on their platforms. Finally, more Research is required to fully comprehend how social media affects mental health.

5.1 Managerial Implication: Fostering Employee Digital Well-Being

Managers must address this issue head-on and encourage digital well-being among their staff as businesses become more aware of the potential harm social media may cause to mental health. Some management ramifications from the study "Digital Detriments: Unravelling the Psychological Consequences of Social Media" are as follows:

- Programmes for employee education and awareness In order to educate staff about the possible dangers of excessive social media use and to provide techniques for keeping a healthy digital balance, organisations should invest in thorough education and awareness programmes. Workshops, training sessions, and resources that stress self-care and ethical social media use can be found in these programmes.
- To reduce distractions and prevent the blending of personal and professional lines, managers should create and convey clear limits for social media usage during working hours. Setting expectations and limitations is crucial to ensuring that staff members are aware of appropriate social media usage while engaged in work-related tasks.
- Encourage Digital Detoxes and Breaks: To support employees' mental health, businesses should encourage them to take regular breaks from social media and digital detoxes. Managers can set an example by taking a break from their gadgets and promoting a culture that encourages doing so. Promoting a healthy work-life balance and encouraging employees to participate in offline activities can greatly improve their general mental health.
- Promote a Supportive Workplace: Managers should foster a supportive workplace that values candid communication and awareness of mental health

issues. Organisations can assist individuals in navigating the potential drawbacks of social media and other digital platforms by creating avenues for employees to access support, such as private counselling services or mental health resources.

- **Incorporate Mindfulness Practises:** Promoting mindfulness in the workplace can assist staff members in being more self-aware and in controlling their use of social media. Businesses can provide mindfulness training or include quick mindfulness exercises in daily activities to provide employees the opportunity to briefly step away from technology and concentrate on their well-being.

5.2 Research Limitations

- **The scope of the study:** The study is limited to a systematic review of the existing literature on the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes. As such, it relies on the quality and quantity of the literature available, and there may be gaps in the understanding of the impact of social media on mental health that are not covered by the literature.
- **The quality of the literature:** The study is limited by the quality of the literature available. While efforts were made to include high-quality empirical studies in the review, there may be variations in the quality of the studies, including issues such as bias, methodology, and sample size.
- **The potential for self-selection bias:** Many of the studies included in the review rely on self-reported data, which may be subject to self-selection bias. For example, individuals who experience negative mental health outcomes may be more likely to report negative experiences with social media use.
- **The challenge of establishing causality:** The study is limited by the challenge of establishing causality. While the literature suggests a relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes, it is difficult to determine whether social media use directly causes negative

outcomes or whether other factors contribute to the relationship.

- **The potential for publication bias:** The study may be limited by the potential for publication bias. Studies that report negative findings are more likely to be published than those with positive findings, which may result in an overestimation of the negative effects of social media use on mental health.

While these limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the study, they do not detract from the significance of comprehending how social media affects mental health and the demand for more study in this field.

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