

# THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUTH

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## Abstract

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of young people's daily lives. While these platforms provide opportunities for communication, self-expression, and access to information, they also pose potential risks to mental health. This article explores both the positive and negative effects of social media on the psychological well-being of youth and suggests strategies to minimize harmful impacts.

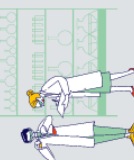
**Keywords:** Social media, youth, mental health, anxiety, depression, digital communication.

## Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the way young people interact, learn, and perceive the world. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become central to youth culture. However, alongside their benefits, concerns have emerged about their influence on mental health, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

**Positive Effects of Social Media.** Social media offers several advantages for young users. Firstly, it enables communication and connection with peers regardless of geographical boundaries. This is especially important for individuals who may feel isolated in their offline environment. Secondly, social media provides a platform for self-expression, allowing users to share their thoughts, creativity, and achievements. Additionally, it can serve as a valuable source of information and support, including access to educational content and mental health resources.

**Negative Effects of Social Media.** Despite its benefits, excessive use of social media can lead to various psychological issues. One of the most significant problems is the development of anxiety and depression. Constant exposure to idealized images and lifestyles can result in unrealistic comparisons, leading to low self-esteem and dissatisfaction. Moreover, cyberbullying has become a serious concern, negatively affecting emotional well-being.



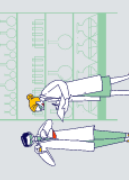
Another issue is addiction. Many young people spend excessive amounts of time online, which can disrupt sleep patterns, reduce physical activity, and negatively impact academic performance. Furthermore, the need for validation through likes and comments may create emotional dependence on social media platforms.

The impact of social media on mental health is complex and depends on how it is used. Moderate and purposeful use can be beneficial, while excessive and passive consumption may be harmful. It is essential for young people to develop digital literacy skills and self-awareness to manage their online behavior effectively. Parents, educators, and policymakers also play a crucial role in promoting healthy social media habits. Encouraging open discussions about online experiences and setting reasonable usage limits can help mitigate negative effects.

**Table-1. Survey Questionnaire for Youth**

<b>How many hours per day do you spend on social media?</b>	A) Less than 1 hour B) 1–3 hours C) 3–5 hours D) More than 5 hours
<b>Which social media platforms do you use most frequently?</b>	A) Instagram B) TikTok C) Facebook D) Telegram Others: _____
<b>How do you feel after spending time on social media?</b>	A) Happy B) Neutral C) Anxious D) Depressed
<b>Have you ever compared yourself to others on social media?</b>	A) Yes B) No
<b>Have you experienced cyberbullying?</b>	A) Yes B) No
<b>Do you think social media affects your self-esteem?</b>	A) Positively B) Negatively C) No effect

Table-1 presents a questionnaire designed to analyze how social media affects the mental health of young people. The questions focus on several key aspects: the amount of time spent on social media, the most frequently used platforms, and the emotional state of users after online activity. Additionally, the questionnaire explores important psychological factors such as social comparison, experiences of cyberbullying, and the impact of social media on self-esteem. The purpose of this survey is to collect primary data that can help identify patterns between social media usage and mental health outcomes among youth. The results of such a survey can be used for further research, analysis, and development of preventive measures.



**Table-2. Key Statistics (Example Data)**

Indicator	Percentage (%)
Youth using social media daily	85%
Experiencing anxiety symptoms	40%
Reporting low self-esteem	35%
Experiencing cyberbullying	25%
Positive impact (communication)	60%

Table-2 provides statistical data that illustrates the relationship between social media use and mental health indicators among young people. The table includes percentages showing how many youths use social media daily, as well as how many experience anxiety, low self-esteem, or cyberbullying. These statistics help to support the arguments presented in the article by providing quantitative evidence. For example, a high percentage of daily social media use indicates its widespread influence, while notable levels of anxiety and low self-esteem highlight potential psychological risks. At the same time, the data also shows some positive effects, such as improved communication, demonstrating that social media has both advantages and disadvantages.

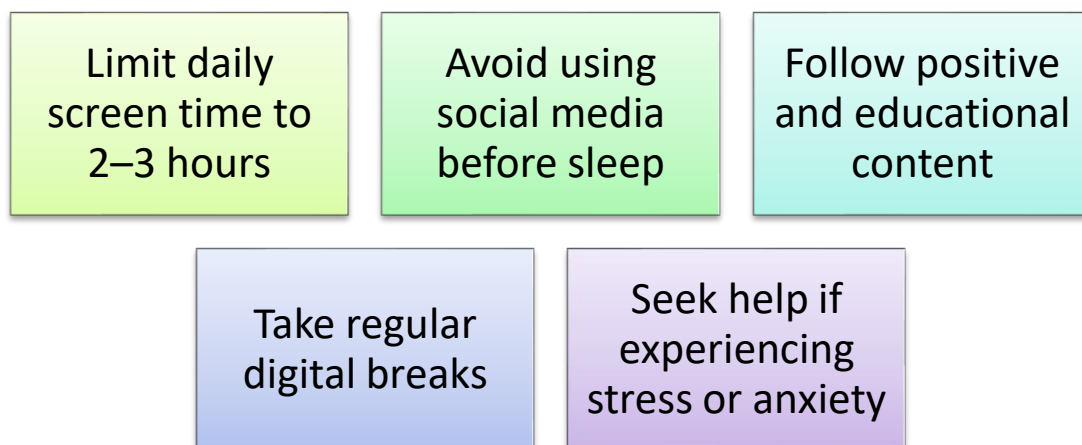
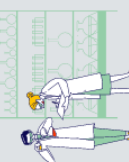
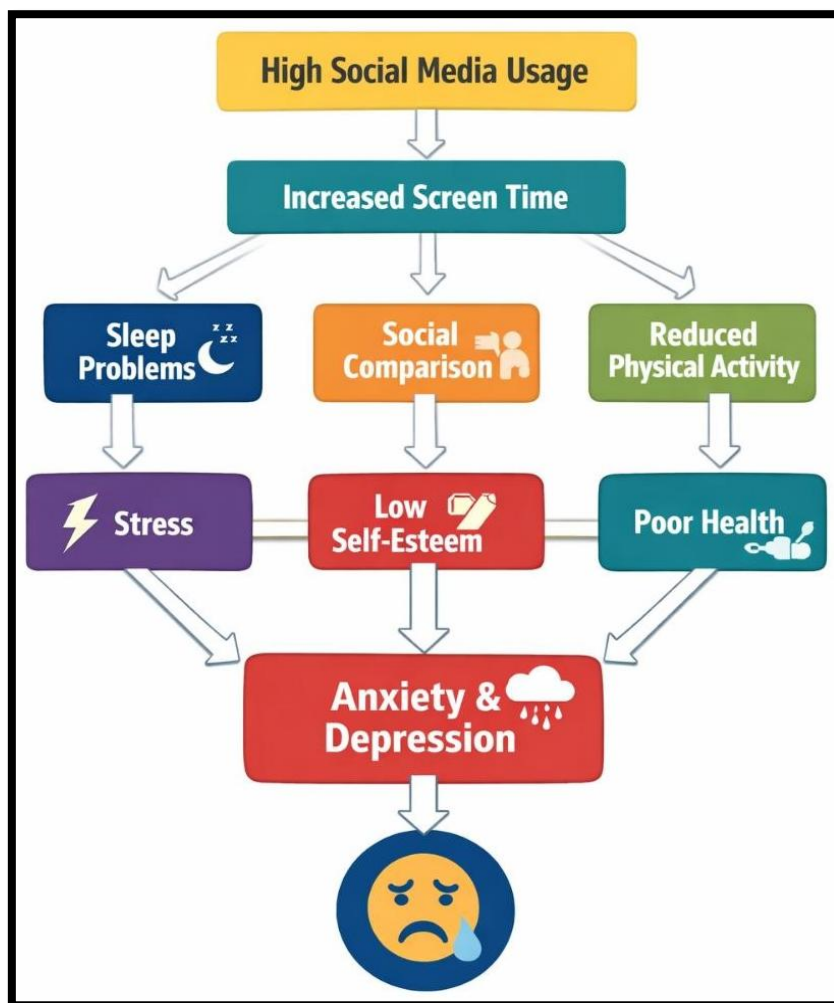
**Table -3. Recommendations for Healthy Use**

Table-3 outlines practical recommendations aimed at reducing the negative impact of social media on mental health. These suggestions are based on the analysis of common problems associated with excessive social media use.

The recommendations include limiting daily screen time, avoiding social media before sleep, and following positive or educational content. They also emphasize the importance of taking regular breaks from digital devices and seeking professional help if necessary.

The purpose of this table-3 is to provide readers, especially young people, with simple and effective strategies to maintain a healthy balance between online and offline life. By following these guidelines, users can minimize risks such as stress, anxiety, and addiction while still benefiting from social media.



**Picture-1. Relationship Between Social Media Use and Mental Health**

Explanation: the diagram (pic.1) illustrates how excessive use of social media can affect the mental health of young people through a chain of interconnected factors. At the top of the diagram is high social media usage, which leads to increased screen time. This is the starting point of several negative consequences. Increased screen time contributes to three main problems:

- Sleep Problems – Spending too much time on social media, especially at night, disrupts sleep patterns. Poor sleep leads to fatigue and emotional instability, which increases stress levels.
- Social Comparison – Young people often compare themselves to others on social media, where users tend to present idealized versions of their lives. This comparison can result in low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy.
- Reduced Physical Activity – Excessive time spent online reduces time for physical activities. This negatively affects physical health and overall well-being.

These three factors lead to further consequences:

- Sleep problems increase stress
- Social comparison leads to low self-esteem
- Reduced physical activity contributes to poor health

All these negative outcomes are interconnected and ultimately lead to more serious mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. In summary, the diagram (pic.1) shows that while social media itself is not inherently harmful, excessive and unbalanced use can create a chain reaction of negative effects that significantly impact the mental health of young people.

In conclusion, social media is a powerful tool that can both positively and negatively influence the mental health of youth. While it offers opportunities for connection and learning, it also poses risks such as anxiety, depression, and addiction. Therefore, it is important to promote responsible use and raise awareness about its potential impacts. By adopting balanced digital habits, young people can benefit from social media while protecting their mental well-being.

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