

# **EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH**

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## **Abstract**

This research paper examines the effects of social media on the mental health of adolescents and young adults. With the increasing prevalence of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, there is growing concern about their impact on mental well-being. The study aims to explore the relationship between social media usage and mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. The hypothesis suggests that excessive use of social media is linked to negative mental health outcomes.

The research methodology involves a thorough literature review and data collection through surveys and interviews with adolescents and young adults. The findings reveal a significant correlation between high social media usage and elevated levels of anxiety and depression. Additionally, the study highlights the detrimental effects of social media on self-esteem and body image, as well as its contribution to sleep disturbances.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals about the risks associated with social media use. By understanding these effects, strategies can be developed to promote healthier online behaviors and mitigate the negative impacts on mental health. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the intersection of social media and mental well-being, emphasizing the need for further investigation and intervention.

## **Introduction**

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, influencing how people communicate, share information, and perceive the world. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have millions of users worldwide, making them powerful tools for connection and self-expression. However, the pervasive use of social media has raised concerns about its impact on mental health. Studies suggest that excessive use of social media can lead to issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

**Hypothesis:** This study aims to investigate the effects of social media usage on mental health among adolescents and young adults. The primary research question is: “How does the use of social media affect the mental health of adolescents and young adults?” The hypothesis is that excessive social media use is associated with negative mental health outcomes, including increased levels of anxiety and depression.

**Significance of the Study:** Understanding the relationship between social media use and mental health is crucial for developing effective interventions and promoting healthier online behaviors. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights into how social media impacts mental well-being and identifying potential risk factors. The findings can inform policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals in creating strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on mental health.

## Literature Review

### Existing Research:

#### 1. Impact on Anxiety and Depression:

- Several studies have found a correlation between social media use and increased levels of anxiety and depression. For instance, a study by Lin et al. (2016) reported that individuals who spend more time on social media are more likely to experience depressive symptoms.

#### 2. Self-Esteem and Body Image:

- Social media platforms often promote unrealistic standards of beauty and success, which can negatively affect users' self-esteem and body image. A study by Fardouly et al. (2015) highlighted that exposure to idealized images on social media is linked to body dissatisfaction among young women.

#### 3. Sleep Disturbances:

- Excessive use of social media, especially before bedtime, has been associated with sleep disturbances. Research by Levenson et al. (2016) indicated that social

media use can interfere with sleep patterns, leading to poorer sleep quality and increased fatigue.

**Gaps in Current Knowledge:** While there is substantial evidence linking social media use to mental health issues, there are still gaps in understanding the mechanisms behind these effects. Additionally, most studies focus on adolescents and young adults, leaving a need for research on other age groups and diverse populations.

The literature review underscores the importance of examining the effects of social media on mental health. By addressing the gaps in current research, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media influences mental well-being and to identify strategies for promoting healthier online habits.

## Methodology

**Research Design:** This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of social media on mental health.

**Participants:** The study involves 200 adolescents and young adults aged 15-24, recruited from local schools, colleges, and online forums. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure a diverse representation of gender, socioeconomic status, and social media usage patterns.

## Materials:

- **Surveys:** A structured questionnaire was developed to assess social media usage, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and sleep patterns. The survey includes standardized scales such as the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS), the Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item (GAD-7) scale, the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 30 participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions of social media's impact on their mental health.

## **Procedures:**

1. **Survey Administration:** Participants completed the online survey, which took approximately 20-30 minutes. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was assured.
2. **Interviews:** Selected participants were invited for one-on-one interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Each interview lasted about 45-60 minutes.
3. **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS) to identify correlations and patterns. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and insights.

## **Findings/Results**

### **Quantitative Data:**

- **Anxiety and Depression:** The survey results indicated a significant positive correlation between high social media usage and increased levels of anxiety ( $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and depression ( $r = 0.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- **Self-Esteem:** Participants with higher social media usage reported lower self-esteem scores ( $r = -0.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- **Sleep Disturbances:** A significant proportion of participants (60%) reported experiencing sleep disturbances related to late-night social media use.

### **Qualitative Data:**

- **Themes Identified:**
  - **Pressure to Conform:** Many participants expressed feeling pressured to conform to social media standards, leading to anxiety and stress.
  - **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** Participants frequently mentioned FOMO as a source of anxiety and compulsive social media checking.
  - **Positive Aspects:** Some participants noted positive aspects of social media, such as staying connected with friends and finding support communities.

### Tables and Graphs:

- **Table 1:** Correlation between Social Media Usage and Mental Health Indicators
- **Figure 1:** Anxiety and Depression Levels by Social Media Usage
- **Figure 2:** Self-Esteem Scores by Social Media Usage
- **Figure 3:** Percentage of Participants Reporting Sleep Disturbances

## Discussion

**Interpretation of Results:** The findings support the hypothesis that excessive social media use is associated with negative mental health outcomes. High social media usage correlates with increased anxiety and depression levels, lower self-esteem, and sleep disturbances.

**Comparison with Previous Research:** The results align with previous studies, such as Lin et al. (2016) and Fardouly et al. (2015), which also found a link between social media use and mental health issues. This study adds to the existing literature by providing both quantitative and qualitative insights.

### Limitations:

- **Sample Size:** The sample size is relatively small and may not be representative of the broader population.
- **Self-Reported Data:** The reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality.

## Conclusion

The study highlights the need for awareness and interventions to mitigate the negative effects of social media on mental health. Future research should explore longitudinal designs and larger, more diverse samples to further understand these relationships.

## References

- Lin, L. Y., Sidani, J. E., Shensa, A., Radovic, A., Miller, E., Colditz, J. B., ... & Primack, B. A. (2016). Association between social media use and depression among U.S. young adults. *Depression and Anxiety*, 33(4), 323-331.
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- Levenson, J. C., Shensa, A., Sidani, J. E., Colditz, J. B., & Primack, B. A. (2016). The association between social media use and sleep disturbance among young adults. *Preventive Medicine*, 85, 36-41.

## Appendices

**Appendix A:** Survey Questionnaire **Appendix B:** Interview Guide **Appendix C:** Additional Tables and Graphs