Project: Summarizing and Analyzing Research Papers

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**Topic:**

The Effects of Social Media on Mental Health.

**Details:** This topic explores how social media usage influences mental health, focusing on both positive and negative aspects. With the rise in social media usage, particularly during stressful periods like the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding its impact on mental health has become increasingly critical.

**Research Paper:**

Draženović, M., Vukušić Rukavina, T., & Machala Poplašen, L. (2023). Impact of Social Media Use on Mental Health within Adolescent and Student Populations during COVID-19 Pandemic: Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(4),3392.

**Prompts and Iterations**

**Initial Prompt**

**Description :** "Summarize the overall impact of social media use on adolescent and student mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on both negative and positive aspects, such as how social media might have contributed to mental health issues like anxiety and depression while also providing emotional support and maintaining connections."

**Generated Summary :** "The research reveals that social media use during the COVID-19 pandemic had a dual impact on adolescent mental health. While it contributed to anxiety, depression, and stress due to social comparison and exposure to negative content, it also played a vital role in maintaining social connections and providing emotional support during isolation. Social media allowed adolescents to stay in touch with friends and family, which mitigated some feelings of loneliness. The findings emphasize the complex role social media plays in mental health, acting both as a risk factor for psychological distress and a support system."

**Iteration 1**

**Description:** The prompt was refined to focus specifically on how social media’s negative impact manifests in increased anxiety and depression among adolescents during the pandemic. The aim is to explore factors such as passive content consumption and the exposure to harmful online behavior, like cyberbullying and social comparison.

**Generated Summary:** "Social media use during the pandemic significantly worsened feelings of anxiety and depression among adolescents. The pressures of social comparison, fueled by seeing idealized images and lifestyles, were a major factor. Cyberbullying and exposure to distressing content also contributed to these mental health issues. Prolonged passive consumption, such as scrolling without engaging, was linked to higher levels of loneliness and anxiety. However, not all social media use was detrimental—when adolescents used social media for meaningful interactions, it still provided emotional relief, though this benefit was overshadowed by the dominant negative effects during this period of increased reliance on digital connections."

**Iteration 2**

**Description:** This prompt refines the focus on both negative mental health outcomes (anxiety, depression) and the mitigating effects of emotional support provided by social media. The goal is to explore how social media can simultaneously increase stress while also offering emotional support to combat isolation during the pandemic.

**Generated Summary:** "Although social media use during the pandemic increased anxiety and depression due to exposure to negative content and social comparison, it also acted as a crucial support system for adolescents. By offering a platform for maintaining relationships, it helped alleviate some of the psychological distress caused by isolation. Emotional support through online connections helped mitigate loneliness for many users, showing that the impact of social media on mental health is context-dependent. The negative effects were more pronounced when social media was used passively, but its role in maintaining social ties during crises provided crucial benefits for some users."

**Final Prompt**

**Description:** The final prompt combines both negative and positive impacts of social media on adolescent mental health during the pandemic, focusing on how passive consumption led to anxiety and depression, while active use provided emotional support and helped maintain social connections during isolation.

**Generated Summary:** "The research highlights that social media use during the COVID-19 pandemic had both negative and positive effects on adolescent mental health. Passively consuming content, particularly involving social comparison and exposure to negative material, contributed to higher levels of anxiety and depression. On the other hand, social media played a crucial role in maintaining social connections, which provided much-needed emotional support during periods of isolation. Active engagement through meaningful interactions helped alleviate loneliness and stress. These dual effects underscore the importance of how social media is used, with active engagement being more beneficial than passive scrolling."

**Insights and Applications**

**Key Insights:**

The research underscores the dual role that social media played during the pandemic. On one hand, it worsened mental health by increasing levels of anxiety and depression, primarily through mechanisms like social comparison and cyberbullying. Adolescents who passively consumed content, such as scrolling through feeds without interaction, reported higher levels of loneliness and mental health issues. On the other hand, social media served as a critical tool for maintaining relationships and emotional connections during lockdowns, reducing feelings of isolation. Active engagement with social media, such as participating in conversations or sharing positive experiences, provided emotional support that buffered the negative mental health effects of isolation.

**Potential Applications:**

These findings suggest that future mental health interventions should emphasize mindful social media use, encouraging active and positive engagement while warning against excessive passive consumption. Schools and public health agencies could create educational programs that help young people navigate social media healthily, teaching them how to use these platforms for positive interactions. Additionally, social media platforms could introduce features that promote well-being, such as reminders to take breaks from passive scrolling or algorithms that prioritize uplifting and supportive content. Policymakers could also work with tech companies to mitigate the risks associated with harmful content, particularly cyberbullying.

**Evaluation**

**Clarity**:

The final summary provides a balanced and well-organized explanation of social media’s dual impact on adolescent mental health. By clearly distinguishing between passive and active social media use, the summary effectively communicates complex findings in a way that is understandable and accessible to both academic and general audiences.

**Accuracy**:

The summaries accurately capture the key findings of the research, reflecting both the positive and negative impacts of social media use. They correctly emphasize critical details, such as the heightened anxiety and depression linked to passive consumption and the emotional support provided by active engagement, in alignment with the paper’s conclusions.

**Relevance**:

The insights are highly relevant to current debates around mental health and technology use. The recommendations, such as promoting mindful social media use and developing interventions to enhance positive interactions on social platforms, directly address concerns about adolescent well-being, making these findings valuable for policymakers, educators, and health professionals.

**Reflection**

This project significantly improved my ability to summarize complex research findings and iterate on prompts to distill key insights. Initially, I found it challenging to balance the dual aspects of social media’s impact on mental health—capturing both the negative effects, such as anxiety and depression, and the positive role of emotional support. The iterative process of refining prompts allowed me to focus on specific areas, such as distinguishing between passive and active social media use, and how these behaviors influence mental health. I learned the importance of context in interpreting research; social media’s impact varies greatly depending on how it is used, with passive consumption exacerbating mental health issues while active engagement can provide emotional relief.

One of the most challenging aspects of this project was maintaining brevity without losing important details. I had to ensure that the summaries were concise yet still captured the complexity of the research findings. Through multiple iterations, I became more adept at fine-tuning prompts, which helped me generate summaries that were both clear and comprehensive.

Overall, this project not only enhanced my research analysis skills but also significantly improved my understanding of prompt engineering. I learned how to design prompts that efficiently extract relevant and actionable insights. The process reinforced the value of iterative refinement in achieving clarity and depth, ultimately making me more effective in summarizing and analyzing academic research.