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Literature Review

Social media has become an ubiquitous presence in our lives, with billions of people worldwide using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to connect with friends, family, and the world at large. The rapid growth of social media has revolutionized the way we communicate and access information, providing us with unprecedented opportunities for self-expression and connection. However, as social media usage continues to skyrocket, there is increasing concern about the potential impact of these platforms on our mental health. While some research suggests that social media can have positive effects, such as increasing social support and reducing feelings of loneliness, other studies have shown that excessive use of social media can lead to a range of mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in social media usage as people look for ways to stay connected and informed while social distancing. This literature review will explore the complex relationship between social media, mental health, and the COVID-19 pandemic, with the goal of shedding light on the potential benefits and drawbacks of social media and its impact on our mental well-being.

Social media is a form of electronic communication that allows users to create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. The use of social media has increased significantly in recent years, with around 73% of adults on social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. People use social media due to its activation of the intrinsic reward system of the brain, which is as powerful as food and sex. Older people tend to use social media to find friends, while younger people use it to stay in contact with their existing friends. Several studies have identified negative outcomes associated with social media use, including increased depression, anxiety, compulsive behavior, loneliness, and narcissism. There is a positive correlation between high school students' Facebook use and depression, and many feel worried or uncomfortable when unable to access email or social network sites. Social media also encourages sedentary behaviors, which are activities characterized by sitting or lying down and have low metabolic equivalent total. Theories of the cause of this include blue light exposure, fear of missing out, and the sedentary nature of social media use. Additionally, social media can increase feelings of jealousy.

In addition to the negative outcomes of social media use, the COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in specific and uncontrolled fears related to infection, as well as increased fears of health concerns and the risk of infecting others. The isolation and lockdowns associated with the pandemic have led to a pervasive increase in anxiety, which may be related to sensory deprivation, loneliness, and a perceived decrease in social support. Reduced social contact has also increased boredom and frustration. A lack of information or inadequate information may also be a significant stressor. To mitigate these effects, preventive strategies include implementing effective communication, providing psychological services, and staying active.

Some potential gaps in the research done on this topic so far is the broadness of the results. One could take a closer look on how social media effects mental health during COVID-19 and how it effected different age brackets. For example, college students versus non students or adolescents versus post pubescent just to name a few.