

# **A Review of Social Media's Psychological Effects on Young Adults' Mental Health**

**Nikesh Lagun<sup>1\*</sup>**

*1. St. Xavier's College, Maitighar, Kathmandu, Nepal.*

---

## **Abstract:**

Social media has completely transformed how we speak, share parts of our lives, and connect with one another, and how it has affected our mental health is significant. In this review, we embark on a review of the world of social media and its positive and negative sides. There's freedom in it, stimulation in it; it's a space to spark creativity and connect emotionally, but it's also a space that carries with it anxiety and sadness and a blow to self-esteem. We also cover deeply embarrassing topics like cyberbullying, Phantom Vibration Syndrome (a condition that causes seemingly hopeless anxiety when you can't remember seeing any text messages), and the pressure to appear perfect on the Internet. These factors can put us off sleep and cause psychological stress. With the challenges it brings, social media is vital to our keeping connected and sharing our experiences with others. This paper gathers together work and sounds an important note regarding the importance of a balanced social media message. We urge that the platform's potential to improve mental health be used for healthier online interactions. However, through this balance, we work to build a safer digital space for everybody.

**Keywords:** Social media, Mental health, Anxiety, Depression, Cyberbullying, Digital identity, Psychological effects.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since we continue to dive into the world of the digital age, its versatile social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, and many more have had a constant impact and innovated globally on how we communicate with each other. Sites that weren't even conceived of when you went off to university help not just in how we communicate with each other, but they have shaped our identities and how we think about and affect the rest of the world. This study examines how social media can either improve or harm our mental health and explores how both of these things can seemingly happen at the same time. In this study, we delve deeply into what the consequences of interactions within digital environments are for things like anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and social isolation in the conversation around the mixed effects of social media. However, given the increasing potential drawbacks of exacerbating psychological problems, we balance that against the benefits of elevated levels of community support and opportunities for self-expression that come with screening. Particularly, we look at how these impacts vary across groups, accounting for things like age and gender, to learn more about how social media influences disparate slices of the populace. This nuanced approach allows us to bridge dramatic gaps filled by previous studies, which were mainly focused on younger users, and gives deeper insight into those digital platforms' effect on our psychological health. This paper is a bit of a skimming of a wide variety of work to understand the effect that social media has on our mental health. Based on our review, we've come up with some insights that will help shape the development of new spaces in the digital world, understanding how policymakers can create policies to enable these spaces, and also providing users with tips on how to use these systems to improve their mental well-being. We explore the subtle ways in which social media influences our psychological state in order to continue to understand tangible aspects of our digital interactions. The insights from this review are an important map for anyone intending to manage the intricacies and enjoy the opportunities that technological advancement presents.

## 2. MATERIALS & METHODS

### **Research Approach:**

I gathered studies up until 2024 from academic database searches using keywords such as Social media, mental health, anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, digital identity, and psychological effects I wanted the research to really get into how social media influences our mental health.

**Selection Criteria for Studies:**

This review was produced from empirical studies on social media's effects on mental health that were published in peer-reviewed journals. These dissertations and broader Internet use studies that are exploring social media were intentionally dropped.

**Article Selection Methodology:**

I was initially checking out about 15 to 20 articles. After screening the titles and abstracts of all papers carefully to identify ones that matched our research goals, the selection was reduced down to just 8 articles. These were very relevant and gave some great information in tackling our research questions.

**3. REVIEW**

The study by [1] looks closely at how social media affects millennials. These platforms have the ability to bring stronger bonds and create more creativity. But they can also damage you mentally through depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem [1]. At the same time, Karim et al. in 2020 had researched the negative impact on men and women and discovered that social media may weigh more on women than men. The effects they found are the same whether your age or if you've been on social media for a long or shorter time [5]. They also talk about another really big problem they had, which is cyberbullying, because a lot of the time when you have cyberbullying, it can sometimes help with some anonymity of these online platforms, so it can get people a lot more stressed, anxious, and depressed [1].

Social media has a huge impact on the way young individuals think of themselves. When we present ideal versions of ourselves online, we can disconnect from our virtual and real identities, which can lead to psychological discomfort and uncertainty [1]. In their study, [7] explore what different sorts of connections that different sorts of social media platforms push for are likely to have different effects on mental health. This demonstrates how social media has two sides: The use of MBM depends on where this is used; it can promote or damage mental health [7]. Additionally, Phantom Vibration Syndrome (PVS) represents a notable example of how excessive social media use brings on additional anxiety and discomfort by tricking the person into feeling as if vibrational alerts are still coming in when they're not [2].

One thing to worry about on social media is that they can be addictive and might disrupt sleep. Screen time too many leads to sleep deprivation, and that in turn harms people's mental health [1]. While

social media can foster greater social interaction, says [3], it also comes with risks, such as assuming too much social media for people with mental health issues .

There are definitely upsides to social media. Building support networks for those working with mental health challenges is great, and it boosts community involvement [1]. It can also fortify relationships with friends and family, find new communities, or give people a safe emotional space to react and be reactive—especially during bad times, writes [4].

But there is also real concern about social media making mental health issues worse and being stressful because it undermines people for things that don't actually compare [3]. The effects of advertising in distribution environments vary by platform (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) because of the different types of social interactions and comparisons they enable [7].

Rising mental distress, quantified by increased use of mental health services, was linked to increased smartphone and social media usage, Abi-Jaoude et al. (2020) reported [6]. Moreover, they talk about how 'phubbing,' or when a person neglects a friend or partner in favor of their phone, can seriously harm personal relationships and mental health [6].

In summary, we blankly put our attention on our screens with social media, and something definitely got in the way, but not without its consequences, too—heightened anxiety, stress, and compulsive behaviors. Social media offers great connectivity; the support it offers is often a much-needed one, but we can't afford to ignore its less desirable effects. The negatives of social media in the future should be worked on to minimize these negatives rather than maximizing the positives [8]. For optimizing social media's contribution to mental health, a multidisciplinary approach combining medical and social scientific perspectives will be necessary.

## **4. DISCUSSION:**

The effects of social media on young adult mental wellbeing have multiple faces. It provides access to ways to build connections and to be creative but raises questions that include whether it is good for mental health, which can increase anxiety, depression, or diminished self-esteem. While the impact seems constant across different ranges of age, females may be more vulnerable to these negative effects, according to research.

Forcing ourselves to show up on social media with perfect versions of ourselves can feel like psychological stress and lead to compulsive behaviors like constantly checking notifications because

there aren't any. Combined, this can throw a swing into sleep patterns that can exacerbate mental health issues.

On the bright side, social media helps stretch the support systems, enabling you to engage with your community emotionally and socially. It also has its downsides, however. Negative comparisons to other people and 'phubbing' the habit of picking up your phone before your real-life friends can mean serious strain on real-life relationships and stressed-out levels.

To really understand and overcome these dual effects, future research should look towards potential strategies that can help the positive effects of social media and diminish the negative effects. This could be the beginning of healthier digital lives.

## **5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

No conflict of interest is to be disclosed.

## **6. REFERENCES:**

- [1] Sabar, S., Dzulkalnine, N., & Khir, M. M. (2024). The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health of Young Adults: A Literature Review. *Information Management and Business Review*, 16(3S(I)a), 447-460. [https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v16i3S\(I\)a.4146](https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v16i3S(I)a.4146)
- [2] Bashir H, Bhat S A (2017), Effects of Social Media on Mental Health: A Review, *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Volume 4, (3), DIP:18.01.134/20170403, DOI:10.25215/0403.134
- [3] Naslund, J.A., Bondre, A., Torous, J. et al. Social Media and Mental Health: Benefits, Risks, and Opportunities for Research and Practice. *J. technol. behav. sci.* 5, 245–257 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41347-020-00134-x>
- [4] Robinson, L., & Smith, M., MA. (2024, October 29). Social media and Mental health: Social media addiction. *HelpGuide.org*. <https://www.helpguide.org/mental-health/wellbeing/social-media-and-mental-health>

[5] Karim F, Oyewande AA, Abdalla LF, Chaudhry Ehsanullah R, Khan S. Social Media Use and Its Connection to Mental Health: A Systematic Review. *Cureus*. 2020 Jun 15;12(6):e8627. doi: 10.7759/cureus.8627. PMID: 32685296; PMCID: PMC7364393.

[6] Elia Abi-Jaoude, Karline Treurnicht Naylor, Antonio Pignatiello, *CMAJ* Feb 2020, 192 (6) E136-E141; DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.190434

[7] Ulvi O, Karamelic-Muratovic A, Baghbanzadeh M, Bashir A, Smith J, Haque U. Social Media Use and Mental Health: A Global Analysis. *\_Epidemiologia\_*. 2022; 3(1):11-25. <https://doi.org/10.3390/epidemiologia3010002>

[8] Patti M. Valkenburg, Adrian Meier, Ine Beyens, Social media use and its impact on adolescent mental health: An umbrella review of the evidence, *Current Opinion in Psychology*, Volume 44, 2022, Pages 58-68, ISSN 2352-250X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.08.017>.