




# Ethics of Social Media

## Effects on Mental Health in Adolescence

by Albert Chen and Andrew Dickerson



# *Negative* Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Mental Health

# Problems that Social Media can worsen

## Mental Health

- Studies have found that online social networking can be linked to a rise in psychiatric disorders like depression, anxiety and self esteem
- Increase in screen time use contributes to this
- Amplified by addictive algorithms
- The literal Surgeon General has said that it's a problem

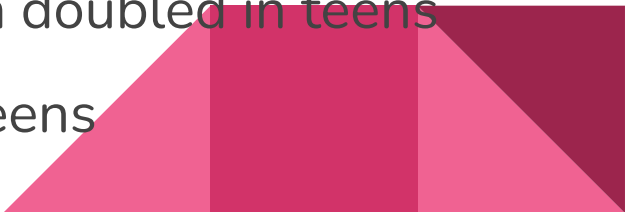
## Extremism

- Extremism movements like Al-Qaeda, the Taliban as well as White Nationalist movements have used Social Media to Recruit members
- Often targets young men that already have problems
- Social media companies often fail to regulate such

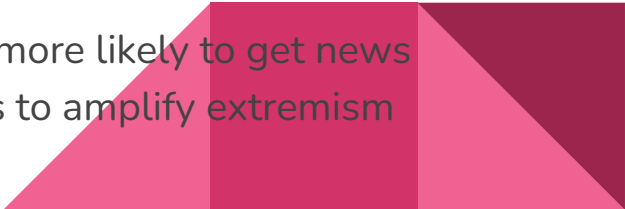
## Misinformation

- Relative freedom and lack of censorship means that misinformation is more likely to spread
- The technology also allows for the fast spread of misinformation
- Algorithms again lead to the amplification of this problem

# Effects of Social Media on Mental Health

- Can lead to an uptick in disorders like anxiety, depression
    - Prolonged use is correlated to an uptick in disorders like anxiety and depression though there is no confirmed causation
    - Especially affects adolescent females who are more vulnerable to sexual harrasment
  - General Rise in Mental Illness
    - From 2011 - 2019, depression more than doubled in teens
    - General rise in suicide attempts among teens
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# Extremism

- Social Media allows for the rapid spread of extremist beliefs
    - ISIS's famous "Media Jihad" in the early-mid 2010s
    - Modern groups like Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis have often shared videos of themselves on social media
    - Groups like The Proud Boys, Atomwaffen Division, and the Active Club network have used social media sites to communicate, recruit and set up new chapters
    - The algorithms Social Media uses means that people are more likely to get news sources that match their already existing biases and helps to amplify extremism
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## Davel Purov

- Founded Telegram in 2013
- Was arrested in Paris on charges of allowing drug trafficking and child sexual abuse to happen on Telegram
- Also refused to cooperate with law enforcement
- Telegram is supposedly less lax than other platforms like Facebook which often have teams dedicated to moderation

# Misinformation

- The relative lack of censorship and freedom on Social Media helps lead to the rapid spread of misinformation
  - The recent Riots in the UK caused by rumors that the perpetrator of a stabbing attack was a Muslim asylum seeker
  - Trump's Cats and Dogs claim about immigrants eating pets (Disproven by the City Administration of Springfield where Trump claims it took place)
- Lack of trust in conventional news media and increase of news from Social Media
  - The numbers vary per news source, but over 50% of adults now get their news from Social Media
  - The algorithms Social Media uses means that people are more likely to get news sources that match their already existing biases

Benefits of

*Social Media*

in

Mental Health



# Connection and Support

Section - 1

How Social Media:  
**Facilitates Social Connections**  
&  
**Maintains Virtual Support Networks**

# Facilitation of Social Connections

- Revolutionize Connecting with Friends and Family
  - Combat feelings of isolation and loneliness, acting to improve overall mental health.
  - Serves an outlet for those struggling to engage in traditional social settings.
  - Allows users to interact regardless of physical or logistical limitations.



# Virtual Support Networks

- Supporting Infrastructure for Mental Health
  - Provide a safe environment for users to share experiences, offer advice, and seek solace, reducing alienation and promoting a sense of belonging.
- Allowing for more accurate representation of the self:
  - Allows users to engage in communities that accept them regardless of sexuality, gender, religion, or other views that may not be tolerated in their physical space.



How Social Media:

**Raises Mental Health Awareness**

&

**Reduces Stigma and Promoting  
Conversations**

# Mental Health Awareness

Section - 2

# Campaign for Mental Health Awareness

- Raising Awareness
  - Through organizations, influencers, and activists campaigns and information about mental health has never been more easily accessible to the public.
  - Acts as a space to gain insight about the causes and effects of anxiety, depression, or other challenges to mental well-being.
- Promotes understanding and empathy
  - By interconnecting people of all walks of life, Social media can act as a common ground to overcome outstanding prejudices.



# Reducing Stigma & Promoting Conversations

- Fosters a Community of Compassion and Support
  - By allowing users to openly share their journeys and by highlighting the importance of seeking support, social media acts as an outlet to challenge stigmas and social norms.
- Anonymity Online
  - By providing an open space for individuals to more easily share their struggles and ideas, users can take solace in a place without judgment.



# Safe use of Social Media

Section - 3

How May we Address:

**Mindful Usage**

&

**Confidentiality and Privacy  
Concerns**

# Mindful Usage of Social Media

- How to Use Social Media Carefully
  - Limit screen time and avoid emotional triggers that may arise from comparing oneself to others.
- Diversification of Content Intake
  - Curate social media feeds to include diverse and body-positive content. Unfollow accounts that promote unrealistic beauty standards or toxic diet culture.





# Confidentiality and Privacy Concerns

- Anonymity on the Internet
  - While anonymity does offer certain liberties and protections, it is important to understand that what is posted on social media is visible to everyone.
  - Users should be careful when discussing personal information online.
- Seek Support
  - If you begin to develop an unhealthy relationship with social media services, don't hesitate to reach out to friends, family, or mental health professionals.

