

Relationship between social media and mental health



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Social Media and Mental Health

Social media platforms have expanded a lot during the past decade. First, they were very simple and they mostly only had one purpose which was connecting people. Nowadays, they are way more complex with other intentions more than just connecting people. For example, advertisement is one of the major purposes and usages of social media. Yet, besides all of these good intentions, there are some side effects to it. Not only has social media been proven to cause unhappiness, but it can also lead to the development of mental health issues such as anxiety or depression when used too much or without caution. Mindlessly scrolling through our social media feeds when we have a few spare minutes or some hours. And as we probably know intuitively, and as the research is confirming, it's not the best habit when it comes to psychology. Here are some reasons that show social media is not very good for mental well-being, and in some ways, it can be very damaging.

One of the adverse effects of social media is depression. The greater we use social media, the less happy we seem to be. One study discovered that Facebook use was linked to both less happiness and less life satisfaction. The more people used Facebook in a day, the greater these two variables dropped off. The authors endorse this can also have to do with the reality that Facebook conjures up a perception of social isolation, in a way that other solitary activities do not. The authors write, " Facebook provides an invaluable resource for fulfilling such needs by allowing people to instantly connect. Rather than enhancing well-being, as frequent interactions with supportive ' offline' social networks powerfully do, the current findings

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demonstrate that interacting with Facebook may predict the opposite result for young adults—it may undermine it” (Steers et al., 2014, p. 701-731).

Another source mentions that “ Heavy users of social media increase their risk of depression by 27 percent” (Does Social Media Cause Depression?). Many other findings suggest the same issue with social media usage. It has been an uprising problem mostly between teenagers and adolescents.

Social media may not be so social after all for young adults. One study has found very interesting results related to how much time you spent on social media including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Vine, Snapchat and Reddit, and isolation. It turns out that the people who reported spending the most time on social media, greater than two hours a day, had twice the odds of perceived social isolation than those who reported they spent a half hour per day or less on those sites. Furthermore, people who visited social media platforms most frequently, about 60 visits per week or more, had greater than three times perceived social isolation than those who visited fewer than 9 times per week (Primack et al., 2017, p. 1-8).

There could be two explanations for these results. One could be that when people feel lonely or socially isolated, they use these platforms as a way to escape their isolation and feel less lonely. Another reason for this matter could be that when people spend a lot of time on social media, they become isolated as a result of that. We are already witnessing people with their heads down on their phones all the time in public. So, the social media platforms may not be a very good help in connecting people after all.

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Unrealistic social media comparison and envy could cause a drop in mood. Passively using social media, and just lurking in people's posts and stories could cause this problem. The truth is that some people enjoy showing off the highlights of their life. Many people portrait their lives as just perfect with no flaws. They are always happy, and their lives are full of great achievements. The problem is that people sometimes tend to forget that what is shown to them on social media is only a part of someone's life and not all of it. Thus, we start to feel envious when we compare our everyday lives with other people's highlight which is all social media really is.

When you fall into the trap of comparing your private self with other people's public personas, you are will feel inferior to others. One solution for this problem is to limit your time and usage of passively using social media. Choose what content you want to see on your feed and ignore the rest. Accept yourself for who you are, and always remember that what you see is not completely the reality of someone's life (BBC News, 2016).

The other thing that social media effect is sleep and circadian rhythm. The mobile devices and computer monitors used to view social media websites all emit high degrees of blue light. This artificial light disrupts healthy sleep cycles. The blue light included in artificial light is the most damaging to humans. Blue light suppresses melatonin production greater than other wavelengths. Blue light suppresses melatonin via the sensors in our eyes, therefore, makes it hard for us to fall asleep. Browsing social media before bed is no longer simply distracting you from sleep, but also it can literally stop you from being sleepy at all (Holzman, 2010).

A connection between sleep and mental health is properly established. It has been proven that people who suffer from anxiety tend to spend much less time in deep sleep than those without anxiety (Monti & Monti, 2000). It is well-known that long term sleep deprivation and anxiety are clearly not good for the physical or mental health of a person.

From my own experiences, I think that social media gets a huge part of our daily lives. After using the Moment application and tracking my everyday activities, I found out that I spend about 2 and a half hours on Instagram. Also, I have noticed that because of social media, I am having attention problems. I tend to check my account everywhere I am in any time of the day. Sometimes I do it automatically without any specific intentions. Wasting time and attention deficits are two other major problems that these platforms are causing.

According to British Neurologist Greenfield, "The short-attention-span issue is linked to the idea that social networking encourages the reward center of the brain to signal as it does with drug use, due to the instantly gratifying nature of these simulated interactions". Greenfield declares that the unexpectedly taking place interchanges current in these websites will accustom the brain to operate on these unrealistic timescales. As a result, when one finds that responses are not right away forthcoming, Greenfield suggests that behaviors of Attention Deficit Disorder will grow to be common in adolescents, a diagnosis on the rise for years (Foehr, 2006).

So what should we do to control these side effects of social media? The first step is to thoroughly understand the certain risks that social media poses to

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our mental health. Then, we should learn how to self-monitor our behaviors on social media. I personally used this strategy by first identifying and targeting what makes me sad or anxious. After that, I removed those specific targets from my social media. Following that, I felt so much better not being surrounded by things that depress me. The other thing that helps is to reduce the time spent on these applications. I simply just moved my Instagram application from my first page to that last page. Therefore, whenever I wanted to use Instagram I had to swipe a couple of pages to get to the app. This action by itself made me use my account less than before because I had to take some time to get to the app.

In conclusion, social media has some benefits too. It obviously keeps us connected across great distances, and helps us find people we had lost touch with years ago. But getting on social when you are bored or need an emotional lift, is likely a very bad idea. Based on all of the research that has been done on this subject, some main issues have got more attention. Depression can be caused by heavy usage of social media or feeling envious towards other peoples' achievements. Isolation is another problem. You may be isolated because of your heavy usage, or use social media because you are isolated. Furthermore, sleep deprivation because of the blue light that comes from our screen could also be a threat to our health. Lack of enough sleep could also lead to depression and anxiety. Social media could also be so distracting. Getting numerous notifications from your accounts distracts you from your daily activities to just check what is happening online. All of these issues are preventable only if you could have self-control on your

behaviors. Controlling and determining how often you should check your accounts is the key factor in this subject.

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