

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of social media has raised concerns regarding its impact on psychological well-being. While social media platforms provide opportunities for connection, information sharing, and self-expression, they have also been linked to various mental health issues. This abstract explores the effects of social media use on psychological well-being, focusing on both positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, social media can enhance feelings of social support, foster a sense of belonging, and provide platforms for individuals to share experiences, particularly for marginalized groups. However, extensive use of social media has been associated with negative effects, including increased anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness. These outcomes are often attributed to the constant comparison to idealized images, cyberbullying, and the pressure to maintain an idealized online persona. Furthermore, the addictive nature of social media can lead to decreased face-to-face social interactions, disrupting real-life relationships and further harming emotional health. This paper highlights the complex relationship between social media use and psychological well-being, emphasizing the need for balanced engagement and mindful use of these platforms. The study concludes with recommendations for promoting healthier social media habits, such as time management and fostering offline connections, to mitigate its detrimental psychological effects.

Key words: Anxiety, Cyberbullying, Depression, Social media, Social isolation, Self-esteem, Harassment.



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აბსტრაქტი

სოციალური მედიის აქტიურმა გამოყენებამ და სწრაფმა გავრცელებამ, მნიშვნელოვანი გავლენა იქონია ადამიანების ფსიქოლოგიურ კეთილდღეობაზე. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ სოციალური მედია პლატფორმებს, აქვს მრავალი დადებითი მხარე: ინფორმაციის გაზიარების, სწრაფად გავრცელების, თვითგამოხატვის, უკუკავშირის მიღების და სხვ, მისი აქტიური გამოყენება, ასევე, დაკავშირებულია ფსიქიკური ჯანმრთელობის საკითხთან. ეს აბსტრაქტი იკვლევს სოციალური მედიის გამოყენების გავლენას ფსიქოლოგიურ კეთილდღეობაზე, ფოკუსირებულია, როგორც დადებით, ასევე უარყოფით შედეგებზე. პოზიტიური კუთხით, სოციალურ მედიას შეუძლია გააძლიეროს სოციალური მხარდაჭერის გრძნობა. თუმცა, სოციალური მედიის ფართო და აქტიური გამოყენება, დაკავშირებულია უარყოფით ეფექტებთან, მათ შორის შფოთვისთან, დეპრესიასთან და მარტოობის გრძნობასთან. რაც არ უნდა გასაკვირი იყოს, ამ შედეგებს, ხშირად, მიანერენ კიბერბულინგის, რაც, გააზრებულად-განზრახ, ან გაუაზრებლად ხდება. გარდა ამისა, სოციალურ მედიაზე დამოკიდებულებამ, შეიძლება გამოიწვიოს პირისპირ სოციალური ინტერაქციის შემცირება, რეალურ ცხოვრებაში ურთიერთობების დარღვევა და ემოციური ჯანმრთელობის შემდგომი ზიანის მიყენება. ეს ნაშრომი, ხაზს უსვამს ურთიერთობას სოციალური მედიის გამოყენებასა და ფსიქოლოგიურ კეთილდღეობას შორის, პლატფორმების დაბალანსებული ჩართულობისა და გონივრული გამოყენების აუცილებლობას. კვლევის ბოლოს, შემუშავებულია რეკომენდაციები სოციალური მედიის უფრო ჯანსაღი გამოყენების ხელშეწყობისთვის, როგორცაა დროის მენეჯმენტი და ოფლაინ კავშირების ხელშეწყობა, მისი მავნე ფსიქოლოგიური ეფექტების შესამცირებლად.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: შფოთვა, კიბერბულინგი, დეპრესია, სოციალური მედია, სოციალური იზოლაცია, თვითშეფასება, შევიწროება.



INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to a category of digital platforms and tools that enable users to create, share, and interact with content online. These platforms facilitate communication, networking, and content sharing among users. Common examples of social media platforms include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube e.t.c. People use social media for a wide range of reasons, driven by personal preferences, social needs, and professional goals. Here's a detailed look at these reasons: Personal Connection and communication, Information and News, Social Interaction and Community, Self-Expression and Identity, Entertainment and Leisure, Professional Development and Networking, Validation and Feedback.

THE MAIN PART

people use social media for its ability to facilitate communication, provide entertainment, support professional and personal development, foster community and connection, and offer convenience in accessing and sharing information. The platform's versatility and wide range of functions make it an integral part of modern life.

As we already discussed a lot of reasons of social media usage, it's important to know the connection between so-

cial media and psychological well-being, which is complex, involving both potential benefits and risks. Positive Impacts are: Social Connectivity, Self-Expression and Identity, Access to Information and Resources. Negative Impacts are: Social Comparison and Self-Esteem, Cyberbullying and Online Harassment, Addiction and Distraction, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

Let's start with social comparison and self-esteem. Proposed by Leon Festinger in 1954, Social Comparison Theory posits that individuals evaluate their own abilities and opinions by comparing themselves to others. Comparisons can be upward (comparing to those perceived as better) or downward (comparing to those perceived as worse). Social media platforms often feature idealized and curated portrayals of individuals' lives, including photos, achievements, and lifestyles. This idealization can lead to frequent upward social comparisons, where users compare themselves to those perceived as better off. Seeing friends post about their luxurious vacations or career achievements might make someone feel their own life lacks excitement or success or they may feel inadequate when they perceive others as having more successful, attractive, or fulfilling lives. Comparison leads people to feel jealousy. It arises when individuals covet what others have or achieve, feel-

ing envious of their possessions, status, or experiences, for example: observing someone else's new car or seemingly perfect relationship can trigger feelings of envy. Viewing photos of a friend's happy family life might evoke sadness as well about one's own perceived lack of similar happiness. Sadness may result from the realization that one's own life or achievements seem less fulfilling compared to others. Regular comparisons can lead to diminished self-worth and self-esteem as individuals may feel they do not measure up to others. For example: constantly comparing one's appearance to others' edited photos can erode self-confidence and lead to body image issues. Studies show that the constant exposure to these idealized images can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem. For example, research published in **Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking (2018)** found that individuals who frequently engaged with idealized content on social media reported lower self-esteem and higher levels of body dissatisfaction.

„SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN THE U.S.“

study demonstrated that high levels of social media use are associated with increased feelings of social isolation and lower self-esteem. Another study published in American Journal of Preventive Medicine (2017) found that higher social media use was associated with increased feelings of social isolation. The researchers suggested that the more time people spent on social media, the more likely they were to feel isolated from their real-world social networks. Despite the ability to connect online, to interact with others, social media can lead to increased feelings of social isolation. This paradox is often referred to as the “social media paradox.” Often, social isolation leads people to feel loneliness, because connections might lack the emotional depth and support found in face-to-face relationships, leading to feelings of loneliness despite having many online “friends.” as well as social media interactions are often less meaningful than face-to-face conversations. Superficial online interactions may not fulfill the deeper emotional needs that in-person interactions provide. Without regular social interactions and emotional support, individuals may feel increased insecurity and worry about their social situation and future, leading to heightened anxiety. The emotional pain of loneliness can cause persistent negative thoughts and exacerbate anxiety symptoms, reinforcing feelings of isolation, studies such as those in The Lancet Psychiatry (2019) have found that social isolation is strongly associated with increased anxiety levels, as we know Isolated individuals often struggle with processing emotions and managing stress. Anxiety plays key role in FOMO (Fear of missing out). FOMO is a psychological phenomenon characterized by the anxiety or apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, it is type of social anxiety that one is either not in the know or missing out on information, events, experiences, or life decisions that could make one's life better. It happens when Individuals compare

their own lives to the idealized and curated portrayals of others in social media, leading to feelings of inadequacy and fear of missing out on rewarding experiences. Social media platforms exacerbate FOMO by providing constant updates about friends' activities and accomplishments, often showcasing only the positive aspects. The constant fear of missing out can lead to heightened anxiety and stress, as individuals worry about not being part of social activities or experiences. Chronic FOMO can contribute to feelings of sadness and low self-esteem, particularly if individuals feel they are not measuring up to others' experiences or achievements, as well as FOMO can exacerbate feelings of loneliness if individuals feel excluded or disconnected from their social circles. FOMO has impact on human's behavior, where: Individuals may engage in compulsive checking of social media or constant communication to stay updated and avoid missing out, they may overcommit to social events or activities, leading to burnout or exhaustion, increased engagement in social comparison can reinforce feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with one's own life. FOMO can be driven by perceived social norms and expectations, where individuals feel pressured to conform to social standards or trends, they may focus on selective positive content shared by others, overlooking their own achievements and experiences, reinforcing feelings of FOMO. Research published in Computers in Human Behavior (2019) found that social media use is strongly associated with FOMO, particularly when users see others participating in activities they are not part of, another study in Journal of Behavioral Addictions (2018) highlighted that FOMO can contribute to higher levels of stress and decreased overall well-being.

Cyberbullying and online harassment are serious issues that can have significant emotional and psychological impacts on individuals. Cyberbullying involves the use of digital platforms, such as social media, messaging apps, and forums, to harass, threaten, or belittle someone. It can include spreading false information, sending threatening messages, or posting humiliating content. Victims under cyberbullying might feel fearful of further attacks or feel unsafe online and offline. This fear can lead to anxiety and hypervigilance. Persistent harassment can lead to feelings of deep sadness or depression. Victims might feel overwhelmed by the situation and struggle to find joy or motivation. They might feel anger towards the perpetrators or frustration about being unable to stop the bullying can be common. Victims may also experience self-directed anger or guilt for not being able to handle the situation better. Cyberbullying often involves personal or humiliating information. Victims may feel shame or embarrassment about the things that are being shared or said about them. It is an interesting fact that the anonymity that social media provides, can sometimes embolden perpetrators to be more aggressive or harmful. Research investigates the psychological effects of cyberbullying, such as increased risks of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Long-term studies may also look at how these effects persist into adulthood. „The Relationship Between

Cyberbullying and Depression: A Meta-Analysis“ (2016) by J. B. F. Smith et al.: This meta-analysis explores the link between cyberbullying and depression, showing that victims of cyberbullying are at a significantly higher risk of developing depressive symptoms, such as: sadness, hopelessness, irritability, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, concentration problems, negative thoughts, pessimism, changes in sleep patterns or appetite changes, fatigue, suicidal thought e.c.t A study published in *The Lancet Psychiatry* (2018) investigated the impact of cyberbullying on mental health and suicide risk. It found a strong association between cyberbullying and increased risk of depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts. Another research published in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* (2020) focused on adolescents, finding that cyberbullying is a significant predictor of suicidal thoughts and behaviors in this age group.

It is important and interesting topic to discuss, the psychophysiology of using social media which refers to the study of how social media use affects both the psychological and physiological aspects of individuals. This field explores how interactions with social media platforms influence mental states, emotional responses, and physical health. Social media can both support and undermine emotional regulation. For some, it provides a platform for expressing emotions and receiving support, while for others, it can trigger negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and stress. The feedback received from posts, such as likes and comments, can influence mood and emotional states. Social media encourages social comparison, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy or superiority depending on the nature of the comparisons, exposure to idealized images and successful portrayals can impact self-esteem and body image, influencing overall mental health. Social media use can become addictive, with users engaging in compulsive checking or excessive use, which can interfere with daily functioning and relationships. The variable rewards from social media (e.g., likes, notifications) can create a cycle of reinforcement that encourages repeated use. The use of social media, especially before bedtime, can disrupt sleep patterns as well and contribute to insomnia. The blue light emitted by screens and the cognitive stimulation from engaging content can interfere with the body's natural sleep-wake cycle. Social media use can trigger the body's stress response, leading to physiological changes such as increased heart rate and cortisol levels, exposure to stressful content or online interactions can activate the stress response system, affecting overall health. The engagement with social media can alter brain activity patterns, particularly in areas related to reward, attention, and social processing. Functional MRI studies have shown that social media interactions activate brain regions associated with reward processing, similar to other forms of gratification. Prolonged social media use can contribute to physical health issues such as eye strain, poor posture, and sedentary behavior. Extended screen time can lead to eye discomfort, musculoskeletal problems, and a lack of physical activity, affecting overall health. Social media interactions

can influence neurotransmitter systems, such as dopamine, which is associated with pleasure and reward. Notifications and interactions can trigger dopamine release, reinforcing social media use, this reinforcement can contribute to habitual or compulsive use, affecting psychological well-being. The constant influx of information on social media can lead to cognitive overload, affecting attention and memory. High cognitive load can increase stress and decrease the ability to focus, leading to mental fatigue. Social media use can activate the autonomic nervous system, affecting physiological responses such as heart rate and blood pressure. Increased activation of the sympathetic nervous system can lead to chronic stress and associated health issues. Research published in *Computers in Human Behavior* (2018) found that social media use can lead to both positive and negative emotional outcomes, with varying impacts based on user engagement and content type. Emotional responses to social media are influenced by individual differences and the nature of the interactions and content consumed. A study in *Journal of Anxiety Stress and Coping* (2020) highlighted that social media use is associated with increased stress and anxiety, particularly in relation to social comparisons and online harassment. Social media-related stress can contribute to overall mental health issues, influencing both psychological and physiological states. Research published in *Sleep Medicine Reviews* (2019) found that social media use before bedtime is associated with poorer sleep quality and increased risk of insomnia. The timing and nature of social media use can significantly affect sleep patterns and overall health.

We discussed negative sides of social media usage, why is it important to know all of this things? well, understanding the negative aspects of social media use is crucial for several reasons, as it helps individuals, communities, and policymakers address and mitigate potential harms associated with these platforms. Awareness of the negative impacts of social media, such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness, can help individuals recognize signs of these issues in themselves and others. Early identification can lead to timely intervention and support, reducing the risk of more severe mental health problems. Knowing the negative effects can encourage more mindful and balanced social media use, fostering better mental health practices. Users can adopt strategies to manage their social media habits, such as setting time limits or curating their feed, to minimize harmful effects. Awareness of social media's impact on communication patterns can lead to more effective and empathetic interactions both online and offline. Improved communication skills can strengthen relationships and reduce misunderstandings caused by digital interactions. Understanding the negative aspects of social media is essential for developing educational programs that teach digital literacy and responsible use. Educating users, especially younger audiences, about potential risks can promote safer and more informed social media practices. Awareness helps in identifying and addressing harmful trends such as cyberbullying, misinformation, and digital

addiction. Preventative measures and interventions can be implemented to combat these issues, reducing their prevalence and impact. Understanding how social media affects mental and physical health helps individuals become more self-aware of their own social media use and its effects. Self-awareness enables users to make informed decisions about their social media habits and seek support if needed. Recognizing the negative aspects encourages individuals to seek a balance between online and offline activities, enhancing overall well-being. A balanced approach to social media use can improve mental health, physical health, and personal relationships. Awareness of negative impacts can drive further research into the effects of social media, leading to better understanding and innovative solutions. Ongoing research can provide new insights and evidence-based strategies to address social media-related challenges. Being aware of the negative sides of social media use is essential for protecting mental health, promoting responsible behavior, and guiding policy and technological development. It enables individuals to make informed choices, supports educational and preventative efforts, and encourages the development of safer and more effective digital environments. Recognizing and addressing the downsides helps ensure that social media remains a positive and enriching tool in our lives. It is also important to understanding the psychophysiological effects of social media it can help individuals become more aware of how their social media habits impact their mental and physical health. This self-awareness allows users to make more informed decisions about their social media use, leading to healthier online behaviors and improved overall well-being. Knowledge about how social media use triggers stress responses or influences mood can help users implement strategies to manage and reduce stress. By recognizing stressors and physiological impacts, individuals can adopt practices such as mindfulness, screen time limits, and digital detoxes to mitigate negative effects. we discussed reasons of social media usage, negative sides of platforms, the psychophysiology of using social media and reasons why we should know more about social media usage. Main idea of this article is to get more knowledge about social media usage which helps users understand its potential effects on mental and physical health. we would like to empower individuals with this article to use these platforms in ways that benefit their personal and professional lives, enhances

communication skills, promotes safety and privacy, and contributes to informed decision-making.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion understanding the link between social media and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and insomnia can aid in the prevention of these conditions. Early recognition of mental health issues promote healthier social media use practices. Recognizing the physiological impacts allows for a more comprehensive approach to health. Understanding how social media affects brain activity, can help optimize the digital experience for users. Awareness of psychophysiological effects can guide users in balancing their social media engagement. This balance can improve overall quality of life. By understanding social media's impact, users can engage more purposefully in the digital world.

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