

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19204686

## MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

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Received: 07/11/2025

Accepted: 22/11/2025

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### ABSTRACT

*More and more teenagers are spending time using social networking sites which may affect their health and well-being. Many studies do not focus on how young people perceive social media impacts on them. They tend to mainly focus on the type of platform use only. Focus groups were conducted with the adolescents to examine their views. The interviews were transcribed and then subjected to thematic analysis. Participants said social media is a double-edged sword. It offers benefits, such as connection, self-expression and emotional support, but also downsides, ultimately jealousy, annoyance, harassment, bullying and no socializing. The conclusion shows how adolescents understand the good and bad use of social media. Having open talks about these experiences can help young people deal with risks stronger and better. Other youth services, such as school based, should promote healthy social media usage. It's important to study the digital experiences of youth. This will allow for the evaluation of programs and interventions that assist in mental health. This can be useful for parents, teachers, doctors and law-makers.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Adolescents, social media, Mental Health, Perceptions, Digital Well-Being.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Young people frequently report turning to sites such as Facebook and Twitter to escape from external pressures threatening their mental health (1). Most adolescents now use social media, with figures suggesting that as many as 97% do so regularly (1). The popularization of social media among this age group has received ample attention from researchers, journalists, and policymakers alike (2). Social media are coming to play an increasingly significant role in the social and emotional development of adolescents, a period of heightened sensitivity to both positive and negative health outcome influences (3). Social network sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, allow adolescents to communicate and connect in new ways, maintaining friendships with established peers while expressing interest in the same social world as other friends they have yet to meet (4). Although social media may be facilitating new forms of communication and social connection, initially there were fears about the amount of time young people were spending online and the nature of the communication (5). Policymakers also expressed concerns regarding the level of risk that adolescents were exposed to on social media, particularly in the wake of several high-profile cases in which social media had been implicated in self-harming or suicide attempts (6). Specific risks identified included being exposed to inappropriate content, peer-to-peer abusive behavior, privacy violations, and influence from advertising bodies (6). Cyberbullying is, however, one of the most persistent problems (7). The internet provides a forum for adolescents to anonymously test out different identities, but this anonymity can also be exploited, promoting disinhibition (8). Although risks associated with internet use are probably overstated, there are nonetheless grounds for concern (9). Children are often exposed to risky content, and adolescents are shown to engage in antisocial online behavior (9). It has even been argued that in missing the kind of contextual information readily utilized to moderate behavior in the real world, adolescents have limited capacity for self-regulation and are thus more at risk from social pressures online (10). Puberty is a landmark stage in the opening up to peer influences, and susceptibility to peer pressure alters in terms of risk and choice contextual to development, with adolescents in the pre-teen and younger teenage years taking greater risks than at any other developmental stage (11). The takeaway from this literature, however, is that for all the strides made in the past decade, despite the exponential growth in adolescent use of social media, there is surprisingly

little empirical work investigating how these sites may contribute to adolescent mental health, both positively and negatively (11).

## 2. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ADOLESCENTS' LIVES

Young peoples' lives are lived predominantly in digital social spaces (12). Alongside socialising with friends, young people are increasingly using social media sites to find friendship, check on their crushes, share news, complain about homework, announce dates to the prom, escape the grind of daily life, and a hundred-and-one other forms of everyday chatter (13). Sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Tumblr allow for new types of interaction and connection, but there are also fears about how much time young people spend online (14). The prospect of social media taking the place of face-to-face contact has persuaded some of the more conservative (or 'traditional') commentators that young people are 'missing out' by spending too much time online (12). Policymakers in a similar vein have continued to express concerns in relation to the level of risk that young people are exposed to on social media (15). Risk factors include being exposed to age-inappropriate content, peer-to-peer abusive behaviour, privacy violations, and the undue influence of third parties (1). It has been found that a fair-sized proportion of adolescents have been 'disturbed' by online content and many have reported upsetting experiences on social media (16). Cyberbullying, or the use of digital media to post harmful messages and pictures, remains a persistent problem (16). The anonymity afforded online allows adolescents to test out different identities, as well as the potential for trolling and cyberbullying (17). While there are significant concerns about the suitability of some internet content, it has been argued that the risks are overstated. Nonetheless, there are grounds for concern (18). Children are regularly exposed to risky content, and adolescents engage in antisocial online behavior (18). Concerns have been based on a lack of understanding of how adolescents have limited capacity for self-regulation, and be especially susceptible to peer pressure (19). As a result, they are seen as valuable and vulnerable as they navigate and experiment with social media (20). Despite the exponential growth of the prevalence of adolescent social media engagement, there is surprisingly little empirical work investigating how social media contributes to adolescent mental health (20).

## 3. UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH IN

## YOUNG POPULATIONS

A pressing issue facing the global community is the mental well-being of adolescents and young adults (21). Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (21). Mental well-being is shaped by various risk factors and protective factors, both of which differ between individuals and can change over time (22). There is robust evidence linking mental health problems in adolescence to negative outcomes across multiple domains, including poor educational performance, early school leaving, unemployment, substance abuse, criminality, and increased morbidity and mortality (23). Furthermore, an earlier age of onset of mental disorders has been shown to be associated with poorer long-term outcomes and higher costs of care across several health systems (24). A systematic investigation shows a rise in mental health problems in young populations, not just in high-income countries but in previously low- and middle-income countries (25). The international community may thus face a “youth mental health crisis”, which has drawn attention to identifying risk factors and protective factors for poor mental health (26).

In a flavor of what they represent and how they can change under the influence of health-promoting policies, risk factors and protective factors should preferably be delineated within a framework (27). This allows for various domains to be considered and for risk factors to be examined in combination (28). Adolescent young adult mental well-being is on a continuum from positive mental well-being to severe mental health problems (1). Positive mental well-being includes having good self-esteem, life satisfaction, optimism, and socio-emotional competence. Mental health problems range from low symptoms of anxiety and stress to having suicidal thoughts, feeling hopeless, and having received treatment for a psychiatric disorder (29).

### 4. POSITIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH

Many studies have reported the risks associated with adolescent social media use and addictive social media use (30). Adverse mental health symptoms are more prevalent in socially isolated adolescents (30). It was also reported that social media has been associated with increased depressive symptoms (31). However, it has been suspected that social media help adolescents to cope with social distancing

restrictions and a lack of direct communication caused by COVID-19 (32). Some research supports the theoretical framework involving positive and negative impacts of adolescents’ social media experiences on their mental health (33). All participants experienced social media negatively impacting mental health (34). Some participants emphasized the possible positive impacts social media might bring, raising the necessity to explore further the complex relationship between adolescents’ mental health and their social media experiences. Several social media activities were discussed across a variety of domains (35).

To study adolescents’ experiences of social media, this approach has highlighted several potentially fruitful directions for future research (36). The findings clearly illustrate that adolescents’ experiences of social media and the impact of these experiences on their mental health are multifaceted (37). Some experiences have solely negative impacts or solely positive impacts (37). However, other experiences have both negative and positive impacts (38). For example, it was observed that the impact of social comparison on adolescent mental health was either positive, negative, or no effect depending on the way they compare themselves to others and individual differences (39). Hence, future research aimed at exploring individual differences in the relationship between social comparison on social media and mental health in adolescents might be beneficial (40).

Adolescents emphasized the importance of connection and communication, entertainment, learning what is happening in the world, and following and monitoring other people’s lives (41). This illustrates that social media may have acted as a protective factor against the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions, which may be worth investigating in future research (42). There is substantial anecdotal evidence indicating that during the COVID-19 pandemic adolescents increased their time spent on social media (43). Passive social media use is often linked to monitoring others’ activities which may then increase the likelihood of exposing negative contents that may create negative emotions, engaging negative social comparisons, and experiencing FOMO thereby reducing life satisfaction (44).

### 5. NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH

Communication has changed due to the rapid growth of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube, as well as messaging

services like WhatsApp and WeChat (45). Most adolescents and young adults (AYAs) possess smartphones, making social media apps readily available (46). An increasing number of social media accounts are linked to various platforms, increasing both connectivity and social isolation (21). Both positive and negative impacts on the mental health of AYAs are expected (47). As smartphones become more common, the risk of negative consequences increases. The association between mental health and self-harm has been used in recent years to rationally restrict social media use (48). This raises many questions regarding improper practices, especially among the most vulnerable populations (e.g., obese, suicidal, LGBTQIA+, automatic mental health disorder, etc.) (49).

A systematic literature review examined the relationship between social media usage and mental health issues in AYAs, from January 1, 2010, to March 21, 2022 (50). Peer-reviewed studies analyzing the impact of different social media platforms and online applications on the mental health of AYAs were included (51). Experimental studies with older populations, risk and protective factors of mental health, and offline support systems improving mental health were excluded (52).

The pilot review summarizes findings from previous research on the effect of social media on AYA's mental health (53). Positive effects include peer support and improved self-image (54). Negative aspects include unhealthy behaviors, cyberbullying, anxiety, and loneliness (55). A single platform is insufficient to increase understanding as different platforms affect different mental health aspects (56). More platforms increase knowledge and protection against both the good and the bad. Social connectivity quality outweighed quantity (57). Further research is needed to enhance qualitative understanding.

## 6. SOCIAL COMPARISON AND SELF-ESTEEM

The adolescent years are an extremely important time for a person's mental health as their self-image, attitudes about their self-esteem, and attitude toward comparing themselves with others will affect their mental health for the rest of their life (58). Because adolescents are still developing and growing into their identity, self-image and self-esteem ratings are highly variable, thus making them vulnerable to possessing negative feelings about themselves from social comparisons (58). As these social comparisons often come from social media, social media also begins to take a more prominent role in affecting

adolescent's mental health for better or worse (59). Adolescents engage in more social comparisons than older adults because it is a critical developmental phase when social interactions are increasingly defined by comparison and competition with peers (60). One study showed that the more often a person would use Facebook, the more they engaged in upward social comparisons, which resulted in poorer self-esteem (61). Trends on Instagram also contribute to increased social comparisons as they are often made through #hashtags, which make trend chasing more appealing, easier, and public (62). The amount of friends or followers a person may have may increase the risk of social comparison, which is dangerous for maintaining the mental health of an adolescent (63). Some adolescents engage in buying followers or likes in order to appear more socially acceptable and popular, but when they don't receive the number of likes anticipated, they often feel less liked (64). With three apps for social media being prevalent among adolescents, most studies focus solely on Facebook without looking into the unique risks associated with Snapchat or Instagram, even though their structure may lead to even more social comparison (65). In anticipation of formulating a plan to research mental illness symptoms and their trends on Instagram or Snapchat, data was gathered through survey research to discover which app was the most popular among respondents (66). The results revealed that Instagram was the most popular app with an average ranking of 1.75, while Snapchat was ranked next with an average ranking of 2.85, indicating a shift in social media use and how young people interact (67).

## 7. CYBERBULLYING AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Cyberbullying is defined as online abusive behaviors or practices that are directed primarily at juveniles and/or pupils (68). As such, discussions about abuse often revolve around school-age children, their parents, teachers, and the Internet industry's responsibility to protect minors from being victimized by others (68). Cyberbullying is defined as a process, and the abuse itself is defined as an act (69). The focus is on the psychological aspects and perceptions of abuse and victimization rather than on who is or is not a bully, and whether the behavior meets the legal criteria of bullying (70). Adolescent subjects are studied as they are particularly vulnerable to bullying (70). Adolescents are not fully capable of understanding the nature of the relationship between behavior and consequences (71). Even when capable of thinking about dilemmas

and weighing choices, many young people lack the requisite knowledge and skills to make reasonable decisions (72). Other people may over-spontaneously choose the immediate benefits rather than considering the long-term risks and consequences of their behavior (72). There is a significant number of adolescent cohorts with decision-making capacity impairments due to low executive functions and comprehension difficulties (73). These limitations may increase the adolescent's vulnerability to extreme behaviors like suicide or delinquent acts (74).

Teenagers have a broad range of high-risk behaviors that they contemplate, for which they have gratitude, and in which they engage in various degrees (75). Such complex behaviors may include substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, violent behaviors, stealing, and misuse of the Internet (76). Digital technology can accelerate information processing and can be an incredible tool to learn and disseminate valuable information locally and globally (77). This generation's cognitive upbringing is largely dominated by the Internet (77). This changed the environment in which teenagers mature (78). Nonetheless, the Internet can also be misused to harm others by humiliate, embarrass, and distress someone in a way constrained by time and space (79). Cyberbullying, like traditional bullying, is a complex psycho-social phenomenon, most of the time in the remit of pupils and schools, sometimes outside them (80).

## 8. ADDICTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Understanding the addictive qualities of social media platforms is crucial for parents, educators, and communities (81). Many social media platforms are specifically designed to extend the user experience, drawing users in with messages and notifications (82). Notifications offer rewards—a ping to indicate that someone liked a post, sent a friend request, or commented in emoji. Such “intermittent reinforcement” is what makes slot machines so addictive for gamblers (81). These notifications tend to draw back in users who might otherwise leave, fostering unhealthy and habitual use (83).

In addition to notifications, many social media companies also use algorithms to curate personalized feeds (84). These algorithms effectively replace the newspaper editor, selecting which stories and posts a user will see (85). An algorithm curates the content based on how users engage with it, leading to a personalized feed that reinforces biases and views (86). Social media platforms have a significant say in

the information that is available while sometimes restricting less popular user content (87). The result is that teenage users receive a curated feed of information from trusted sources (88).

Research on the negative consequences of technological devices has established a strong association between problematic social media usage and poor mental health outcomes, including depressive symptoms or disorders, anxiety, and negative body image perceptions (89). Although generally thought to be positive and beneficial tools, the use of social media platforms is associated with lower self-esteem in teens for various reasons, including cyberbullying, social comparison through processed filters and photo editing, and exclusion in social contexts (90).

## 9. IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SLEEP PATTERNS

The past decade has seen considerable growth in the use of social networking services (SNSs) by adolescents and young adults. Since their inception, such services have allowed users with interest to interact and subsequently share content low-cost (91). However, with the use of social networking, teenagers have to stay online to ensure the intended use of SNS (92). Although there are tweets or posts on an account while asleep, individuals would most likely miss comments, re-tweets, and replies of posts, which leads to concerns about losing attention or even social ostracism (93). This situation has accumulated evidence addressing the concern that sleeping problems were strongly associated with SNS use (94). As a consequence, medications and suggestions were prompted to assist individuals on how to have a better bedtime and sound sleep (95).

Despite the pervasive of using SNS around the world, there are some social guest factors that would drive such a habit (96). In addition, while previous literature has identified these factors under academic circumstances, most studies have failed to respond to the needs of adolescent's perspectives (97). To reconcile these gaps, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted to have an understanding of how pre-bedtime involvement of SNS is associated with the prevalence of sleeping problems regarding adolescents' perspectives (98). As underlined by research on social media, wellbeing is dominated by adult perspectives, thus further studies on under-explored groups and regard factors could disentangle the differences of this phenomenon across cultures (99).

Aside from adolescents, adult users using SNSs account 90% of mobile phone users, and 70% of

emerging young adults suffer from a range of mental issues, indicating sample diversity across age (100). However, with rapid changes in media devices and social networking interfaces, such studies aged between 2009-2017 are pivotal to reassure whether digital media would remain a strong link with users' mental problems (100). While recent publications have focused on adolescents' mental health and time on internet-based mobile phones, it remains unclear how emerging young adults' media use could affect emerging mental proportions (101). Consequently, a series of focus group discussions were conducted to investigate emerging young adult's experiences, concerns, and meanings of using SNSs during the pandemic (102).

## 10. SOCIAL MEDIA AND BODY IMAGE ISSUES

Body image refers to one's body's perception, feelings, thoughts, and actions, and can include a significant difference between one's body image and actual body form (103). In Western culture, since the 1960s, body image ideals shown in the media have favored the thin appearance for females, and this problem is suspected to have deepened with the advent of social media (104). Mass media strongly influences adolescents' perceptions of body image ideals, as many adolescent females are portrayed as unrealistic figures and are encouraged to adhere to that body image (103). Through the rapid development of social networking services (SNS), online platforms have increasingly evolved into another important medium where ideals are displayed, embodied, and discussed (105). Studies reported the influence of social media regarding body image ideals has significantly increased, along with its use (106). Nowadays adolescents are considered a digital native who first utilize the internet at around age ten, with 96% of them using at least one social networking (SN) platform (107). This is expected to affect their body image, particularly as many adolescents are exposed to idealized body images throughout various social media platforms (104). Body image issues can affect adolescents' mental health, emphasizing the need for preventive approaches and interventions (108).

Social media platforms differ in what forms of content a user can create, share, and receive (109). The type of social media used by adolescents could also fall into diverse categories, leading to diversified effects on their body image (109). Highly visual social media (HVSM) are those that primarily focus on sharing audiovisual information rather than textual content (110). Constructed on the foundation of

filmed and photographed photo-sharing, HVSM, such as Instagram and Snapchat, typically allow users to upload images with filters and editing functionalities to enhance the attractiveness of images (111). When using HVSM, images are often shared, liked, and commented upon through interactive features, and a given image becomes a social object that continues interacting with others after posting (111). Environments rich in idealized visuals and social feedbacks could promote social comparison and evaluation regarding self-body image in both favor and unfavorable directions (112).

## 11. THE ROLE OF ONLINE SUPPORT COMMUNITIES

The development of web-based platforms offering peer support for adolescents and young adults (AYAs) has taken place in parallel with an increase in public interest in youth mental health and the wish to make mental health services and support more available through online peer support (113). People with similar experiences may interpret each other's problems, sympathize, and reappraise the situation positively without needing the mastery and expertise of a health professional (114). The growth in available support options, both globally and locally, highlights the need to investigate the experiences of AYAs who have used existing platforms and whether a sense of public responsibility for local youth or the willingness to engage in the role of support-provider may be enhanced through community participation (115).

To achieve a nuanced understanding of the role of online support communities (OSCs), this study adopts an exploratory and inductive approach (116). Grounded theory, an iterative process of moving between data collection and analysis, is used to investigate the thoughts and beliefs of AYAs who use OSCs and how a sense of public responsibility may be fostered through participation in OSCs (117). To recruit participants who could shed light on the role of OSCs, several focus group discussions were conducted both individually and with the support of a co-facilitator (118). Before analysis, the participants were presented with a summary of the findings, and their input was included to enhance validity (119). Additionally, social scientists and mental health professionals familiar with the topic reviewed the findings (120).

There has been a growing emphasis on protecting the mental health of adolescents and young adults (AYAs) as trajectories for mental disorders often begin during the late adolescence and early adulthood years (121). The progression from private

suffering to public acknowledgment and, ultimately, a formalized help-seeking response is seldom predictable and easily interpreted (122). The peer group chemically inverts this progression into help-offering, a process that may travel through the previously public acknowledgment and be greatly affected by online technology and social media (123). The transparency of social media, creating permanent footprints and broad visibility, raises challenges of being “seen” and “heard,” potentially intimidating help-offering youth and therefore, leaving a void of support deeming such privacy-challenging disclosure either too frightening and overwhelming, or trivial and unworthy (124).

## 12. PARENTAL GUIDANCE AND MONITORING

For many adolescents, social media has moved from an open space for self-expression and gathering information to a dangerous environment for measuring self-worth through social comparisons, the facilitation of risky behavior, exposure to harmful content, and unwanted contact with strangers (125). It can be assumed that adolescents’ use of social media becomes in a certain way problematic when they are unable to stop or at least regulate it and as a result suffer from negative repercussions in their lives (126). Peculiarly, frequent and excess use does not necessarily indicate problematic use and some findings support the notion that, for example, greater time spent on social media has a protective effect in terms of both well-being and a relatively healthier diet and therefore needs to be studied much further (126). To date, the most widespread and weighty socially interactive platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp, due to their social comparison features and young people’s interest in social interactions (127). What becomes clear is that the use of this technology can have both negative and, even more, positive effects (128).

The discourse on influences is ridden with dichotomous pronouncements on attention, distraction, the ease of spreading messages and misinformation, bullying, and the rise of politics of outrage and hatred (129). Guidelines, best practices, and recommendations on how to navigate this complex media environment for health and quality of life are amply available (130). Such recommendations are increasing in number and obscurity; however, nothing seems to work for the youngest, newly emerging digital generation (130). Social media are of relevance and interest to a growing field of scientific inquiry, but still vast knowledge gaps remain (131). Broadly speaking, a

distinction can be made between parental guidance and monitoring (131). On the one hand, parents have to guide their children through the process of collecting, storing, and sharing information on the Internet (132). On the other hand, parents have to check and control the quantity and/or quality of information shared and possibly also advise them on what, when, and to whom information has to be either published or withheld (133).

## 13. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ON HEALTHY SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Educational programs have long been recognised as critical in assisting young individuals in maintaining healthy and constructive behaviors (134). To this end, programming targeting important health concerns is widespread in schools and other venues that facilitate youth socialization (135). Such instruments may also assist in enabling young people to keep a more advantageous view of social networking sites (SNS) and other online activities (136). Targeting fact-finding behaviour was successful for adolescent health issues like sexual health, substance use, and conflict resolution (12). These methods train young individuals to find suitable resources and convey the contents discovered (137). The effects of social media and the behaviours it leads to may be similar for mental health issues like anxiety and depression. For these objectives, such programs focus on equipping participants with fact finding skills, evaluating online content, and thinking about SNS use implications (138).

Creating educational programming on the mental health implications of social media use might begin with engaging youth focus groups to gain insight into their views regarding how social media affects mental health (139). Focus groups would also be used to structure educational content and determine the views and preferences of target group members on the best delivery methods (140). There is a chance to reach a vast audience of youth, who, in some cases, have access to their own profile pages (21). The educational programs may consider various delivery formats, such as Facebook or Instagram pages (141). Reinforcing internet-based information with face-to-face contact would enhance the chance of positive change, especially in light of young individuals’ vulnerability (142). By building on existing approaches related to other adolescent health issues, it is hoped that programming on this issue would be developed quickly and effectively (143).

## 14. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The current academic literature on the topic as well as future research directions are summarized hereafter (144). Examining more advanced machine-learning approaches that leverage broader context about social media interactions, observational data on growth patterns of social media communities and broader media, qualitative data on users' perspectives, and more diverse groups of adolescents (including those who are more diverse in terms of disability status, gender expression and sexual orientation), it is necessary to create the most transparent, interpretable, and friendly-to-use toolkits to systematically analyze large-scale data on social media for research (145).

As more sophisticated machine-learning approaches are developed to detect users' mental disease symptoms based on their social media posts, further studies are also needed to understand the motives and impacts of algorithmically searching users with mental illness (146). To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the associations between social media use and mental health, multi-method longitudinal studies combining self-report measures, diary studies, data scraping, and data interpretations of AI tools are warranted (21). Specifically, while self-report measures converging with passive data may identify patterns of moderators that exist at the level of individuals, qualitative approaches may reveal more nuanced processes that require person-centered or context-oriented analyses (147). However, because social media is key to the social and personal life of youth, skeptics of social media may argue that policies regulating youth access to new technologies could mitigate the risks and protect the youth population from the adverse effects of new technologies (148).

On the one hand, it is unclear whether the well-documented effects of quasi-experimental studies and the unlikely-to-be-replicated but more causal estimates of social media increases from early COVID-19 studies apply to online platforms other than TikTok and are generalizable to the broader youth population who may have different experiences on other platforms (149). On the other hand, conditions of validity testing for achieving generality might not be met and contexts of interest could be missed if studies merely focus on the investigation of quasi-experimentally defined mechanisms (150). In addition, the current research on interactions among various conditions, mediators, and influences of other forms of media other than

social media is limited and more research is needed (151).

## 15. CONCLUSIONS

The primary objective of this review was to synthesize the evidence on the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes among adolescents and young adults, defined here as 14 to 25 years of age. The synthesis appears to support the view of social media as a double-edged sword, or more colloquially, a mixed blessing. On the negative side, social media has been associated with feelings of loneliness and anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, body image concerns, and cyberbullying victimization. Conversely, positive associations have emerged with real opportunities for social connectedness, self-expression and identity exploration, access to mental health information and online support groups. This supports a context-dependent, nuanced view of social media use rather than a blanket condemnation or unqualified endorsement based on individual vulnerability factors, patterns of use and design features of particular platforms, and the wider sociocultural context within which young people live. Several public health and practice implications emerge from this review as priorities. Most are about future studies that will provide reviews but have very important implications because some scholars have noted this issue. The predominant approach in research on social media and mental health has been whether a particular measure of social media use is related to some mental health outcome. The focus should now be on healthy use of digital media rather than just limiting screen time. Openness among adults- clinicians, professionals, and parents -to encourage adolescents and young adults to share their online experiences is vital within this framework where they help identify both good things and bad things about being online. The review also calls for school-based professionals to facilitate discussions between how parents are using the internet so as to allow a more permissive approach rather than an outright ban on digital activities.

In short, the question is not whether social media in itself is "good" or "bad," but rather under what conditions it will most likely enhance resilience, connectedness, help-seeking versus under what conditions it will more likely exacerbate existing problems.

**Funding Statement:** Funding statement: This work was supported and funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) (grant number IMSIU-DDRSP2601).

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