

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH**Ayan Sarkar*, Sanjana R. Singh and Ashish Bhaktprahlad Singh**East West College of Pharmacy, Bengaluru, Karnataka,
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Social media has transformed communication, allowing people to connect globally for various purposes, including business, entertainment, and news consumption. However, the rapid growth of social media abuse has raised concerns about its potential negative effects on mental health, especially among young adults. This study aims to explore the diverse effects of social media on mental health, with a specific focus on its detrimental impacts. Through an examination of existing research, we seek to understand the allure of negativity on social media platforms and its potential harm to the mental well-being of young individuals. Additionally, the importance of parental involvement in guiding youth's social media use is emphasized. The influence of social media platforms promoting

harmful behaviors such as substance abuse, animal cruelty, and the consumption of harmful substances. The efficacy of awareness programs like "World Cancer Day," "World No Tobacco Day," and "World Drug Day" in countering the negative influences of social media is discussed. Ultimately, this study calls for collective action to address the negative aspects of social media for the betterment of future generations, particularly the youth.

KEYWORDS: Social media, mental health, cyberbullying, professional life, social networking.

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are extremely popular among young people, serving as the primary means of communication with friends and family for several reasons. One significant advantage is the convenience of connecting with numerous individuals simultaneously, regardless of their location or distance.

Moreover, these platforms are accessible to a wide range of people since they are free to use. Consequently, checking social media regularly has become a common habit among youth. However, the extensive use of social media by young people has raised concerns about its potential impact on their mental health, particularly in terms of life satisfaction and depressive symptoms. Depression, being a serious condition that significantly affects health and can increase morbidity and mortality, arises from complex interactions between social, psychological, and biological factors. In this context, the term "social media-induced depression tendency" (SMIDT) has been coined, referring to the inclination to experience depression because of problematic social media usage. High-frequency usage of social media has been associated with adverse health-related consequences, including depression, anxiety, and even suicide. Unhealthy internet use has been shown to trigger depressive episodes, manifesting in symptoms such as sadness, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, lack of energy, diminished self-confidence, self-blame, suicidal thoughts, indecision, and inattention.^[1]

Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Cyberbullying refers to the act of sending or posting harmful or cruel texts and images using the internet or other digital communication devices like cell phones. This harmful behavior can take the form of threats, harassment, stalking, impersonation, humiliation, trickery, and exclusion. Researchers have identified various factors that can predict cyberbullying victimization and perpetration on social media, including online behaviors and individual differences.^[2] Victims of cyberbullying on social media, particularly adolescents, often experience a range of negative well-being outcomes. These can include heightened levels of psychological distress and physical complaints, increased depressive symptoms and anxiety, diminished life satisfaction, and even thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts.^[3]

Impact on Sleep and Well-Being

Despite the advantages of the internet, excessive use can lead to problematic social media habits that negatively impact mental well-being. Additionally, internet addiction can cause sleep disturbances among users. Problematic social media use is characterized by compulsive, pathological, or troublesome internet habits that result in evident psychological and social impairments, affecting users' physical and mental health. A previous longitudinal study has already demonstrated a negative association between Facebook use and users' well-being. Not long ago, a cross-sectional study was undertaken, involving 1,791 students from three

universitiesin.

Qazvin, Iran. The researchers examined the relationship between problematic social media use, mental distress in the morning and evening, daytime sleepiness, and the participants' sleep quality and insomnia as potential factors that mediate these effects.^[4] Recent research indicates that engaging in social media use driven by the "fear of missing out" during nighttime may lead to sleep disruption and negatively impact the overall quality of sleep. To address this gap in knowledge, this study aims to explore the connections between FoMO, psychological well-being, compulsive social media use (CSMU), and sleep hygiene concerning problematic sleep patterns in adults both in academic and employment settings. The findings of this study reveal that psychological well-being has an influence on CSMU, and in conjunction with sleep habits, it affects the relationship between FoMO and problematic sleep outcomes.^[5] In their study, the researchers discovered that young adults aged 19–32 in the U.S. spend an average of 61 minutes per day using social media. Additionally, more than half of the participants reported experiencing medium to high levels of sleep disturbance, aligning with previous research. Furthermore, the study revealed consistent, significant, and increasing correlations between social media use and sleep disturbance among the participants.^[6]

Addiction and Impulse Control

The overview section provides a concise perspective on the global issue of Internet and social media addiction. Researchers estimate that approximately one to eight percent of users develop addiction to these platforms. While Internet and social media addiction is prevalent in many countries, it appears to be particularly pronounced in South Korea, China, and Taiwan among Asian nations.^[7] Social media addiction is a type of Internet addiction characterized by an excessive urge to use social media. Those affected by social media addiction exhibit an uncontrollable compulsion to log on and use social media, often showing concerns that surpass normal levels. Studies have found that social media addiction can have a significant impact on mood, cognition, physical and emotional reactions, as well as interpersonal and psychological aspects. Approximately 12% of users across social networking sites are reported to be affected by this addiction. Numerous research studies on social media usage and mental health have demonstrated that prolonged use of platforms like Facebook is positively linked to mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression, while negatively affecting long-term well-being. For instance, spending more

time on social media has been associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms among both high school students in Central Serbia and young adults in the United States. Additionally, certain types of social media use, like non-academic purposes such as video gaming, and social media multitasking, have been linked to reduced academic performance. It is crucial to distinguish between frequent social media usage, which is common among many individuals and does not necessarily indicate addiction, and social media addiction, which leads to unfavorable consequences when the compulsion to use online social networking becomes uncontrollable.

Most studies exploring social media addiction have primarily focused on Facebook addiction, which has been associated with increased depression, anxiety, and insomnia, while negatively affecting subjective well-being, subjective vigor, and life satisfaction.^[8] This study investigated the correlation between social media addiction and the mental health and academic performance of college students. Additionally, it explored the role of self-esteem as a potential mediator for these relationships. Furthermore, an intervention was implemented to assess its effectiveness in reducing social media addiction and its negative consequences. The results demonstrated that the intervention successfully reduced social media addiction, leading to improvements in the students' mental health and academic efficiency. These findings contribute to the existing empirical knowledge on social media addiction and hold significant theoretical and practical implications.^[9] Excessive use of the Internet and social media is often likened to well-established substance and behavior addictions, such as smoking, alcoholism, and gambling. Individuals who are addicted to social media exhibit similar brain alterations to those with substance abuse and excessive gambling habits. A comprehensive examination of various excessive behaviors, including drinking, smoking, overeating, gambling, shopping, exercise, and Internet use, reveals a lack of consensus on their conceptualization. The literature mostly links excessiveness to recognized addiction concepts, sparking debates about whether the term "addiction" is applicable to all excessive behaviors, as not all of them are listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Similarly, discussions surrounding excessive social media use revolve around the controversy of the term "social media addiction" and the recognition of excessiveness in this context. Consequently, evaluating excessiveness concerning social media necessitates considering both the quantity and quality of time spent on these platforms.^[10]

Influence on Body Image and Eating Disorders

Various research methods, including surveys, correlational studies, randomized control trials, and covariance structure modeling, have consistently demonstrated the significant influence of media on the development and perpetuation of eating and shape-related disorders. Among the individual difference variables, the internalization of societal pressures concerning prevailing beauty standards has emerged as a critical factor that moderates or even mediates the media's impact on women's body satisfaction and eating dysfunction. The presence of problematic media messages in portrayals of eating disorders has been recognized by researchers, prompting the identification of intervention strategies to counteract these harmful perspectives. Social activism and social marketing approaches are recommended as effective means to combat negative media messages. Notably, the media itself has the potential to be a constructive platform for disseminating accurate and de-glamorized information about eating and shape-related disorders.^[11] Numerous studies have delved into the link between social media usage and body image as well as eating concerns among adolescents and young adults. Notably, among Australian high school students, exposure to appearance-related content on the Internet, primarily through social media platforms, was connected to a drive for thinness and reduced weight satisfaction. Among the various social media platforms studied, Facebook showed the strongest association with body image concerns out of 11 popular websites. Similarly, a significant sample of Australian adolescents aged 13–15 reported higher levels of body image concerns if they were Facebook users compared to non-users. Likewise, a study involving over 600 Dutch adolescents aged 11–18 revealed that social media use was linked to both appearance investment and a desire for cosmetic surgery. Additionally, among a sample of Belgian female adolescents, exposure to sexually objectifying content on social media correlated with self-objectification and increased body surveillance. Taken together, these findings suggest that social media use, particularly on Facebook, has been consistently associated with heightened body image concerns among adolescents.^[12] Throughout history, the feminine body ideal has undergone changes and, over time, become more uniform due to the increasing impact of mass media. Consequently, the ideal female body shape has shifted towards thinness, even as the average woman's size has progressively increased. This chapter aims to review survey, experimental, and longitudinal data, highlighting the influential role of media in contributing to body-image disturbance and eating dysfunction among women and girls. Additionally, recent theoretical approaches are outlined, and promising new avenues in the realms of prevention and early intervention are summarized. Multiple empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that both print, and television media hold significant sway

over the body ideals and eating behaviors of females.^[13]

Impact on Academic and Professional Life

The predominant trend among secondary school students in Nigeria is the frequent use of social media platforms as their primary mode of communication and interaction. However, these platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, are often used negatively and inappropriately, leading to a lack of beneficial outcomes for the students. Furthermore, many secondary school students in Nigeria have developed antisocial behaviors, such as engaging in fraudulent activities and adopting undesirable character traits, which are particularly prevalent on social media. Consequently, a significant number of students have been neglecting their reading habits, as they spend excessive amounts of time on social media platforms. This overindulgence in social media has adversely affected the reading culture among secondary students in Nigeria, as they prioritize spending hours on these platforms over dedicating time to study their academic materials. Moreover, the prevalence of online fraud (yahoo) has become rampant in various areas of the country, particularly in rural, urban, and Riverine regions, with teenagers mistakenly viewing it as a shortcut to amass wealth quickly. Tragically, this has led to a growing calamity among secondary school students in Nigeria.^[14]

Disinformation and Mental Health

Misinformation spreads faster and wider than accurate information, leading to significant real-world consequences like vaccine controversies and the dissemination of unproven cancer treatments. Public health research and practice communities must take urgent action to address health misinformation on social media. "Health misinformation" in this context refers to health-related claims that contradict the current scientific consensus and are factually incorrect. While other types of information also pose challenges for health communication, this editorial focuses specifically on patently false information. Addressing misinformation is complex due to various factors, including psychological elements like emotions and cognitive biases that hinder straightforward efforts to counter it with accurate information. Interventions such as recommending corrective articles have shown mixed efficacy. Additionally, identifying and reaching individuals exposed to misinformation is challenging due to the diversity and volume of social media, which enables the creation of information silos. Users can curate their feeds and find similar content through automated algorithms, reducing exposure to contradictory viewpoints within their networks.^[15]

Media Literacy Programs

Concerns regarding the adverse impacts of social media have prompted a growing emphasis on the importance of media literacy as a potential solution. Present interpretations of media literacy predominantly stem from traditional mass media, emphasizing the examination of prevalent content and its evaluation using established norms. This article introduces a fresh conceptual framework termed "social media literacy". Departing from the established mass media-oriented paradigms, SoMeLit revolves around the individual user's interactions within the realm of social media. These interactions are intricately linked to the user's selection of messages and associations within networks, forming a dynamic relationship. Consequently, the focal points of analysis in SoMeLit encompass an individual's choices and the underlying values that shape and are shaped by the construction of their digital reality within the social media landscape. Moreover, this framework also incorporates the evolving attributes of social media platforms, which delineate the boundaries within which an individual constructs their digital reality. The implications of these novel components and dimensions within SoMeLit are explored with regards to their potential impact on future research directions, educational initiatives, and practical interventions. In traditional (mass) media literacy, the primary subject of scrutiny is the media content itself. This content is divorced from the individual, having been generated by media establishments and professionals. It reflects the viewpoints of these institutions as well as their supporters, sponsors, and advertisers. However, in the context of social media literacy, the analytical focus needs to shift. The central point of examination becomes the individual themselves, encompassing their choices of content and their network of social interactions. The individual's presence in the social media sphere is interdependently connected to their choices regarding the consumption and engagement with content, as well as the cultivation, modification, and upkeep of their networks across diverse platforms. This suite of skills, constituting social media competence in analysis, entails the ability to introspectively monitor and observe one's behavior, motivations, and outcomes related to social media usage.^[16]

Privacy Concerns and Online Safety

While social media platforms potentially offer novel avenues to improve mental health services, their associated privacy risks have not garnered substantial consideration. This study delved into the privacy hazards linked to employing social media for mental health purposes, particularly from the standpoint of individuals with severe mental illnesses. The outcomes of this investigation provide initial glimpses into the specific privacy concerns that individuals

with serious mental illnesses harbor while utilizing social media for mental health-related matters. These revelations hold the potential to guide the development of safer and more effective social media interventions in the future.^[17]

Impacts on Personal Relationships

Social media has the potential to exert influence on various aspects of your life, including your relationships with family members, friends, and partners. The ramifications of this influence can be both advantageous and detrimental, as social media usage can either exacerbate existing relationship issues or contribute positively if used wisely. Employing social media in a constructive manner can contribute positively to your relationships with others. The establishment of healthy boundaries regarding social media and relationships stands as a crucial initial step. While experiencing jealousy is a natural and common emotion, it becomes problematic when it's allowed to escalate unchecked, leading to potential harm in relationships. Jealousy often stems from internal insecurities, often prompting us to conjure unlikely scenarios within our minds. These fabricated scenarios may fuel feelings of anger and insecurity. In moments of insecurity, observing a photograph of your partner with a friend might trigger suspicions of infidelity. Alternatively, feelings of personal inadequacy might drive you to scrutinize your partner's Instagram likes, attempting to deduce their potential attraction to others. In this process, it becomes easy to project these complex emotions onto the content encountered on social media. Even if your partner remains completely faithful, your actions might seemingly uncover "evidence" that seemingly justifies your jealousy. If not addressed in a healthy manner, social media has the potential to perpetuate feelings of jealousy. In a study conducted in 2018, it was discovered that heightened use of social media is linked to a reduction in the quality time spent with loved ones, a phenomenon termed "partner phubbing. Nevertheless, it's important to note that this study relied on self-reported data, warranting further investigation. The captivating and easily scrollable nature of social media platforms can make it difficult to disengage from your phone and focus on your partner or friend, leading to partner phubbing. Consequently, an excessive amount of time and attention can be directed towards these platforms, unknowingly diverting focus from loved ones. In line with research from 2021, partner phubbing, also known as pphubbing, demonstrates a negative correlation with relationship satisfaction. This behavior can induce sensations of isolation, jealousy, and diminished intimacy.

The phenomenon of comparison, often facilitated by social media, can indeed steal away one's

sense of contentment. Despite an inclination to make comparisons, especially through social media, viewing "Relationship Goals" posts on platforms like Instagram can evoke feelings of inadequacy in one's own relationship, even if it's usually a source of happiness. A study from 2018 focused on the connection between social media and relationship satisfaction. Individuals who perceived social media as a significant aspect of their lives often reported lower levels of satisfaction within their romantic relationships. A study conducted in 2021 revealed that heightened Instagram usage was linked to decreased relationship satisfaction, coupled with increased conflict and negative outcomes. This dissatisfaction and conflict can subsequently lead to heightened Instagram usage. Social media platforms often serve as avenues for showcasing the highlights of relationships, including gifts, romantic getaways, and grand gestures. In contrast, the routine aspects of everyday life with your partner might appear mundane in comparison. Even if ostentatious gifts or extravagant vacations aren't necessarily your priorities, there might be a lingering concern that your relationship is subpar, driven by comparisons to the seemingly perfect relationships showcased online.^[18]

Comparison and Envy

Adolescents typically exhibit a predisposition towards social groups that are particularly susceptible to experiencing adverse psychological and behavioral effects stemming from their usage of social media platforms. Considering the malleability of teenagers' behavior within the social circles they are part of, it is plausible that the pivotal influencers shaping teenagers' behavioral outcomes arising from social media usage could be their parents and peers. In light of the growing apprehension regarding the unfavorable repercussions of teenagers' engagement with social media, this research endeavors to delve into the correlation between the intensity of social media usage and teenagers' inclination to partake in social comparison and feelings of envy. To unravel this dynamic, data were collected from 250 teenagers via a snowball sampling approach. The outcomes, deduced from a partial least-squares regression analysis, unveiled intriguing patterns. Notably, the positive association between the extent of social media use and feelings of envy was markedly more pronounced among teenagers whose parents engaged in comparisons between their offspring and peers within an environment characterized by heightened in-group competition. Conversely, the positive correlation between the intensity of social media use and the propensity for social comparison was distinctly elevated solely within the cohort of teenagers embedded within a peer-group that exhibited heightened in-group competition tendencies.^[19]

Gaming and Social Media Addiction

In the latter part of the 20th century, there was a notable surge in internet accessibility and the emergence of digital technologies like personal computers and smartphones. As of July 2021, for instance, the user count on social media stood at an impressive billion active users. These rapid technological advancements have triggered profound social transformations, and their extensive consequences are still unfolding. Nevertheless, the comprehensive impacts of these changes on mental health and psychological well-being remain inadequately comprehended. Psychological disorders often exhibit pathoplastic characteristics, with their nature, progression, and prevalence significantly influenced by shifting social dynamics. This extends to the influence of contemporary and emerging digital technologies on mental health issues. Examples include illness-related anxiety, psychoses, mood disorders, and eating-related psychopathology. Gaining insight into how digital technologies can contribute to mental health problems holds the potential to refine treatment strategies and preventive measures, and even question the safety of specific digital technologies. Apart from pathoplasticity, digital technologies themselves can foster problematic usage patterns or behavioral addictions. Social media and online/digital gaming, among the most widely adopted digital technologies, have sparked concerns within public mental health circles due to addictive or problematic usage. Illuminating the risk factors, cognitive susceptibilities, and underlying mechanisms of such problematic patterns of usage will be instrumental in devising effective intervention and prevention strategies. To attain a deeper comprehension of the influence of digital technologies on mental health, it's crucial to investigate both established and emerging challenges. This involves delving into the latest research encompassing topics like problematic social media use (PSMU) and gaming disorder. This encompasses a spectrum from case reports of clinical cohorts to review articles exploring the intricacies of problematic social media use, its associated risk factors and mechanisms, as well as gaming disorder, its risk factors, and mechanisms. Considering the intricate relationship between cyber-psychopathology and culture is essential. Elements such as the internet, the emerging concept of the metaverse, body image, and eating disorders warrant exploration. Additionally, understanding the interplay between social media and mood disorders, including the mechanisms involved, is vital. The impact of the internet and the metaverse on conditions like PTSD, particularly concerning traumatic online content, merits investigation. Cyberchondria, the phenomenon of illness anxiety spurred by online information, and its connection to the internet's vast resources, is another area of study. Moreover, the intersection of the internet, the evolving metaverse, virtual and augmented

reality, and psychosis necessitates research. Exploring the potential of psychotherapeutic interventions through gaming and social media is an innovative avenue that merits exploration, as does the impact of the metaverse on mental health.^[20]

Digital Detox and Strategies for Well-Being

The pervasive integration of information technology (IT) into society has far-reaching effects, extending to the realm of work and its boundaries. Professionals, particularly those engaged in knowledge-based tasks, find themselves immersed in the use of digital devices for a significant portion of their working hours. Additionally, the allure of meticulously designed social media platforms and digital entertainment applications occupies a substantial portion of people's leisure time, reaching unprecedented levels. Recent findings highlighted that a staggering 33.1 million individuals in Germany utilize the Internet "multiple times a day," with an additional 11 million indicating nearly constant usage. Evident from scholarly exploration, this cumulative screen exposure has the potential to yield profound repercussions on individual well-being. Indeed, the adoption of IT can give rise to what is termed as "technostress," a phenomenon encompassing any negative impact on attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, or even physiological aspects induced either directly or indirectly by technological interaction.^[21]

In today's world, smartphones have become ubiquitous. On average, we allocate nearly three hours each day to smartphone usage. Unlike other electronic gadgets, smartphones provide the convenience of utilizing their functions virtually anytime and anywhere, leading to a multitude of implications for our daily routines. Various terms are employed by both the general public and the scientific community to describe the act of abstaining from electronic devices. Commonly used terms encompass abstinence, breaks, disconnection, detox, timeouts, or unplugging. Despite the widespread prevalence of digital detox, which, by its definition, offers an opportunity to alleviate stress and focus on in-person social interactions, uncertainty lingers regarding its effectiveness as a strategy to foster a healthy lifestyle within the digital age. Remarkably, a comprehensive assessment of the efficacy of digital detox through systematic review is absent, resulting in a body of literature comprising isolated findings. Nevertheless, the potential of digital detox interventions as a means to mitigate the potential adverse impacts of digital technologies on health and well-being necessitates a synthesized overview of the existing empirical evidence. Furthermore, identifying effective digital detox interventions could serve as a compass for the formulation and dissemination

offuture interventions in this realm. Hence, the objective of the current systematic review is to systematically juxtapose findings pertaining to digital detox interventions. This paper will concentrate specifically on research that investigates temporary abstention from smartphone usage, distinct from similar abstentions from alternative devices such as televisions, radios, or portable music players. This choice stems from the unique nature of smartphones that facilitate a multitude of functions at any time and place, contributing to perpetual interconnections among individuals, ultimately generating heightened sources of distraction and stress. Excessive smartphone utilization, particularly on social networking sites or instant messaging platforms, has been associated with compromised well-being and clinical phenomena such as depression. In response to the negative repercussions of smartphone overuse on aspects like well-being and social relationships, digital detox interventions have emerged as potential solutions. These interventions involve timeouts from electronic devices, particularly smartphones, either encompassing complete disconnection or targeted restriction of specific smartphone usage segments. However, up until now, the effectiveness of digital detox interventions in fostering a healthy digital-era lifestyle has remained enigmatic. The purpose of this systematic literature review is to address this ambiguity. It aims to elucidate whether digital detox interventions hold the potential to enhance outcomes such as health, well-being, social relationships, self-control, or performance. This comprehensive review aims to consolidate the current body of evidence regarding the correlations between digital detox and various outcomes, including factors like usage duration, performance, self-control, well-being, health, and social relationships.^[22,23]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the rapid growth of social media abuse has raised concerns about its potential negative impact on mental health, particularly among young adults. This study has highlighted the diverse effects of social media on mental well-being, with a specific focus on its detrimental influences. The data generated through social media provides valuable insights for rapid ideation and client-centric innovation. It represents a significant asset for data-driven innovation due to the connections and relationships it fosters between firms and their stakeholders. However, effectively harnessing social media's potential for innovation remains a challenge for many firms, requiring further research and exploration in this realm. Negative influences, such as cyberbullying, sleep disturbances, addiction, and body image concerns, have been identified as critical issues affecting the mental well-being of individuals using social media. Addressing these negative impacts necessitates collective action and the exploration of

various strategies. Mental health awareness campaigns on social media can counteract harmful content and promote positive outcomes. Collaboration with social media platforms to implement features that foster well-being and mental health among users could prove beneficial. Evaluating the effectiveness of media literacy programs can empower young individuals to critically interpret social media content and protect their mental well-being. Cross-country studies and longitudinal research will shed light on unique challenges and long-term effects of social media use on mental health. It is crucial to continue exploring the interactions between social media and mental health to create a healthier digital environment. By identifying and implementing effective interventions, we can mitigate the negative influences of social media and ensure the well-being of future generations, particularly the youth, as they navigate the ever-evolving world of social media. In summary, the integration of technology, especially smartphones, has become pervasive in our lives. While digital detox strategies have gained attention, their true effectiveness remains uncertain due to a lack of comprehensive review. The potential benefits of digital detox in enhancing health, well-being, self-control, and social relationships require a synthesized assessment of existing evidence. By addressing this gap, we can gain a clearer understanding of the intricate interplay between digital detox and overall well-being in our increasingly digital world.

ABBREVIATIONS

SMIDT: social media-induced depression tendency SoMeLit: social media literacy

FoMO: fear of missing out

PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

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