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**PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND E-COUNSELING
ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF ADOLESCENTS**N.A Anusha Vasist^{1*}, Amrutha Raju²^{1,2} Students at Maharani Lakshmi Ammanni College for Women, Autonomous; Bangalore. Affiliated to BCU

* Corresponding author email address: anushavasist8@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59415/mjacs.v2i3.132>**Abstract**

The impetus behind this paper is to map the literature on the impact of social media on adolescents' mental health through a psychological perspective, using data from original papers published from 2016 to 2021 using bibliometric analysis. The key findings include A) social media causes problems such as anxiety, depression, body image issues and FoMo. B) The use of social media has exponentially increased over the past 5 years. C) Past studies have only addressed platforms. But, the implications of social media on social interactions is a field still open to study. The implications E-counseling has on mental health is also a study with potential.

Keywords: Anxiety, Body image issues, Counseling applications and websites, Depression, Impact on adolescents, Online counseling, social media

1. Introduction

The inception of social media is often credited to the invention of the internet. Social media has evolved from the primary email in 1971 to present-day photograph and video-sharing platforms like Instagram, and Facebook. Social media has become a vital part of adolescents' lives. A 2018 Pew Research Center survey of nearly 750 13- to 17-year-olds showed that 45% are online persistently and 97% use at least one social media platform, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat.

2. Some Platforms

Instagram: It is a photo and video-sharing platform which allows users to interact with each other through messaging interface called direct messages or "dm". Instagram was first introduced in 2010 and has since evolved into a massive business for users. There is content available for every demographic. This has also become a hub for cybercrime and online trolling. This has led to obvious repercussions which include body image issues, anxiety, pressure to stay relevant, and even depression. This paper contains an analysis specifically done on Instagram further along.

WhatsApp: It is an application that is primarily used for messaging and now even audio and video calls can be done through it. With the pandemic, WhatsApp became the widely used mode of communication among various sectors including schools, colleges even offices. This may have blurred the lines between personal and professional lives.

Twitter: It is a microblogging application that allows users to post and interact with other users. Over the years it has gained popularity for the freedom of speech it provides. However, it has caused its fair share of problems.

3. Social media benefits

Social media entitles adolescents to build online identities, communicate with others, and construct social networks. These networks can equip adolescents with incalculable support, especially helping those who encounter exclusion or bear disabilities or chronic illnesses. They also use social media for recreation and self-expression. And the platforms can expose teens to current affairs, let them interact across geographic impediments, and acquaint them with an assortment of subjects. Social media that's humorous or distracting or nourishes meaningful connections even helps adolescents evade depression. Friendships are a key component of adolescent life, they not only feel accepted, and more empowered and connected to the world around them. Research has proven that having one solid friendship can help prevent bullying. Adolescents are developing fundraisers and are supporting important causes through social media to help them make an impact in their communities. Social media also exposes them to important issues

globally. Social media is a way for them to support people and the causes they believe in.

Social media can make adults feel lonelier. However, it seems to have the opposite effect on adolescents. As adolescents find their niche, they are becoming more unorthodox and amicable. They have higher self-esteem. This makes adolescents more secure in existing friendships and reduces loneliness. Building a profile on social media can help adolescents build a positive online reputation. It can uncover them to college scholarships, college networks, and even a future career. It can also help change their perspectives. Digital technology can be a tool for channeling creativity and expressing personal concepts. Providing an avenue of self-expression is important for adolescents. It is proven that there is an association between self-expression and self-confidence.

Social media has evolved to become a source of information and news for many adolescents. As they begin social networking, they can follow anyone with a social media account. Adolescents also can gather information about issues that influences them. Many news outlets, charity organizations, celebrities, and even politicians have active social media accounts

4. Social media harms

However, social media use also negatively affects adolescents, diverting them, disrupting their sleep, and revealing them to bullying, word spreading, utopian views of people's lives, and peer pressure.

The menaces might be commuted to how much social media they use. A 2019 study of 6,500 12- to 15-year-olds in the U.S. found that those who devoured more than three hours a day using social media might be at elevated jeopardy of mental health problems and a 2019 study of about 12,000 13- to 16-year-olds in England found that using social media more than three times a day foresaw poor mental health and well-being in adolescents. Other studies also have heeded associations between heightened levels of social media use and depression or anxiety symptoms. A 2016 study of more than 450 teens found that more significant social media use, nocturnal social media use, and dynamic investment in social media — such as deeming upset when stemmed from logging on — were each concatenated with more impaired sleep quality and more elevated levels of anxiety and depression.

How teens utilize social media also might determine its impact. A 2015 study found that colonial comparison and validation-seeking by teens using social media and cell phones were correlated with depressive symptoms. In addition, a 2013 study discovered that older adolescents who utilized social media passively, such as by simply viewing others' photos, documented plunges in life satisfaction. Those who used social media to interact with others or publish their content didn't encounter these plunges. Because of teens' capricious natures, experts imply that adolescents who publish content on social media are at the menace of sharing personal photographs or highly confidential stories. This can result in them being bullied, harassed, or blackmailed. Teens frequently make posts without marketing opportunities for industries.

Adolescents are a substantial part of social media. This has indirectly caused body image issues. With the intention of free speech, comment sections were introduced, resulting in trolling. Trolling has palpably caused problems among adolescents: anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and even Fear of missing out (Fomo). It can't be concluded that social media and digital devices alone are the cause of all the mental health struggles adolescents face. Nonetheless, it's an ongoing debate. The use of social media among adolescents has increased since 2012, and so did depression rates.

5. E-Counseling

E-counseling or online counseling is a form of psychological counseling that uses communication technologies to render mental health services: therapy, consultation, or psycho-education. These are provided by certified specialists. They take place through telephone, e-mail, chat, or videoconferencing. The goals of E-counseling remain similar to counseling with just a difference in the mode of counseling. E-counseling may benefit people that don't have access to face-to-face therapy. It can offer support at the right moment; patients can seek help exactly when they feel they need it without having to wait for an appointment.

Online therapy has widely spread and can be conducted on multiple platforms. Some psychotherapy clients can be more comfortable communicating with therapists via e-mail when addressing situations that may be strenuous to discuss face-to-face. Clients who prefer interactive sessions can use videoconferencing.

E-counseling is not recommendable for people suffering from severe mental health problems namely; suicidal tendencies, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. Undergoing therapy from the luxury of their homes, the patients might display more self-control. This can be a challenge for the therapist. The space barrier of e-counseling may also jeopardize a meaningful connection between therapist and client and for the patient to feel they are in a safe environment. Practitioners of online counseling should be acquainted with ethical and legal issues. Patients can have problems with personal information confidentiality. Therapists cannot correctly acknowledge crises as effectively.

6. Review

Despite growing evidence of the effects of social media on the mental health of adolescents, there is still a dearth of empirical research into how adolescents themselves perceive social media, especially as a knowledge resource, or how they draw upon the wider social and media discourses to express a viewpoint. Accordingly, this article contributes to this scarce literature. This paper is titled “Is social media bad for mental health and well-being? Exploring the perspectives of adolescents” written by Michelle O’Reilly, Nisha Dogra, Natasha Whiteman, Jason Hughes, Seyda Eruyar, and Paul Reilly. Published on May 20, 2018. Six focus groups took place over 3 months with 54 adolescents aged 11–18 years, recruited from schools in Leicester and London (UK).

Thematic analysis suggested that adolescents perceived social media as a threat to mental well-being and three themes were identified: (1) it was believed to cause mood and anxiety disorders for some adolescents, (2) it was viewed as a platform for cyberbullying, and (3) the use of social media itself was often framed as a kind of ‘addiction’. Future research should focus on targeting and utilizing social media for promoting mental well-being among adolescents and educating youth to manage the possible deleterious effects.

Another study investigated adolescent and parent reports of adolescent social media use and its relation to adolescent psychosocial adjustment. This paper titled, “Adolescent social media use and mental health from adolescent and parent perspectives” was written by Christopher T. Barry, Chloe L. Sidoti, Shanelle M. Briggs, Shari R. Reiter, and Rebecca A. Lindsey. This was published on 5 September 2017. The sample consisted of 226 participants (113 parent-adolescent dyads) from throughout the United States, with adolescents (55 males, 51 females, 7 unreported) ranging from ages 14 to 17. Parent and adolescent reports of the number of adolescents’ social media accounts were moderately correlated with parent-reported DSM-5 symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity/impulsivity, ODD, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, as well as adolescent-reported fear of missing out (FoMO) and loneliness.

Lastly, anxiety and depressive symptoms were highest among adolescents with a relatively high number of parent-reported social media accounts and relatively high FoMO. The implications of these findings and the need for related longitudinal studies are discussed.

While becoming inextricable to our daily lives, online social media are blamed for increasing mental health problems in younger people. A paper is written by Betül Keles, Niall McCrae, and Annmarie Grealish and titled: A systematic review: the influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents was published on 21 March 2021. This systematic review synthesized evidence on the influence of social media use on depression, anxiety, and psychological distress in adolescents.

A search of PsycINFO, Medline, Embase, CINAHL, and SSCI databases reaped 13 eligible studies, of which 12 were cross-sectional. Findings were classified into four domains of social media: time spent, activity, investment, and addiction. All domains correlated with depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. However, there are considerable caveats due to methodological limitations of cross-sectional design, sampling, and measures. Mechanisms of the putative effects of social media on mental health should be explored further through qualitative inquiry and longitudinal cohort studies.

Many studies have found a link between time spent using social media and mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. However, the existing research is plagued by cross-sectional research and lacks analytic techniques examining individual change over time. The paper is titled: ‘Does time spent using social media impact mental health? An eight-year longitudinal study’ by Sarah M. Coyne, Adam A. Rogers, Jessica D. Zurcher, Laura Stockdale, and McCall Booth published on 10 October 2019.

The current research involves an 8-year longitudinal study examining the association between time spent using social

media and depression and anxiety at the intra-individual level. Participants included 500 adolescents who completed once-yearly questionnaires the ages of 13 and 20. Results revealed that increased time spent on social media was not associated with increased mental health issues across development when examined at the individual level. Hopefully, these results can move the field of research beyond its past focus on screen time.

In recent years many parents, advocates, and policymakers have expressed concerns regarding the potential negative impact of social media use. Some studies have indicated that social media use may be tied to negative mental health outcomes, including suicidality, loneliness, and decreased empathy. Other studies have not found evidence for harm, or have indicated that social media use may be beneficial for some individuals. This paper titled: “Social Media Use and Mental Health among Young Adults” by Chloe Berryman, Christopher J. Ferguson, and Charles Nagy were published on 1 November 2017 and is an important study regarding the issue.

The current correlational study examined 467 young adults for their time spent using social media, the importance of social media in their lives, and their tendency to engage in vaguebooking (posting unclear but alarming sounding posts to get attention). Outcomes considered included general mental health symptoms, suicidal ideation, loneliness, social anxiety, and decreased empathy. Results indicated that social media use was not predictive of impaired mental health functioning. However, vaguebooking was predictive of suicidal ideation, suggesting this particular behavior could be a warning sign for serious issues. Overall, results from this study suggest that, except vaguebooking, concerns regarding social media use may be misplaced.

Social media use is rapidly growing among adolescents, studies cite that the rates of “constant use” doubled from 2015 to 2018 (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Lenhart, 2015). Social media use can have a serious negative impact on areas of well-being including feelings of depression, anxiety, fear of missing out, body image, bullying, and sleep. Mojtabai, Olfson, and Han (2016) cite the problematic use of mobile phones and social media applications as one of the trends aligning with the increase in major depressive episodes. Conversely, the use of social media can promote positive feelings of well-being including creating a sense of community, providing access to needed health information, helping create new relationships and maintain existing ones, and offering a platform for self-expression and the creation of self-identity.

Social media: Positive and negative effects on adolescent well-being in Goodhue County, MN. Katie Kennedy. Master of Science in School Health. Minnesota State University, Mankato (2019). The purpose of this study was to compare the positive and negative impacts of the top four social media platforms used by adolescents on 14 areas of well-being. SPSS was used for data analysis to compare well-being scores for Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. Analysis was also completed to see if there was a relationship between time spent online and perceived well-being. Consistent with research, the majority of adolescents cite that their smartphone is the primary way they access social media. YouTube was identified as having the most positive impact on adolescent well-being while Instagram was perceived as having the most negative. Time spent online indicated a weak, positive correlation to well-being with only YouTube.

The question of whether social media use benefits or undermines adolescents’ well-being is an important societal concern. Previous empirical studies have mostly established across-the-board effects among (sub)populations of adolescents. As a result, it is still an open question whether the effects are unique for each adolescent.

7. Discussions

High heterogeneity along with the little general effect size marked in the association between self-reported social media use and depressive manifestations suggests that other factors are the potential to act as influential moderators of the association. We recommend that prospective research should be concentrated on understanding which types of use may be detrimental (or helpful) to mental health, rather than focusing on general use measures that likely reminisce highly heterogeneous exposures.

These studies show an analogous report of social media and its impacts on the mental health of adolescents. While becoming inseparable from our daily lives, online social media are accused of increasing mental health problems among young people. This systematic review synthesized the evidence on the influence of social media use on depression, anxiety, and psychological distress in adolescents. The mechanisms of the putative effects of social media on mental health should be further explored through qualitative surveys and longitudinal cohort studies.

Another study investigated adolescent and parent reports of adolescent social media use and its relation to adolescent psychosocial adjustment. Parent and adolescent accounts of the number of adolescents' social media accounts were relatively correlated with parent-reported DSM-5 manifestations of inattention, hyperactivity/impulsivity, ODD, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, as well as adolescent-reported fear of missing out and loneliness. This showcases the dual responsibility social media users are burdened with to ensure a lack of negative impact on their mental health and happiness.

Mojtabai, Olsson, and Han mention the improper use of mobile phones and social media applications as one of the movements aligning with the increase in significant depressive episodes. An investigation was also completed to see if there was an association between time spent online and perceived well-being. Invariant to research, the plurality of adolescents mention that their smartphone is the primary way they access social media. However, the use of social media can promote positive feelings of well-being including creating a sense of community, providing access to needed health information, helping create new relationships and preserve existing ones, and delivering a platform for self-expression and innovation of self-identity.

The question of whether social media use benefits or undermines adolescents' well-being is an important societal concern. Previous empirical studies have mostly established across-the-board effects among populations of adolescents. Outcomes indicate that person-specific consequences can no longer be disregarded in research, as well as in deterrence and intervention programs.

Despite expanding proof of the consequences of social media on the mental health of adolescents, there is still a scarcity of empirical research into how adolescents themselves perceive social media, especially as a knowledge resource, or how they draw upon the wider social and media discourses to express a viewpoint. Future research should focus on targeting and utilizing social media for promoting mental well-being among adolescents and educating youth to manage the possible deleterious effects. However, vague booking was predictive of suicidal ideation, suggesting this particular behavior could be a warning sign for serious issues.

Almost every social media platform is in the business of keeping its users online as long as possible to deliver as many advertisements to individuals as possible. To achieve this goal, social media applications use addiction triggers to reward individuals for staying online longer. In the exact way that dopamine, the neurotransmitter accountable for feelings of reward and pleasure, is released when gamblers gamble, social media applications are littered with dopamine release triggers. One researcher spoke about social media applications and how they trigger addiction reactions in users.

8. Social Media Addiction Treatment

Social media addiction is treatable with therapy and behavior modification. Note that due to social media addiction not yet being formally recognized as a diagnosable condition, many insurance companies and other managed care organizations do not offer reimbursement. Accordingly, treatment characteristics for this condition may need patients to spend out-of-pocket.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT): CBT continues to remain one of the top preferred treatment methods. The therapist and patient work jointly to rectify faulty beliefs, alleviate negative thoughts, and think before responding. By doing this, one stands a much better chance of moving onward and fighting the urge to log in.

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT): DBT is like CBT but includes the additional component of mindfulness. By being conscious of one's surroundings as well as what one's thinking and doing, one can work through triggers and other challenges. DBT also encloses a group component and weekly phone sessions with the therapist on top of outpatient visits.

Inpatient treatment:

Although one is likely to work through social media addiction by attending outpatient therapy and support groups, more severe cases may require residential treatment. In the case of residential treatment, patients will be terminated from their everyday environment while having limited access to the Internet.

One area that appears to be getting the greatest amount of attention is online counseling. This method of counseling starts with families such as e-therapy, e-counseling, cybertherapy, and Tele counseling. This type

of counseling takes place over video calls, phone calls, or even via text messages instead of in a formal office setting with the therapist and the client. According to Sabella, the continued development of the internet provides numerous future possibilities and guidance through these platforms.

While online counseling may offer clients instant access, little empirical data has been gathered about its benefits (Cohen, 1999). Some clients facing anxiety have found value in such sessions, such as being more aware of internal processes.

Interventions are also another way to address such issues in families, among friends, or even acquaintances. To meet the expectations of the American Psychological Association, a task force was established to focus on effective interventions in the 1990s. during interventions, multiple principles and precautions are a must.

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