

Date 23/7/2025:

Topic: The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health:

1. Global Perspective

Outline

1. Introduction

2. Purpose of Social Media: A Brief Glance.

3. Positive Impacts of Social Media on Mental Health: Global Perspective.

a) Gives the opportunity to connect; we-community.

Case study: Social Media as a virtual lifeline - The Rise of Online Communities - COVID-19.

b) Easy access to mental health resources.

↳ Online therapy - WHO (2023) report.

c) Mode for support and awareness.

↳ Movements and campaigns like #World Suicide Prevention Day and #MeToo.

4, Negative Impacts of Social Media on Mental Health: Global Perspective.

a, The algorithms are designed to promote polarization and extremism.

↳ Echo chambers and isolation - PNAS (2018)

b, Made for addiction and compulsive use; distracts people from life to social media.

c, Cyberbullying and Online trolling leads to depression and suicidal tendencies.

↳ Case Study: The Amanda Todd Case - Mental Health Global Perspective

d, Body-image issues and Comparison to filtered image leads to low self esteem.

↳ Instagram's Internal: research leak - The Facebook files (WSJ, 2021).

e, Disruptive sleep cycles and cognitive fatigue.

↳ Teens and correlation with social media report poor sleep - AAP 2022.

f, Dependency on likes and posts for validation.

↳ World Health Organization, recognized digital dependency as public health issue.

g, Minimizes focus and attention span.
↳ Microsoft's attention span report, 2015.

5, Way forward: To find a balance and protect mental health.

a, Social Media should be scrutinized through independent bodies for cyberbullying.

b, Digital literacy and awareness should be part of educational curricula.

c, Policies at national level with strict implementation.

d, Regulation for screen time and age-limit by community at global level.

6, Conclusion:

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"Essay"

The era of social media began in the early 2000's and escalated rapidly after 2010, giving a new dimension to technology. Social Media's digital explosion turned the world into a global village. However, the revolutionary invention has its downsides. Undoubtedly, the recent trend of a dramatic shift toward virtual social life has taken a gruesome toll on the population's mental health at the global level. Therefore, digital literacy is one of the solutions to counter the crisis. Furthermore, social media emerged to bridge the gap and connect the world. Hence, the surge in psychological problems came as the by-product of digital dependency. The algorithms of social media are biased and promote polarization, thus, creating echo chambers and leading to isolation. Moreover, the continuous dopamine spikes are the underlying reason for people's addiction. The increases in depression and suicidal cases world wide reflect the relation to cyberbullying and online harassment, which breeds on social media platforms like META and TikTok. These emerging mental health problems have far-reaching consequences. Therefore, it requires collective measures to eliminate the threats from the root cause. The awareness of the ethical use of digital products is the first step towards

addressing the problem. Further, the regulation policies for cyberbullying must be strengthened and implemented. All in all, the psychological problems have escalated due to uncontrolled exposure to social media, and global measures are the need of the hour to suppress the evolving danger as the challenges transcend borders.

The innovation of social media has not only revolutionised technology, but also transformed the way people connect. 'Six Degrees' laid the foundation of social media platforms in the late 20th century; the industry has boomed since then with numerous platforms - Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram to name a few. It has paved the way for new avenues, creating virtual world that transcends physical borders. Eric Qualman once stated, "social media is not a fad, it's a fundamental shift in the way we communicate".

Social media has penetrated every sphere of life from interpersonal bonds to business tools. To sum up, social media was created to foster bonds and bridge the distance virtually.

Social media challenges mental health. The algorithms of social media are biased and promote polarisation and extremism, resulting in isolation. Further, it deteriorates social unity and creates division in the community. The

hatred instilled through social media platform goes beyond virtual connections and penetrates daily life. According to the 'Proceedings for the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)', 2018 report, the echo chambers of social media commonly known as filter bubbles are the core reason for intellectual isolation. People fail to interact with individuals of diverse mindsets as the perceptions are strengthened via virtual sites. To enclose, Social Media is designed to show what people believe in and this leads to stratification and alienation.

Addiction is the by-product of social media sites. It is very common for people to lose time while doomscrolling. 'Dopamine hits' that were only released after acquiring goals, are just one click, one scroll, one like away. As per Montag, C., & Reuter, M. (2017). Internet Addiction. This work focuses on brain functionality and dopamine reward system; activated by social media stimuli, similar to how it is activated by other addictive behavior or substances. The unpredictable nature of these makes checking social media particularly compulsive. Moreover, this keeps the platforms engaging. Thus, making it easier to be distracted from bigger goals that require effort and dedication. In a nutshell, these sites benefit at the cost of people's addiction and distraction from real life purpose by inducing constant

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dopamine spikes.

Unregulated social media sites have become the breeding ground for cyberbullying and online trolling. This is the underlying reason for depressive thoughts and in extreme cases, leads to suicidal attempts. Exposure to social media at a young age is more ~~vulnerable~~ alarming, as children and youth are very sensitive and vulnerable to hatred on social media. There are numerous cases worldwide, the case study of Amanda Todd, a 15-year-old Canadian girl, who died by suicide in 2012. She posted a YouTube video, titled "My story: Struggling, bullying, suicide, self-harm". She used flashcards to describe her experiences with cyberbullying, online harassment and black-mail. Now, the crisis has intensified with the rise of new threats, including AI-generated deep-fakes that amplify harassment. In conclusion, Amanda Todd is just one example, many people are suffering from depression due to online harassment.

Further, social media heavily focuses on appearance and physical image. Filters were introduced to attract users and give the illusion of curated beauty standards. However, people take extreme measures from drugs to cosmetic surgeries in order to imitate the delusional

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image created by social media filters, thus lowering their self-esteem. Comparison is another major problem caused by ideal images. This reflects that the mass population is discontented with their looks and physique. As per 'The Wall Street Journal's "Facebook Files" investigation (2021), Meta's internal research showed that Instagram worsened body-image issues for approximately 1 in 3 teenage girls. The fake and filtered body culture shatters one's confidence. In conclusion, body-image crisis has escalated through social media, taking a toll on mental health.

Social media has adverse effects on the sleep cycle. Healthy and Quality sleep is the crucial part of a person's lifestyle. The cognitive abilities develop and strengthen during rest. The gadgets, used to access social media platforms, emit blue light and disturb the circadian rhythm. According to a 2023, systematic review linking digital media use to sleep problems and emotional disturbance, 'shorted and fragmented sleep caused by prolonged media use has been shown to correlate with

daytime dysfunction, increased fatigue, and worsened mood. The sleep regulates body and disruptive sleep effects all tasks of a person. In a nutshell, the sleep cycle disturbed by the usage of social media leads to underdeveloped cognitive functionality.

Social Media has changed the modes of validation. People act as per others' choices. The inclination and trait of people pleasing have been heightened by social media. The likes, comment and share direct give direction to life decisions. The new form of validation makes a person self-conscious and then the individual acts in a certain perceived manner. The World Health Organization, recognized digital dependency as mental health issue. Digital dependency prevails due to social media platforms. The constant need of approval and to show off traps individuals in a digital bubble, thus distancing them from ^{the} authentic inner self.

~~Root~~
Lastly, focus level and attention span have been diminished by social media.

The platforms capture on humans and their engagement generates tech economy. The human psyche is it gets bored easily and craves for new things. One-minute reel, videos, doomscrolling and numerous content creators

Keep the enthusiasm alive. This trains the brain to not focus on any task which is tiresome and requires concentration. Resultantly, jeopardized attention span of humans. Microsoft's 2015: 'Attention Span Study' involving both surveys and EEG testing, the average attention span declined to just 8 seconds - shorter than that of a goldfish - attributing this drop to digital lifestyles and social media behaviors such as 'rapid scrolling, multitasking, and constant notifications'. In order to achieve big goals and accomplish in life, attention is the fuel that drives us through. In conclusion, the emergence of social media is benefitting technology at the cost of human's focus deterioration.

Social Media has evolved and gained immense engagement which reflects, the platforms are strengthening and setting new trends. It is the core responsibility of humans to take certain stringent measures to counter the harmful impacts posed on mental health. First of all, scrutinize social media through independent bodies. There is need to create and make room for independent bodies that are free from external influence. Those will be aligned to monitor cyberbullying. The threats posed by social media needs to be catered strategically with proper training. New Zealand offers compelling example to other countries. The Netsafe and the Harmful Digital Communications Act (2015), emphasizes complaint resolution and education alongside

legal enforcement. Many countries do not prioritize the issue. It is a high time to understand the gravity of the crisis and protect citizens by scrutinizing online harassment and cyber bullying of any form.

Secondly, digital literacy is the need of the hour. Social media opens a new world of virtual relationships and most of the time the web is invisible. It is imperative to make digital literacy part of educational curricula. The dynamics are evolving and so should the educational system. The awareness generated through online systems and education will be inculcated by masses. It is like navigating through online world, which is equally important. Howard Rheingold, digital literacy advocate, stated,

"Literacy in the 21st century means being able to read, write and participate on the web."

Digital literacy is often ignored, but plays crucial role in protecting the citizens from online malicious activities.

Next, policies with strong implementation are necessary to be made at national level. The cyber world must not be ignored. Countries and nations that turn blind eye towards the emerging threat fail to survive. Digital policies need to be made part of the power corridor discussions. This

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is the requirement as propaganda and online threats on social media become tools for extremism and anti-nationalisation. Frustration is the by-product of citizens. Countries like Canada and Ireland made policies to protect citizens from cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is a real threat and needs to be addressed vigilantly by policies that deter the perpetrators and be source of ease for victims. To sum up, intervention of national policies can prevent the harassers and cybercrime.

Social Media and its harmful effects on mental health are global threat; thus requires global solution. The UNICEF and ITU (International Telecommunication Union) can coordinate global efforts, setting universal protocols on age-appropriate content and screen-time regulation. People are the asset for any country and collectively for the globe. It is global responsibility to protect and make them useful citizens, that can only happen by protecting their well-being. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (adapted from UN's Digital Cooperation report),
"We need global norms to regulate the wild west of online abuse".

Regulation of Social Media sites and usage per number of hours along with the time are crucial for human development. Australia is a good example, that has put age-limit. But global co-operation can eliminate the threat at

Larger extent

Last but not the least, monetize social media platforms. This should be practiced nation-wise rather than by tech companies. The human engagement becomes easy on free platforms, exploiting human data, attention span, time and focus level. Andrew Lewis quoted,

"If you are not paying for the product, then you are the product."

This will reduce the traffic on social media. People with higher incomes would likely subscribe. Thus, producing fruitful content. The community created would be selective and small moving more towards well-being. Moreover, background check must also be included to gain more benefits in creating healthy online community. To conclude, monetization of social media sites as well as the background check will make safer online community and reduce cybercrimes.

To conclude, social media is a double-edged sword. It did shrink the globe, but caused harmful effects on mental health, that can no longer be ignored. Cyberbullying, Online harassment, screen-time all direct towards the negative impacts of social media; that further leads to problems like depression, anxiety, suicide and sleep disruption. These collectively,

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contribute to a generation that is hopeless and depressed. There call for strict measures at regional, national and global levels to counter the evolving threats ^{that} social media poses. Implementation of regulation policies and age-appropriate content to name a few. By and large, the global modern online threat on mental health could be catered through modern strategies and take more benefit of social media by out-weighting the negative impact on mental health.

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