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**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS.**

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**ABSTRACT:**

In today`s day, social media plays a significant role in our lives and consequently, social media significantly impacts the mental health of people, especially our young generation. While social media has brought many positive changes, such as enhancing connection and improve of self of belonging and self-esteem in people, but opposite of too much time spent on social media by teenagers and our youth can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation, improve mental stress and pressure of comparison with others consequently worsening of mental health like depression and anxiety. Through this article, an attempt is being made to explain, how the impact of social media can have both, good and bad effects on you, so you should always be aware while using social media. Therefore, it is very important that you should use the social media platform mindfully.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Impact, Benefits, Positive and Negative effects, Mental health.

**INTRODUCTION:**

“According to Article 21 of our Indian Constitution<sup>1</sup>, the Right to Health (including mental healthcare) is a fundamental right”. It is truly said that the power of tools is as good as how they are used by the people. One such tool of our generation is Social Media. One cannot deny that today`s social media has become a daily habit in our lives, especially in our teenagers and young generation. Individuals across different age groups use social media platforms for communication and networking.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, there is a growing dependency on social media. Over the last few years, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat have seen a meteoric rise, Clearly, there is a growing dependency on social media. However, the constant use of social media leads to exposure to risky content, changes in behaviour patterns, feeling of inferiority, and cyberbullying, resulting in grave mental health challenges and illness.

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<sup>1</sup> INDIA CONST. art. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Manas Srivastava, UPSC Essentials: Case Study of the week- The impact of social media on young India`s mental health, indianexpress, (Oct. 10, 2023, 9:29 PM), <https://indianexpress.com/article/upsc-current-affairs/upsc-essentials/upsc-essentials-case-study-of-the-week-social-media-and-the-mental-health-of-young-india-8058975/>

That`s why we should focus on socialization in family, school, and professional spaces. There is a duty of parents should encourage their children for physical exercises, meditation and go outside to play physical games like cricket, football, etc and they should follow the same.

### **Analysis:**

#### **The role social media plays in mental health:**

People are social by nature, they need the companionship of others in their life.<sup>3</sup> When socially connected to other people can ease stress, boost self-worth, and provide comfort and happiness. On the other side, people spending too much time on social media platforms can actually be impacting your mental health, it means you may feel more lonely depressed, and isolated. So please it's time to re-examine your consumption of social media time and online habits guys and find a healthier balance.

#### **The positive aspects of social media:**

Social media plays an important role in the social growth of our society and helps Businesses, providing tools for marketing, and getting jobs, we can access any type of information in one click. Many people use social media to grow socially and interact with the world. You can communicate with your friends and family around the world within a minute, find new friends, and interact with the intellectuals. During COVID-19, social media plays an important role in your mental health.” The role of online social support becomes crucial to increasing the likelihood of reducing psychological distress during the outbreak of COVID-19”. Social media can create awareness for different types of social issues.<sup>4</sup>

You can also use it as a news medium, use it as a good tool for your education, and for research work. Whenever we discuss what is the relationship between social media and mental health, we believe that social media always has a negative impact on our mental health, but this is not completely true, we have a lot of evidence that shows social media actually has a positive impact on mental health of some people.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Robinson and Melinda Smith, M.A., SocialMedia and Mental Health, helpguide, (Oct. 10, 2023, 9:29 PM), <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/social-media-and-mental-health.htm>

<sup>4</sup> ipl, <https://www.ipl.org/essay/Social-Medias-Impact-On-Social-Issue-PCZXUGY3XG>, (last visited Oct. 11, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> 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.

**Social media keeps us connected to those we love:**

A pandemic like Covid-19 brought sadness and anxiety to the lives of many people. At a time when we cannot meet each other physically, we can use social media platforms in such difficult times, social media platforms are our only support to stay connected with each other. When all the schools and offices were also closed, then at that time we could do our office work while using social media platforms our home and children also used to study from their homes through social media platforms, we used to exchange crucial information among our community members through social media platform. During those stressful times, it was social media that made people feel less isolated.

**Use of social media for mental health support:**

Even if we put the global pandemic aside, today many people are becoming victims of anxiety and depression. Many people who are struggling with mental health problems, feel that the people around them will not trust them and in such a situation they take the help of social media platforms for support and encouragement from the mental health community. Thus they get the information, comfort, and guidance that they need. A study by Michigan State University found that the use of social media can be beneficial for our mental health.<sup>6</sup>

**The negative aspects of social media:**

According to our psychiatrists, social media is the only factor causing depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and fear of missing out (FOMO) in youth. Social media and an increased risk for this type of mental problem have been found a strong link between them, said to multiple studies.<sup>7</sup>

**Problems caused by social media -****Depression:**

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<sup>6</sup> Alverdia health life, <https://alverdiahealth.life/2023/04/24/the-positive-impact-of-social-media-on-our-mental-health/>, (last visited Oct. 11, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Gupta M, Sharma A. Fear of missing out: A brief overview of origin, theoretical underpinnings and relationship with mental health. World J Clin Cases. 2021 Jul 6;9(19):4881-4889. doi: 10.12998/wjcc.v9.i19.4881. PMID: 34307542; PMCID: PMC8283615.

- According to UNICEF, 1 in 7 Indians aged between 15 to 24 years feel depressed.<sup>89</sup>
- Depression is linked to a lack of self-esteem, poor concentration, and other maladaptive symptoms, and can lead to difficulties in communication, failure, and study, amplified risk of substance use and abuse, as well as suicidal thoughts.
- One of the key risk factors for these prevalent rates of depression is social media.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Internet Persona:**

- As social beings, we inherently have a need for social acceptance, and social media often becomes a tool for validation.<sup>11</sup>
- The number of likes one's posts or images garners becomes a quantitative measure for many, in relation to their looks, and intelligence, and even extends to their worth as a person.<sup>12</sup>
- Body dysmorphia - It is common among young people and has increased over the past few years.

#### **Lack of socialization:**

- Excessive social media use takes time away from doing other things that may benefit your mental health, like connecting with others in person, spending time in nature, and taking care of yourself.<sup>13</sup>

A few years ago a deadly game named Blue Whale was released on social media, it was an online challenging game. This deadly game spread all over the world. In this online game, an administrator used to give tasks to the participants, and in this game, players had to take a

<sup>8</sup> Insightsonindia.com, The impact of social media on young India's mental health, August 1, 2022 August 1, 2022 by Insights Editor. <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2022/08/01/the-impact-of-social-media-on-young-indias-mental-health/>, (last visited Oct. 11, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> Manas Srivastava, UPSC Essentials: Case Study of the week- The impact of social media on young India's mental health, indianexpress, (Oct. 10, 2023, 9:29 PM), <https://indianexpress.com/article/upsc-current-affairs/upsc-essentials/upsc-essentials-case-study-of-the-week-social-media-and-the-mental-health-of-young-india-8058975/>

<sup>10</sup> Dr Sukriti Chauhan, Shireen Yachu, Mental health in India: Impact of social media on young Indians, indianexpress, (Oct. 10, 2023, 9:29 PM), <https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/mental-health-in-india-impact-of-social-media-on-young-indians-facebook-instagram-youtube-twitter-7778499/>

<sup>11</sup> Manas Srivastava, *Supra* note 07, at 1032.

<sup>12</sup> Dr Sukriti Chauhan, *Supra* note 08, at 1032.

<sup>13</sup> Insightsonindia, <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2022/08/01/the-impact-of-social-media-on-young-indias-mental-health/>, (last visited Oct. 11, 2023).

photo<sup>14</sup> after facing challenges to prove, that the player had completed the given challenge.<sup>15</sup> The last challenge of this game was to commit suicide and the players couldn't stop playing this game because they used to blackmail and do cyberbullying, within two weeks, more than six children across India, who belonged to the age group of 12 to 19 years, committed suicide.<sup>16</sup> After that, the government directed the internet company to ban the game. Similarly, another game PUBG has been banned by the Government of India. PUBG is a Chinese app that has been banned by the Indian Government on grounds of national security and data theft, as a result, this game was also banned. It is worth noting that almost 25 percent of players from the entire world are from India only.<sup>17</sup> This game has also affected peoples` mental health and there are many injuries to reports, suicides, and even murder for this game.

### **Misuse of social media in Manipur violence and Khalistan case:**

Not only this, social media has also served as a spark in Manipur ethnic violence, because of which Manipur is burning today. As soon as things start to calm down a bit, similarly, some such pictures or news is posted on social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp which insist the violence again, because of which so many innocent lives were lost. On the other side, the issue of Khalistan in the present time is a very big problem. According to INDIA TODAY "The creation of a social media narrative of Sikh oppression combined with protests in multiple countries has a familiar fingerprint, according to officials."<sup>18</sup> The way the Khalistan movement is being presented on social media, it seems that this movement is less about the interest and rights of the Sikh, rather there is a vindictive agenda against India that seems more like a self-serving campaign.

### **Symptoms of social media affecting your mental health:**

The time you spend on social media or the frequency and numbers with which you check for updates and posts, all this does not mean that using social media is unhealthy for you, because every person is different from each other. But if you shy away from having face-to-face

<sup>14</sup> bbc, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-46505722>, (last visited Oct. 11, 2023).

<sup>15</sup> Insightsonindia, <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2022/08/01/the-impact-of-social-media-on-young-indias-mental-health/>, (last visited Oct. 11, 2023).

<sup>16</sup> vikaspedia.in, <https://vikaspedia.in/education/childrens-corner/beware-of-blue-whale-challenge-game>, (last visited Oct. 11, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> TIMESOFINDIA.COM, Sep 3, 2020, 17:12 IST. [https://m.timesofindia.com/life-style/health-fitness/de-stress/pubg-ban-in-india-how-the-ban-may-impact-the-mental-health-of-gaming-addicts/amp\\_articles/77911289.cms](https://m.timesofindia.com/life-style/health-fitness/de-stress/pubg-ban-in-india-how-the-ban-may-impact-the-mental-health-of-gaming-addicts/amp_articles/77911289.cms)

<sup>18</sup> Indiatoday.in, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/how-social-media-is-being-used-to-whip-up-pro-khalistan-sentiments-2354415-2023-04-01>, (last visited Oct. 11, 2023).

relationships with people because of the influence of social media or our studies if you are distracted by your work or studies or if it makes you depressed, angry, and jealous or if you want to post something that makes people upset and jealous only. It means that social media is having a negative effect on you and hence making you mentally ill. In such a situation, you need to take a break from social media. Some symptoms that tell you that social media is having an adverse effect on you.

**For example:**

- When social media use becomes a substitute for most of your offline social interactions.
- When we start comparing ourselves with others on social media,
- You worried that you have no control over what people post about you on social media platforms which means you becoming a victim of cyberbullying,
- When you are distracted at your workplace or school, it means that you leave work and studies, and what to post on social media depends on how many likes and dislikes you get and what your friends have posted,<sup>19</sup>
- All the time you are busy spending time on social media, you have stopped thinking about yourself, who you are what you think, and why you are doing, what you are doing, you have forgotten to develop yourself as a human being.
- Your behavior has become risky just to get likes, shares, or positive feedback on social media platforms.

**CONCLUSION:**

In this digital era, no one can live without using social media platforms. The good or badness of any technology depends on the way we use it. Modified use of social media to improve mental health. You should reduce your online time a little daily, we should focus on different things. We should use social media platforms mindfully we should collect good information from social media. you should spend more time with your family and friends instead of spending time on the social media platform. Instead of online friends, you should spend more with offline friends. To overcome anxiety and depression, you

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<sup>19</sup> Lawrence Robinson and Melinda Smith, M.A, Supra Note 07, at 1034.

should take the help of meditation and yoga. With the help of social media, you can fulfill your hobbies like singing, dancing, drawing, etc. Nowadays, there are many online courses available that you can do sitting at home, through social media platforms you can take advice from advocates and doctors, there are many such businesses and professions that you can do through social media, with the help of Apps like Upwork and Fiber, you can earn money sitting at home. During pandemics like Covid-19, when people lost their jobs, social media platforms helped a lot in earning. These are all positive aspects of social media. When children and teenagers use social platforms, parental guidance is very important. Parents should tell children and teenagers about the pros and cons of social media, set a time limit for children's social media use, engage children in outdoor games, and advise children and teenagers to make offline friends instead of online friends.

### **Laws related to social media in India:**

In 1950, the constitution of India provided us with the right to expression, which is a fundamental right. But this is not an absolute freedom, in the interest of the country or an individual it can be restricted by the state. In IPC sections like 153A, 295A, 499, 505, 506, 509, and 124A deal with crime related to social media. Those found guilty of violating these laws should be punished according to the provisions of IPC. In the K.S. puttusamy case, At the request of the UN Supreme Court said to the UN, that India has acknowledged and respects the right to privacy. The IT Rules 2021, only seek information that is necessary to perform a function, and it does not seek to collect Other personal information about an individual. So guys, using social media is not a bad thing, but you should know how to do it properly. We should not become slaves of social media but should make social media our slaves, therefore, we should use social media wisely. Since 1992 World Mental Health Day has been observed every year on 10 October 1992, the aim of which is to create awareness among people about mental health issues and their preventive measures. The theme of World Mental Health Day 2023 is "Mental health is a universal human right."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> SAIMA ANDRABI, World Mental Health Day 2023 Theme: History, Significance and Awareness Quotes, thequint, (Oct. 10, 2023, 9:29 PM), <https://www.thequint.com/fit/world-mental-health-day-2023-theme-history-significance-activities-and-awareness-quotes>