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The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health: Comprehensive Analysis.

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ABSTRACT:

Social media has brought about a revolution in how we communicate, like, and share information. Though these platforms have brought many advantages to our lives, they've also raised concerns about their impact on mental health. The full analysis includes an examination of both the good and the bad implications in relation to a complex relationship between social media and Mental Well-being. On the other hand, it is undeniable that social media facilitates connections and support systems. It provided an opportunity for individuals to connect geographical boundaries, remain in touch, and form a community of like minds. In addition, the use of social media to disseminate information and raise awareness about mental illness is an effective tool. It has been an important contributor to the destigmatisation of these issues, fostering dialogue and providing access to resources and treatment options. There is a tremendous potential for education and engagement in this context. Social media also provides a platform for creativity. Users have the possibility of expressing themselves through art, writing, and a variety of forms of expression. Often leading to feelings of achievement and well-being. However, we cannot ignore the fact that these social media platforms also have a side to it, it's causing a negative impact on society. Cyberbullying and online harassment have become disturbingly prevalent, causing emotional distress, and sometimes even pushing victims towards severe mental health issues. Social comparisons and feelings of inadequacy are fostered by relentless exposure to curated, idealized versions of other people's lives. In conclusion, this research paper will explore in a comprehensive way how social media can affect psychological well-being, both positive and negative.

ANALYSIS:**INTRODUCTION:**

Social media is a form of mass communication on the internet that allows media users to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content, such as videos, through websites for social networking and microblogging.¹ The concepts of social media overlap, but they are

¹ merriam, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media>, (last visited Oct. 15, 2023).

generally understood in the same way as users building networks within themselves by using Social Networking sites and related platforms to attract an audience.²

Internet and programs that help people talk to each other, and involve themselves in the process of information sharing or cooperation are referred to as “social media”.³ A person uses social media to keep in touch with his or her friends, family, and neighbors.⁴ Social media is a computer technology that lets people share ideas, opinions, and information through online networks and communities.⁵ To use social media, users use web-based software and applications on a computer, tablet, or mobile device. With social media on the internet, people’s information, documents, films, and photographs can be shared in a very quick and electronic way. Even though people use social media a lot in the U.S. and Europe, the countries that use it the most are in Asia.

EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

Human desire for communication and technological progress have led to the growth of social media. It’s a tale about creating and sustaining personal connections at an ever-larger scale. Within less than a generation, social media has evolved from a direct electronic exchange of information to a virtual gathering place, to a retail platform, to a vital 21st-century marketing tool.⁶

How did it all start? How have billions of people’s lives been affected by social media? How do businesses adapt to the digital consumer lifestyle? What is the use of social media by marketing professionals? This is all part of the story of social media’s continued evolution. It starts with Samuel Morse’s contribution to the first electronic communications, which is highlighted by the invention 1844 of the Morse code. The emergence of ARPANET in 1969, was a precursor to the modern internet.⁷

² Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "social media." Encyclopedia Britannica, (Oct. 15, 2023, 9:29 PM), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-media>.

³ *Id.*, at 1016.

⁴ ieltsrewind, <https://ieltsrewind.com/describe-a-person-you-follow-on-social-media/>, (last visited Oct. 15, 2023).

⁵ economicetimes, <https://economicetimes.indiatimes.com/definition/social-media>, (last visited Oct. 15, 2023).

⁶ catskillmarketing, <https://www.catskillmarketing.com/the-evolution-of-social-media-marketing/>, (last visited Oct. 15, 2023).

⁷ maryville, <https://online.maryville.edu/blog/evolution-social-media/>, (last visited Oct. 15, 2023).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, online communication services such as CompuServe, were introduced to digital communications through e.g., email, bulletin board messages, or real-time chats in response to the internet's growth. This has made it possible to develop early social media Networks, e.g., Six Degrees in 1997 and Friendster in 2001.⁸

A dynamic and varied ecosystem is now emerging in the world's Social Media landscape, which connects people to businesses and communities around the globe. Social Media platforms have played a vital role in shaping communication, sharing, and interaction of more than 5 billion mobile device users around the world. One of the largest social networks with nearly 2.8 billion monthly active users, Facebook was launched in 2004. It's evolved beyond personal connections, catering to businesses, news outlets, and influencers. Twitter, which was founded in 2006, has 330 million monthly active users and is still popular as a microblogging site. It's known for its real-time updates and trends.⁹

More than a billion users have been added since Instagram was acquired by Facebook in 2012. It is focused on visual content which includes features such as stories, IGTV, threads, and shopping integration. With more than 774 million members, LinkedIn has strengthened its position as the hub of professional networking. It is a platform for job seekers, businesspeople, and professionals to connect. With its ephemeral content and innovation filters, Snapchat has continued to attract more than 300 million users under the age of 30.

In fact, 2 billion downloads and 700 million monthly users have made TikTok a very popular short video platform. It was especially loved by GenZ due to its creative and interesting content. Pinterest, which is used by more than 478 million users to find inspiration for visual concepts and e-commerce, continues to be one of the main websites where people can share ideas. Reddit, which was set up in 2005 is known for its variety of communities and discussion forums and has 52 million users a day.¹⁰

⁸ *Id.*, at 1061.

⁹ Yogesh K. Dwivedi, Elvira Ismagilova, D. Laurie Hughes, Jamie Carlson, Raffaele Filieri, Jenna Jacobson, Varsha Jain, Heikki Karjaluo, Hajer Kefi, Anjala S. Krishen, Vikram Kumar, Mohammad M. Rahman, Ramakrishnan Raman, Philipp A. Rauschnabel, Jennifer Rowley, Jari Salo, Gina A. Tran, Yichuan Wang, Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions, *International Journal of Information Management*, Volume 59, 2021, 102168, ISSN 0268-4012, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>, (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0268401220308082>)

¹⁰ Bradian Muliadi Former Forbes Councils Member Forbes Technology Council, What The Rise Of TikTok Says About Generation Z, *forbes*, (Mar. 15, 2023, 9:29 PM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2020/07/07/what-the-rise-of-tiktok-says-about-generation-z/?sh=69ce38256549>

In the context of changing user needs, and with technology's further development, there are constant changes in the social media landscape. Moreover, the implementation of stricter policies and more stringent security measures has been requested by platforms due to concerns about privacy, misinformation, and internet safety.¹¹

PROS OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

As youth mental health continues to suffer, parents, teachers, and legislators are sounding the alarm on social media.¹² But fear of misinformation also happens to be in common. The APA recommends that scientific balance be added to the discussion, thus allowing for a more balanced debate.¹³ There is a negative conversation going on in social media, and there's a good reason for it. But it is important to remember that there are a lot of benefits to it. Social media, which offers a wide range of advantages and opportunities for individuals, businesses, and societies, is an essential part of today's life. Some of the major advantages of social media can be seen here:

1. **Connectivity:** Social media platforms enable people to associate with friends, family, and acquaintances despite geographical boundaries. It'll help keep one's relationships, particularly when one travels far.
2. **Information and News:** The internet provides direct access to current events, news, stories, and updates on a wide range of topics, in the world; it acts as a real-time source of information.
3. **Networking:** There are prospects for professional networking, searching for jobs, and career development on platforms such as LinkedIn.
4. **Promotion and Marketing:** social media can be used by companies, particularly at a reduced cost compared to conventional advertising methods, to promote or market their product, which helps their products get a reach much faster.
5. **Communication:** It offers numerous ways of communicating, including texts, audio, videos, and live conversations, which can be used as a wide range of communication tools to keep in touch anytime and anywhere.

¹¹ *Id.*, at 1062.

¹² Weir, K. (2023, September 1). Social media brings benefits and risks to teens. Here's how psychology can help identify a path forward. *Monitor on Psychology*, 54(6). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/09/protecting-teens-on-social-media>

¹³ *Id.*, at 1062.

6. Community building: Users can now establish and join communities of like-minded individuals with mutual interest and passion by using social media.
7. Education and awareness: Education institutions and organizations are benefitting from social media for the broadcasting of knowledge, raising their visibility, or offering internet courses that make it easier for students to obtain education.
8. Creativity and expression: Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok provide individuals with a platform where they can share their talents, skills, or any other kind of artistic endeavors.
9. Social Activism: Social media can be an effective tool for arranging and promoting social and political movements, assisting people to advocate for change, and raising awareness.
10. Global Marketplace: Businesses can sell their products and services around the world through eCommerce platforms and markets on social media.
11. Mental Health Support: Online communities and various mediums provide a platform for people to seek and offer support on various mental health issues, reducing stigma and isolation and it helps create a space where people can talk openly about it helps raise awareness about so many mental health issues that people are either scared or embarrassed to talk about. These conversations help other people to open up about their mental state and get help if they are facing similar problems.

CONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

Social media has a negative side to it and it's causing a grave impact on the mental health of people in various ways. Detailed explanations for some of the main negative effects are given below:¹⁴

1. Cyberbullying: Social media provide a platform for cyberbullying, which involves the use of digital communication to harass, threaten, or harm others. Victims of cyberbullying can experience distress, anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. The public and persistent nature of online bullying can make it particularly damaging.¹⁵

¹⁴ Zsila, Á., Reyes, M.E.S. Pros & cons: impacts of social media on mental health. *BMC Psychol* **11**, 201 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01243-x>

¹⁵ *Id.*, at 1063.

2. **Social Comparison:** Many people feel inadequate and low self-esteem because social media encourages them to compare themselves with others. People tend to post their lives, which can create unrealistic standards for others to measure themselves against. It may result in feelings of jealousy, envy, or distress as a result of this continuous comparison.
3. **Addiction and Time Wasting:** Excessive use of social media, often called “social media addiction” may result in time wasting and lack of real-life responsibilities. Productivity can be impaired by the ongoing requirement to check for updates and notifications, resulting in stress and feelings of guilt.¹⁶
4. **Privacy Concerns:** The privacy and data safety of social media platforms can become a matter of concern for users. These concerns can be exacerbated by instances of data leakage, identity theft, and the misuse of private information.¹⁷
5. **Isolation:** Social media use that is excessive can result in actual world societal isolation, paradoxically. Individuals can spend more time online, leading to feelings of loneliness and disconnection from the physical world, instead of engaging in face-to-face interactions.
6. **Comparison and Envy:** feeling envious, jealous, or insecure can be caused by continuous exposure to realistic images and lifestyles on social media. They might feel as though they don't match up to the glamorous or perfect lives that other people share on these platforms.

REDUCING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

Responsible and respectful use of social media is a key element to reduce their negative impact. It is important to establish specific boundaries in the first place. To protect oneself from addiction and time wastage, to make sure that it does not interfere with real-life responsibilities, set special deadlines for the use of social media. The next step is unfollowing or de-tagging accounts that contribute consistently to negative emotions and stress, as well as following those who promote positive feelings and well-being.

¹⁶ Parlak Sert, Hilal, and Hatice Başkale. “Students' increased time spent on social media, and their level of coronavirus anxiety during the pandemic, predict increased social media addiction.” *Health information and libraries journal* vol. 40,3 (2023): 262-274. doi:10.1111/hir.12448

¹⁷ *Id.*, at 1064.

It's important to be careful when posting. Before sharing personal information or content. Before sharing personal information or content, think carefully about how it might affect your mental health and privacy. It is also important to have authentic social media engagement. Instead of trying to achieve quantity, focus on quality connections and relevant interactions. Taking breaks from social media helps one disconnect and recharge, reducing anxiety and restoring balance.

In addition, limiting notifications may reduce the distraction caused by constantly being asked to keep an eye out for updates. Report cyberbullies or harassment to the platform and ask for assistance from trusted people or experts if it occurs. Be wary of misleading stories and myths, facts verify the information before making it publicly available and support a culture of critical thinking. To ensure the protection of personal information and data security, privacy settings should be periodically reviewed and updated. Many social media platforms provide online support for users facing mental health challenges.

CONCLUSION:

Social media undoubtedly rewrote the rules of communication, information exchange, and engagement with the world during this era of digital connectivity. The opportunity to meet loved ones over long distances, and also raise awareness of pressing issues such as mental health, resulted in a new wave of opportunities. But social media has a multitude of aspects that affect our mental well-being, both positive and negative. In terms of the effects on psychological well-being, social media is a double-edged sword. It is essential that these platforms be used responsibly and with due care in order to maximize the benefits and minimize their drawbacks.

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