

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH**MARIYA THOMAS**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of social media on mental health and relationship between social media and mental health. Social media has a significant impact on mental health. Social media enhances connection, increases self-esteem, improves relationship with others, potential for social support and community building and a sense of belonging. But it can lead to tremendous pressure, pressure to compare oneself with others, loneliness, isolation and sadness, cyber bullying, propagation of unrealistic standards regarding the concept of beauty.

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization (WHO) Mental health is a state of well being that enables people to cope up with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is the basic right of every human. Mental health is needed for every human for their personal, community and socio-economic well-being. Social media is a digital technology that has various websites and applications for communication, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. People use social media to interact with friends, family and various other groups. Some of the examples of social media includes Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, twitter, reddit etc. Social media has a reinforcing nature. Using the social media activates the brain's reward center by releasing a dopamine, "a feel-good chemical" linked to pleasurable activities like food, sex and social interaction. Some of the online platforms are associated with anxiety, depression and even physical ailments. They are designed to be addictive.

HYPOTHESIS

Increased use of social media is associated with higher levels of anxiety, loneliness and depression due to various factors such as cyber bullying, social comparison, unrealistic standards. Individuals face a sense of disconnection from real life interactions, decreased time spent on offline activities and dissatisfaction with one's own life when comparing with other lives portrayed online.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Igor Pantic (2014) conducted a study on Online social networking and mental health. Online social networking has significantly altered how individuals engage and communicate during the last ten years. However, it's unknown if some of these modifications could have an impact on typical human behavior and lead to mental health issues. Prolonged usage of social networking sites (SNS), like Facebook, has been linked to indications and symptoms of depression, according to several research. Furthermore, some writers have suggested that some SNS practices, particularly in kids and teenagers, may be linked to low self-esteem. Comparable findings from other research have indicated that social networking has an agreeable effect on self-esteem. Even now, there is disagreement concerning the link between social networking use and mental health issues, and there are many obstacles to overcome in the field of study on this topic.

Luca Braghieri et al, (2022) studied social media and mental health. Using a unique natural experiment—the gradual rollout of Facebook throughout US colleges—we offer quasi-experimental estimates of the effects of social media on mental health. Our analysis uses a generalized difference-in-differences empirical technique in conjunction with student mental health data collected around the time of Facebook's growth. We discover that the introduction of Facebook to a college had a detrimental effect on the mental health of the students. It also raised the probability that students would indicate that their poor mental health was affecting their ability to function academically. Further research on the mechanisms at play indicates that Facebook's promotion of negative social comparisons is the cause of the outcomes.

Fazida Karim et al, (2020) studied on social media use and its connection to mental health. Mental health issues are exacerbated by social media use. This comprehensive study provides an overview of how social network use

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affects mental health. After using a variety of inclusion and exclusion criteria, fifty papers were shortlisted from Google Scholar databases. Of these, sixteen papers were selected, and each manuscript underwent a quality assessment. There were eight cross-sectional research, three longitudinal studies, two qualitative studies, and several systematic reviews among the publications. Anxiety and depression were the two mental health outcomes into which the findings were divided. Engaging in social media activities can positively impact the realm of mental health. Nonetheless, there are significant variations because of the cross-sectional design and sampling's methodological constraints.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- ❖ Social media can facilitate social connections and support networks and enhance well being but excessive use can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and depression.
- ❖ Social media offer avenues for connection and self-expression but exposure to negative content can contribute to mental health issues.
- ❖ Heavy social media use correlates with heightened feelings of depression, anxiety especially for the young adults and adolescents.
- ❖ Cyberbullying, harassment and exposure to triggering contents can affect the mental health of the people.
- ❖ Increased use of social media is seen in adolescents and teens which affects their academic performance, lower grades and disconnected relationships with family and society.
- ❖ Social media use percentage is higher in females compared with males. Young girls and even mothers are addicted to the use of social media. Young mothers are becoming care less about their child because of the social media addiction.
- ❖ Adolescent boys are becoming addicted to online games which affects their mental health. Social media addiction and addiction to gaming can lead to the loss of their life.

CONCLUSION

The impact of social media on mental health is a complex and an evolving issue. Social media and its uses has its own positives and negatives associated with impact on the mental health of an individual. Social media can provide connection, support, information but excessive comparison can lead to anxiety, depression, loneliness. It's crucial to balance social media and its usage with the offline activities. The social and personal life of people are greatly influenced by social media. Studies shows that nowadays children, adolescents and parents are addicted to social media. Social media addiction affects the academic and work life of people, thus affecting their mental stability. When compared with males, females have a greater percentage of addiction towards social media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Digital well-being education – Promote digital literacy and healthy online behaviors from an early age so that the individuals will be able to critically evaluate content, identify and recognize the harmful situations and promote self-care in digital world.
- Mental health resource integrations – Integrate mental health resources and support services to social media platforms by making the information easily accessible and reducing the stigma around seeking help.
- Promotion of positive content – Encourage the creation and promotion of positive content, uplift and support the contents that fosters a connection with people, inspiration and mental health well-being.

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