

**ICSSR Sponsored
National Seminar on**

**Strengthening
Adolescents'
Mental Health and their
Suicide prevention**

Volume - I

de
Principal
St. Xavier's College of Education
(Autonomous)
Palayamkottai - 627 002



ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

(Accredited with 'A' Grade by NAAC)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

(UGC-SAP-DRS - II Approved Department)

Social Media and Mental Health

A. Pauline Chitra

Ph.D. Scholar

Dr. M. Antony Raj

Assistant Professor in History, St. Xavier's College of Education, Palayamkottai

Introduction

In this day and age, social media constantly surrounds us. People are always on their phones or laptops updating statuses, posting pictures, liking things, and messaging back and forth with friends. Although social media is extremely beneficial in several ways; self expression, communicating with long-distance friends, self-identity, emotional support, and linking with the world it does have impact on mental health.

Social Media

Social media is the collection of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.

Mental Health

Mental health includes one's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how people think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how people handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Social Media and Mental Health

Deepens sense of community

If one joins a social media group when he/she feels lost and isolated in a new place, he can find a source of comfort in engaging online with people who are navigating the same problems. We can see this in ever-popular chat apps like Line and WhatsApp. The group chats that these platforms facilitate aren't merely about making texting more convenient. More importantly, they're about maintaining relationships with the communities as we are a part of the community.

Builds personal empowerment

When you get involved in an online community, you're not just developing a network of friends. You're also engaging with hobbies you love, cultivating your own interests, and shaping your sense of identity, in part, around those hobbies and interests

Social media platforms can also build personal empowerment by helping you form a network of people who lie outside your family or immediate community but who nonetheless support you in your interests and passions.

Keeps in touch with others

Surveys have shown that nearly two thirds of social media users primarily use the digital platforms to keep in touch with family and friends. Social media provides us with updates on the lives of our loved ones back home, filling in the gaps between our infrequent visits. We can see how much our brother's kids have grown, or we can hear about our friend's recent trip abroad.

Keeps engaged

The purpose of social media, of course, isn't just to stay updated with friends. It's also to stay updated with causes and organizations you care about.

Tracking organizations on social media is also more convenient and efficient than separately visiting each of their websites or reading each of their newsletters. On top of that, mainstream platforms like Twitter and Facebook drive publicity for your favorite causes, spreading the word about important current events.

Spreads joy

Social media sites, though, have proven good vehicles for disseminating more positive information. In fact, unlike on news sites, most of the stuff we read on social media—whether they're updates from friends or shared posts—is uplifting and, often, humorous. While anything—social media included—can be used in unhealthy ways, our obsession with social media is more good than bad. We use social media to stay updated with all the good stuff going on in the world and to add humor to long days at work and early morning bus rides. We use social media to stay in touch with family and friends, and to strengthen our sense of community. And we use social media to empower ourselves as we engage with our passions.

Social Media and Mental Health

Most of the surveys on popular platforms, including Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter proved to be harming young people's mental health.

Miserable

The latest studies only add fuel to the flames of a growing body of concern from politicians, parents, and health organizations about the effect of so-called "sexting," cyberbullying and even suicides by teenagers, playing the infamous "Blue Whale" social media game.

Suffering

According to a report by Psychology Today, Facebook is responsible for provoking feelings of jealousy in adults as well, which can lead to depression. However, this mainly occurs when the platform is used as a comparison tool. We've all felt pangs of envy on a bad day when our own lives seem mundane or desperate and we're faced with glamorous photos of old classmates doing exciting things. Yet, social media can also be a positive thing, if we learn to use it responsibly. The report suggests that if a Facebook post causes you to feel depressed, you can act immediately by deactivating your account, unfollowing your "happiest friends," or turning your computer off.

Comparing

The first step towards using social media responsibly is to stop comparing yourself to others. As Psychology Today points out, "Stop torturing yourself by comparing your life with everyone else's positively biased representations of theirs." You should be able to separate the photo shopped moments from reality and understand that you're only getting a slice of your friends' lives.

Limits Time

Start scanning for updates nine hours a day and pretty soon you'll rack up a third of your life perusing friends on social media. Social media can be incredibly positive when we use it well, allowing us to keep up with our friends, organize events, and even learn about world news. But be mindful about your social media usage by setting times to check your preferred platform and respecting the limits you impose.

Healthy use of social media

- a) Subscribe to and participate in communities that are supportive, educational and provide insight into events or areas that interest you. Use these virtual neighborhoods to help feel connected and to look for articles, research and resources you might use to improve your life offline.
- b) Enhance and enrich existing offline bonds and relationships through positive feedback, posts and comments.
- c) Become an active citizen. Get involved in the causes you believe in or share, advocate and start a movement of your own. Individuals and charities have raised millions of dollars and spread awareness using social media to get their messages out – you can be a part of that too.
- d) Foster goodwill, empathy and support for others by dropping positive, constructive and helpful comments.
- e) Seek out information and insights from trusted sources to learn more about yourself and the world around you.

Enhance mental health

- a) Monitor your usage of social media- in other words be wary of how often and how much time you spend on social media.
- b) Unfollow toxic accounts- seeing certain posts and photos can be harmful to our mental health and self-esteem, so try and unfollow accounts that make you feel bad about yourself or make you feel as if you need to change yourself in order to be 'better.'
- c) Limit how often you use social media- if you find that you are spending three hours stalking random accounts and are constantly going back and forth from your different social media accounts and checking them, it's probably best to try and limit how often you are using social media.
- d) Take a break- if you find that social media is dramatically affecting your life; maybe consider all together deleting your social media apps for a while. You would be surprised how beneficial this is in helping improve your mental health and self-esteem.

Benefits of Social media on Mental Health

- a) **Sense of belonging:** Everyone wants to fit in to some degree, so when a friend or family member posts on our Facebook wall, we feel accepted.
- b) **Find role models:** Social media facilitates connecting with people who share interests or concerns. If you're training for the marathon and finding it hard to go that extra mile, connecting on social media with your running hero can give you an inspiration boost.
- c) **Increases trust:** Facebook increases trust among users because the detailed information provided by contacts reduces uncertainty about their intentions and behaviors.

- d) **Decreases loneliness:** When people have one-on-one interaction on social media, they feel more bonded.
- e) **Makes us happy:** Despite all the talk about Facebook depression, social media does make us feel better but only while actively engaged. The increased happiness, however, will be away when we switch back to passively browsing.
- f) **Spreads happiness to others:** Researchers found that happiness spreads across social networks to at least three degrees of separation.

Benefits of Social media on Physical Health

- a) **Positively affects in managing health:** Most of the users have improved their health habits as a result of what they read on social media.
- b) **Improves health via Smartphone apps:** Having a phone app at hand helps keep users focused on exercise, diet and weight, plus some apps have social features so other users can provide additional support.
- c) **Increases quality of healthcare:** Doctors think the quality of care they provide is improved because of social media.

Detriments of Social Media on Mental Health

- a) Increases feelings of inadequacy
- b) Increases chances of becoming addicted
- c) Makes communicating in person difficult
- d) Results in anxiety
- e) Causes depression

Detriments of Social Media on Physical Health

- a) Affects sleep
- b) Promotes inactivity
- c) Increases obesity
- d) Leads to eating disorders

Conclusion

Social media can provide mental health support. There are many people suffering from mental illness who don't receive support from the people closest to them. They often turn to the Internet to search for encouragement from the online mental health community. Utilizing social media for mental health purposes gives you the chance to search for forums, articles, and videos about mental health. There is a wealth of information that can bring comfort and guidance

References

<http://socialmediaexplorer.com/content-sections/cases-and-causes/5-ways-social-media-affects-mental-health/>
<https://www.allpsychologyschools.com/psychology/social-media-impact-on-mental-health/>
<http://www.news.com.au/technology/spending-time-on-twitter-instagram-and-facebook/news-story/12628-the-relationship-between-social-media-and-mental-health>
<https://spunout.ie/health/article/the-relationship-between-social-media-and-mental-health/>
<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>