

## THE IMPACT OF PROLONGED SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG TEENAGERS

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**Annotation.** This article puts emphasis on the impact of social media on mental health, with a particular focus on young people. It illustrates both severe consequences and beneficial sides of social media usage, including its contribution to anxiety, depression, and self-esteem issues, as well as its role in fostering social connection and emotional support. Gaining insights from the World Health Organization, it highlights the influence of a wide range of social and environmental factors on mental well-being, including digital engagement. It concludes that adopting a balanced and mindful approach to social media is essential for promoting positive mental health outcomes.

**Keywords:** Mental health, psychological well-being, anxiety disorders, depression, problematic social media use, risk factors, emotional well-being, digital literacy, targeted interventions.

**Аннотация.** Данная статья рассматривает влияние социальных сетей на психическое здоровье, уделяя особое внимание молодежи. В ней анализируются как негативные последствия, так и положительные стороны использования социальных сетей, включая их связь с тревожностью, депрессией и проблемами самооценки, а также их роль в формировании социальных связей и эмоциональной поддержки. Основываясь на данных World Health Organization, подчеркивается влияние широкого круга социальных и экологических факторов на психическое благополучие, включая цифровую активность. В заключение отмечается, что для поддержания психического здоровья необходимо придерживаться сбалансированного и осознанного использования социальных сетей.

**Ключевые слова:** Психическое здоровье, психологическое благополучие, тревожные расстройства, депрессия, проблемное использование социальных сетей, факторы риска, эмоциональное благополучие, цифровая грамотность, целевые вмешательства.

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqola ijtimoiy tarmoqlarning ruhiy salomatlikka ta'sirini, ayniqsa yoshlar orasida, tahlil qiladi. Unda ijtimoiy tarmoqlardan foydalanishning salbiy oqibatlarini bilan bir qatorda ijobiy tomonlari ham ko'rib chiqiladi, jumladan, uning xavotir, depressiya va o'z-o'zini baholash muammolariga ta'siri, shuningdek, ijtimoiy aloqalarni rivojlantirish va emotsional qo'llab-quvvatlashdagi o'rni yoritiladi. World Health Organization ma'lumotlariga asoslanib, ruhiy farovonlikka turli ijtimoiy va atrof-muhit omillari, jumladan raqamli faollik ham ta'sir ko'rsatishi ta'kidlanadi. Xulosa qilib aytganda, ijtimoiy tarmoqlardan muvozanatli va ongli foydalanish ruhiy salomatlikni yaxshilash uchun muhim hisoblanadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** ruhiy salomatlik, psixologik farovonlik, xavotir buzilishlari, depressiya, ijtimoiy tarmoqlardan muammoli foydalanish, xavf omillari, emotsional farovonlik, raqamli savodxonlik, maqsadli aralashuvlar.

In today's technology-driven world, social media has become an integral part of our lives, however, it leads many people, particularly, youngsters to face the challenges of mental illness. Social media offers a huge access to various websites and online platforms that allow individuals to stay connected with others from distances (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, or LinkedIn), where they can share, co-create, or exchange various forms of digital content, including information, messages, photos, or videos. According to the research conducted by National Library of Medicine, individuals living with a range of mental disorders, including depression, psychotic disorders, or other severe mental illnesses, use social media platforms at comparable rates as the general population, with use ranging from about 70% among middle-age and older individuals, to upwards of 97% among younger individuals. Individuals who are regarded as having a schizophrenia spectrum disorder responded to a survey shared through the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI), and reported that visiting social media sites was one of their most common daily activities when using digital devices, taking up roughly 2 hours each day (Gay, Torous, Joseph, Pandya, & Duckworth, 2016). For adolescents and young adults ages 12 to 21 with psychotic disorders and mood disorders, over 97% reported using social media, with average use exceeding 2.5 hours per day (M. L. Birnbaum et al., 2017). Similarly, in a sample of adolescents ages 13-18 invited from community mental health centers, 98% reported using social media, with YouTube as the most popular platform, followed by Instagram and Snapchat. Social media use can also lead to FOMO — a fear of missing out. Following the highlights of someone else's life can make it easy for people to compare their life which, in turn, can cause dissatisfaction and the feeling of inadequacy. Researchers have also linked FOMO from social media to insufficient sleep and feelings of anxiety and depression. Social media experiences can and do differ depending on a user's race, age, gender and sexual orientation.

Statistics. New data from the WHO Regional Office for Europe shows a sharp rise in problematic social media use among adolescents, with rates increasing from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022. This, coupled with findings that 12% of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, raises urgent concerns about the impact of digital technology on the mental health and well-being of young people. These findings come from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, which surveyed almost 280 000 young people aged 11, 13 and 15 across 44 countries and regions in Europe, central Asia and Canada in 2022.

**Key findings include:** More than 1 in 10 adolescents (11%) showed signs of problematic social media behaviour, struggling to control their use and experiencing negative consequences. Girls reported higher levels of problematic social media use than boys (13% vs 9%).

Over a third (36%) of young people reported constant contact with friends online, with the highest rates among 15-year-old girls (44%).

A third (34%) of adolescents played digital games daily, with more than 1 in 5 (22%) playing for at least 4 hours on days when they engage in gaming.

12% of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, with boys more likely than girls to show signs of problematic gaming (16% vs 7%).

**Negative impacts.** The rise in problematic social media use among adolescents arises significant concerns about potential side effects on young people. According the previous research of the WHO, problematic social media users reported lower mental and social well-being and higher levels of substance use compared to non-problematic users and non-users. This trend, if continued, could have far-reaching consequences for adolescent development and health risks in the long run. Moreover, problematic social media use has been associated

with less sleep and later bedtimes, potentially impacting adolescents' overall health and academic performance. "It's clear that social media can have both positive and negative consequences on the health and well-being of adolescents," noted Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe. "That's why digital literacy education is so important. Yet it remains inadequate in many countries, and where it is available, it often fails to keep pace with young people and rapidly evolving technology. We are seeing the consequences of this gap, with worse likely to come, unless governments, health authorities, teachers and parents identify the root causes of the current situation and take steps to rectify it. As millions of children across the world return to school after the summer holidays, some countries are considering restrictions or outright bans on social media for children up to a certain age. It's clear we need immediate and sustained action to help adolescents turn the tide on potentially damaging social media use, which has been shown to lead to depression, bullying, anxiety and poor academic performance." The journal namely, *The New Scientist* reported that Australia has offered to enforce a ban for teenagers who are under the age of 16 to for using social media platforms by introducing certain verification systems, which do not allow children to visit social media apps.

**Positive impacts.** While the report highlights the risks, it also illustrates several potential benefits of social media use. Adolescents who are heavy but non-problematic users reported stronger peer support and social connections. As one 17-year-old boy from Poland shared, "There are many benefits of social media, especially when it is used in moderation. Among the benefits, there is connection and connectedness. Teenagers may meet others who share their passions and interests". "This study reveals both the promise and the pitfalls of digital engagement for our young people," said Dr Natasha Azzopardi-Muscat, Director for Country Health Policies and Systems, WHO Regional Office for Europe. "It's crucial that we take steps to protect youth to allow them to navigate the digital landscape safely and equip them to make informed choices about their online activities, maximizing the benefits while minimizing the risks to their mental and social well-being. In short, they should rule social media, and not have social media ruling them."

In conclusion, as highlighted by the World Health Organization and the National Institutes of Health, mental health is influenced by a wide range of social and environmental factors, including digital engagement. However, we can address this problem by taking some steps, including focusing on helping youngs develop digital literacy skills, promoting healthy online behaviours, and providing support for those at risk of this phenomenon.

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