

The Effect of Social Media on Adolescence Mental Health

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Abstract:

Social media development together with its platforms has transformed adolescent communication and social engagement techniques. Young people experience social emotional psychological changes because of the 95% usage of Instagram TikTok and Snapchat among their demographic. The study analyzes the diverse mental health effects which social media creates for adolescents while examining its combined positive and negative consequences. Social media platforms enable individuals to express themselves while being creative and forming peer connections but at the same time they seem to intensify mental health problems of adolescents. This paper analyzes the combined effects of social media platforms to identify their positive aspects towards community support while helping individuals express themselves and promote advocacy work and their negative consequences which produce mental health issues through stress and depression along with internet bullying and body image difficulties. Social media engagement as a viewer results in higher anxiety levels and depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem but active and creative social media activities frequently generate more favorable results. Social comparison proves to be a main component of research as teenagers evaluate their experiences against the staged perfect representations shown on social media websites. Social comparison reaches its peak on Instagram because this platform encourages individuals to experience body image problems and unease about their appearance. The research analyzes how cyberbullying affects individuals because social communication has migrated to digital environments. The experience of cyberbullying leads adolescents to develop depression and anxiety and they may start experiencing suicidal thoughts. The utilization of social media for support-related activities brings positive outcomes even though it produces adverse results. A considerable number of young people access mental health resources and join communities which both offer emotional support while connecting them to others. Besides examining these positive social impact possibilities the study identifies specific examples from mental health-based communities together with social justice organizations and environmental activists who use social media for change creation.

The research methodology includes both a thorough literature survey and survey data from 200 adolescents to study their social media behavior and mental health results. The study demonstrates an undeniable link between long social media usage and mental health deterioration because adolescents who spend more than three hours daily on social media experience higher anxiety and depression symptoms. Additional interviews conducted with 20 adolescents exposed different perspectives about social media experiences through which some participants experienced mixed positive and negative results based on how they used them. The research concludes by recommending methods to decrease adolescent social media-related mental health issues such as digital literacy training and correct screenusage duration and teaching from parents. Higher quality research must examine how social media affects users

longer-term together with studying virtual reality technologies and evaluation of programs designed to establish better digital behavior.

Keywords: Social Media, Adolescents, Mental Health, Anxiety, Cyberbullying

Introduction:

Modern adolescence stands incomplete without social media since it shapes the basic ways teenagers communicate with others as well as their self-concept and real-world social involvement [1]. Adolescents worldwide adopt social media platforms including Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Snapchat to the extent that this practice affects their mental health at a level that raises significant concerns. Social media enables several useful features for users who connect with friends, post life events and retrieve information but the influence on mental health remains complicated. Social media affects teenagers strongly because their self-concept development and emotional regulation and social identities remain immature [2].

Social media presents two distinct effects on mental health because it creates chances for self-expression but researchers find it leads to negatives such as anxiety together with depression and self-esteem issues [3]. The difficulties related to cyberbullying together with social comparisons and beauty and success standards pressure create these mental health challenges. Adolescents need comprehensive knowledge about social media impacts on mental health because such information has turned out to be essential during these times. Research investigates the effects that adolescent social media use creates between rewards and dangers to understand complete benefits and risks for this population.

Background of the Study:

Social media revolutionized adolescent interaction with the world during the digital era. Research into youth mental health requires study of how social media affects their psychological well-being since these platforms have emerged as major tools for youth communication [4][6]. Social media allows adolescents to continue their historical development of identity and social interaction through its platform. Rapid social media expansion together with its extensive daily presence create new obstacles which affect mental health conditions.

Adolescent communication together with experience sharing and identity development have dramatically changed due to the worldwide expansion of social media platforms including MySpace, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok [5][9]. The adoption rate of global social media platforms rises according to Figure 1 which presents data about these platforms infiltrating more deeply into user daily schedules. The pattern depicts extensive social media adoption which proves its extensive impact on adolescent social relationships.

The number of social media user identities as a percentage of the total global population from 2000 to 2025.

The usage of social media networks among adolescents experienced enormous expansion over recent years. Pew Research indicates that smartphone ownership reaches 95% among teens while 45% of them are connected to the internet for long periods. The platforms enable social relationships in addition to providing both information and entertainment features and tools for self-expression purposes. The widespread positive characteristics of social media platforms

face rising criticism because of adverse effects mostly affecting mental wellbeing. Research findings show that excessive time spent on social media creates links to elevated rates of anxiety, depression and social solitude because platforms show people unfeasible life models that encourage improper peer-based evaluations.

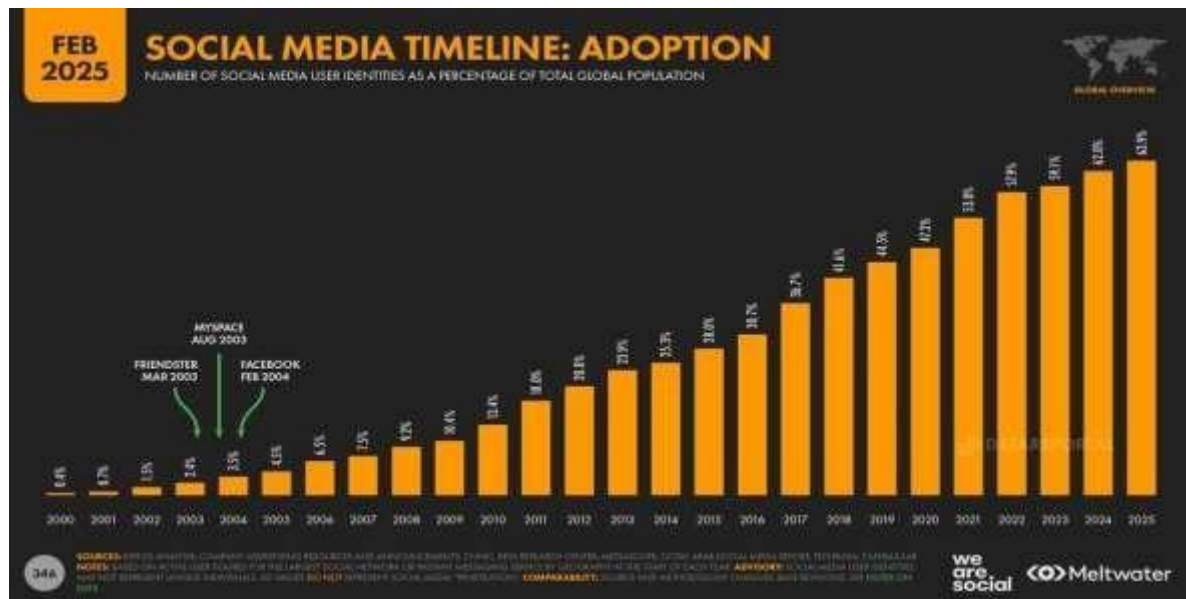


Figure 1: Social Media Timeline: Adoption [7]

The purpose of this research investigates all effects social media has on adolescent mental health conditions alongside their fundamental causes that generate both helpful and harmful outcomes.

Justification:

Social media continues to spread rapidly throughout adolescent communities where mental health disorders are growing so the situation requires instant action. The mental development phase of adolescence needs immediate investigation of external factors including social media in order to properly understand their impact on emotional well-being outcomes. Most people fail to notice or neglect studying the various damaging effects of social media that include cyberbullying and negative impacts on body image.

The extensive adolescent engagement with social media networks requires immediate investigation about their dual beneficial and detrimental effects. The research findings will guide parents as well as education professionals and mental health practitioners make educational choices relating to this intricate social media youth relationship. This research produces results which assist educational programs to establish guidelines for secure social media practice and digital capability development alongside protective strategies against negative consequences.

• Objectives of the Study:

This research establishes two main goals which are to:

- **Evaluate both positive and negative mental health consequences which social media presents for young adults during their adolescent years.**

- Then again this research will examine both positive aspects such as sense of belonging as well as self-expression alongside interpersonal support and negative outcomes including depression alongside anxiety and self-esteem problems.
- **Examine how various elements influence the effects which social media has on young people's mental state.**
- The study examines the relationship between mental health outcomes from different variable factors that combine user frequency, platform selections, user ages and the viral content material (embellished pictures and peer engagement).
- **The evaluation of social comparison alongside cyberbullying practices shows how they affect adolescent mental health when using social media platforms.**
- Participants will examine whether consistent exposure to modified life presentations and social comparison activities leads to mental health complications through feelings of insufficient competency.
- **Create guidelines to minimize the adverse effects that social media has on adolescent mental well-being.**
- The proposed solutions should act as implementable steps which parents and educators as well as policymakers should use to establish healthier social media practices that reduce associated risks from social media.

Literature Review:

The social media presence in adolescent life affects their social relationships as well as their self-perception abilities and emotional wellbeing. The studies on this research topic display dual effects which reveal the challenging nature of how social media affects adolescent populations.

Positive Effects of Social Media on Adolescent Mental Health:

- Several studies show that social media has beneficial outcomes for users especially when they approach it with mindfulness. Adolescents benefit from social media because it enables them to create nurturing social networks as well as discover community spaces that share their interests alongside opportunities to show themselves when offline interactions would prove challenging [8]. Through Instagram and TikTok users can express themselves by sharing photos and videos and memes thus allowing adolescents to reach understanding of their identities.
- Social media provides adolescents suffering from mental disorders with an opportunity to find other people who understand their situations. Virtual mental health support groups help members overcome loneliness by linking them to others experiencing similar struggles and supply emotional assistance [10]. Through Twitter and Facebook users can support their chosen causes while Facebook enables adolescents to become active members of major social movements which produces feelings of belonging.

Negative Effects of Social Media on Adolescent Mental Health:

- Social media has shown numerous adverse effects when used by adolescents which have been extensively documented. Adolescents develop both self-esteem issues and feelings of incompetence because they observe idealized and sanitized content on social media from influencers and peers [11]. Fear of missing out (FOMO) emerges as a common consequence for adolescents which subsequently triggers anxiety and loneliness. Mental health issues stem from cyberbullying which poses a critical threat to users who interact on Facebook Instagram or Snapchat. Victims who suffer from cyberbullying develop depression alongside anxiety which occasionally causes them to think of suicide [12].
- Multiple research projects have established that insomnia develops from social media consumption since teenagers stay connected to their phones during late hours leading to circadian rhythm disruption that affects brain health negatively. Social isolation emerges as a result of heavy social media consumption because people exchange real-life interactions with virtual interactions that often fail to capture true emotional authenticity.

Theories Explaining Social Media's Impact:

- According to Social Comparison Theory human beings use outside comparisons to determine their level of satisfaction with themselves [13]. When adolescents spend time perusing the unrealistic beauty standards displayed through social media they typically develop feelings of worthlessness. According to the Cultivation Theory people who consume media content spend longer periods absorbing its portrayed values [14]. The excessive presentation of beauty perfection and societal success and wealth on social media platforms creates inaccurate self-perceptions that affect adolescent mental health negatively [15].

Current Gaps in Research:

- The present literature on this subject has grown rapidly yet investigators need to examine the enduring mental health impacts of social media on young people especially. Additional scientific inquiry should focus on understanding what different forms of social media content perform on adolescent mental health together with exploring which individual factors from among personality traits and coping methods affect these outcomes.

Material and Methodology:

To study how social media influences adolescent mental health the researchers have used a dual method framework which includes both quantitative and qualitative research techniques.

Approach: The research design includes both extensive literature review followed by primary survey data collection through questionnaires. The literature review serves to compile the knowledge from known research publications which then generates new social media usage data from adolescent participants through surveys.

Participants/Sample: The research targets 12-18 year-old participants during their crucial developmental period because social media controls their identity formation and social networks during this period. The research will survey 200 selected adolescents who will be selected by random from different educational institutions and residential areas. The research participants need to complete an extensive assessment which contains inquiries about their

social media behavior together with their platform choices and mental health concerns such as depressive symptoms along with anxiety and reduced self-worth.

Data Collection: The survey collects data through an online format by using both close-ended and open-ended query types. The survey will ask about:

- The participants need to report their daily screen time on social media.
- The analyzed social media networks consist of Instagram and Facebook together with TikTok and others.
- The participants' exposure to cyberbullying through online harassment forms part of their survey responses.
- Participants will answer psychometric tests including Beck Depression Inventory and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to measure their anxiety levels and depression ratings and self-esteem ratings.

The questions about social media duration and frequency will be guided by the average platform usage shown in the below chart.

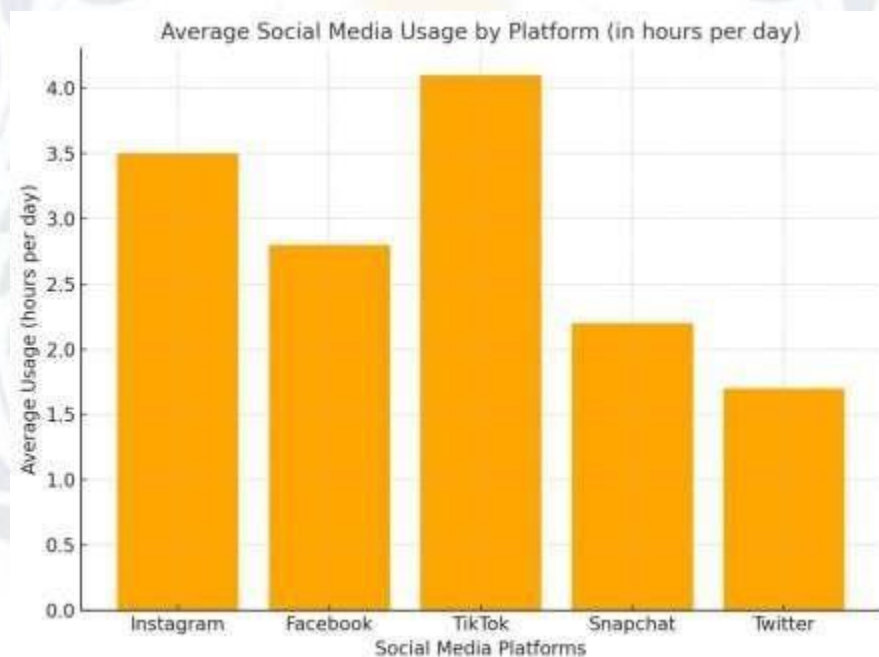


Figure 2: Average Social Media Usage by Platform (in hours per day)

The graph provides understanding about teen social media behavior patterns leading researchers to use it for collecting data about social media usage.

The study includes twenty adolescents who view social media as it relates to mental health to undergo in-depth interview assessments about their personal social media experience together with mental health consequences.

Analysis Methods: Statistical description of quantitative survey data reveals patterns about the relation between social media usage and mental health effects through correlation assessments. Thematic methods enable researchers to perform analysis of interview data so they can study continuous themes and personal narratives about mental health effects from social media use.

Results and Discussion:

Results:

Survey data was collected from 200 adolescents aged 12 to 18 years while interview data was gathered from 20 purposefully selected participants to reach these findings. Major study findings appear in different sections throughout this document.

Social Media Usage Patterns:

Today's typical adolescent spends all their phone hours using social media applications each day. The survey results indicated TikTok as the top social media platform and users spent maximum time on it then Instagram came in the second position followed by Facebook. People who used social media dedicated their time to platforms according to usage patterns which resulted in 1.7-hour minimum to 4.1-hour maximum daily usage. The average platform usage data exists in this specific arrangement according to the table.

Table 1: Average Social Media Usage by Platform (Hours per Day)

Platform	Average Usage (Hours per Day)
Instagram	3.5
Facebook	2.8
TikTok	4.1
Snapchat	2.2
Twitter	1.7

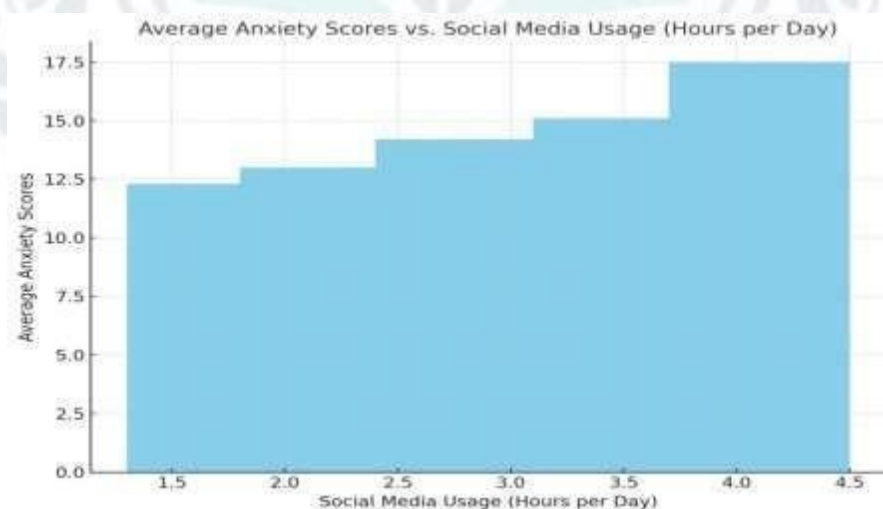
Impact on Mental Health:

Figure 1: Average Anxiety Scores vs. Social Media Usage (Hours per Day)

Participants in the survey explained their mental health condition through answers about anxiety symptoms and depressive manifestations and attitudes towards self-esteem. Research outcomes showed that higher social media consumption produced direct negative effects on depression and anxiety diagnosis in subjects. Those adolescents who spent more than 3 hours each day on social media platforms showed greater numbers of anxiety and depression

symptoms.

An evaluation of adolescent anxiety scores through standardized measurement methods demonstrates this information in the following bar chart according to social media engagement. This graph visually represents the correlation between increased social media usage (measured in hours per day) and the rise in anxiety scores. As social media usage increases, anxiety levels also tend to increase, which is a key finding in the study.

Cyberbullying and Social Comparison:

Cyberbullying was reported by 28% of participants, with Instagram and Facebook being the most common platforms for online harassment. Adolescents who had experienced cyberbullying reported significantly lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression. Additionally, the survey found a significant relationship between social comparison (as measured by a social comparison scale) and mental health issues. Adolescents who engaged in frequent social comparison on platforms like Instagram were more likely to report body image issues and feelings of inadequacy.

Table 2: Impact of Cyberbullying on Self-Esteem and Depression

Experience of Cyberbullying	Depression Score (Mean)	Self-Esteem Score (Mean)
Yes	18.5	15.2
No	12.3	20.1

The following bar chart presents the impact of cyberbullying on depression and self-esteem scores. As shown, adolescents who experienced cyberbullying had higher depression scores and lower self-esteem compared to those who did not experience bullying.

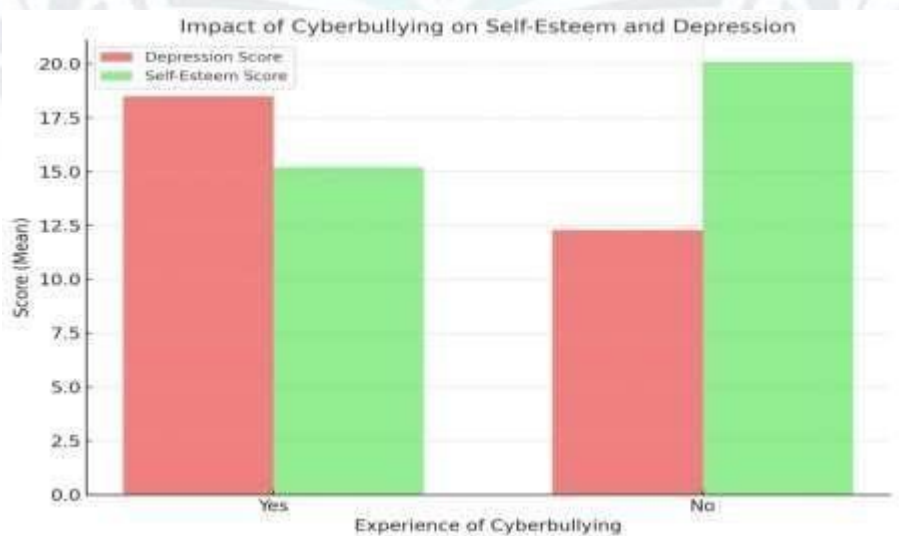


Figure 2: Impact of Cyberbullying on Self-Esteem and Depression

This graph compares the depression and self-esteem scores between adolescents who have experienced cyberbullying and those who have not. The data suggests that those who have experienced cyberbullying report significantly higher depression scores and lower self-esteem.

Positive Effects of Social Media:

The negative aspects of social media usage outran the positive effects which adolescents experienced. People who engaged in creative activities on social media platforms obtained better self-confidence and enhanced social connections. Social causes through platforms like Twitter and Facebook created opportunities for empowerment alongside community when individuals used these platforms in this way.

Differences Across Demographics:

Female adolescents experienced more anxieties and concerns about their body image because of their social media use versus their male counterparts. Male adolescents spent majority of their time using social media for entertainment and gaming purposes while showing no significant impact on their mental well-being.

Discussion:

The research results demonstrate how social media both helps and hurts adolescent mental health and support previously published studies in this field.

Negative Effects:

High social media usage exceeding three hours daily produced substantial negative results that triggered elevation of anxiety alongside depression symptoms. The results match earlier research about how excessive social media usage especially non-participatory scrolling activities makes people feel more cut off and worried. Social comparison behavior establishes itself strongly on Instagram because users mostly encounter carefully selected photos that push people toward unachievable beauty standards as well as success metrics and lifestyle fantasies. Most adolescents experiencing mental health problems linked these issues to cyberbullying behavior. Social media platforms offer perfect conditions for bully activities because they provide anonymous spaces that reach global audiences and produce serious mental health problems such as depression together with reduced self-esteem.

Positive Effects:

The research analysis discovered some positive social effects while revealing its findings. When people post creative content through social media they also become more confident and reported improved social ties. Various studies demonstrate that social media functions perfectly as an outlet for individual self-expression particularly among groups who are marginalized or lack proper representation. The finding revealed that participating in social action through social media resulted in positive mental effects because it provided both empowerment and feelings of community.

Gender Differences:

Female adolescents participated in higher rates of developing body image issues and depression stemming from their social media use. Young women often experience stress from beauty standards produced on Instagram platforms. Male adolescents maintained lower emotional distress because of their social media behavior when compared to female adolescents thus

indicating potential gender-based variations in the use of social media platforms.

Implications for Mental Health Professionals:

Clinical professionals working with mental health patients must evaluate how social media functions in their treatment plans according to the findings. Mental health professionals should create interventions that teach adolescents how to build healthier relationships with social media by providing digital detox approaches along with training about developing self-esteem and developing resilience against online pressures.

• Limitations of the Study:

- Each research investigation has boundary limitations which researchers must recognize including the present research. A number of constraints need to be taken into account before drawing conclusions from this research.
- **Sample Size and Generalizability:** A sample survey of 200 adolescents lacks sufficient breadth in representation since it may not accurately reflect the condition of all global adolescents. Due to geographic restrictions of the study population cultural factors which might affect the relationship between social media and mental health were not appropriately considered.
- **Self-Reported Data:** All data information was obtained through direct participant reports since the study assessed their social media usage and mental health conditions. The valid responses received from participants involved potential biases from factors like social desirability bias and recall bias which influence their reporting of social media habits and mental health conditions.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** A cross-sectional design was used by researchers to gather data at one specific time point. Researchers cannot establish direct cause-effect relations between social media use and mental health because of this study design. Investigators should monitor adolescent mental health development through multiple phases by following them chronologically to determine how social media platforms affect their psychological wellness.
- **Limited Scope of Platforms:** The research examined social media behavior among adolescents who use Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Snapchat platforms above all else. Social media platforms beyond Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Snapchat exist which potentially affect adolescent mental health differently including YouTube, Reddit and Discord. The research analysis omitted evaluation of all available social media which reduced the breadth of its investigative results.

Future Scope:

This research has delivered essential mental health information about social media but additional understanding would result from future work in the following fields.

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Future mental health research should adopt longitudinal study patterns because this approach allows scientists to observe adolescents through time to fully understand the lasting influence of social media on their well-being. Such research design would yield more compelling data about how patterns of social media utilization directly affect mental health results.

- **Specific Platform Analysis:** Research should analyze the separate effects which distinct social media platforms have on adolescent mental health because platforms exhibit diverse outcomes. Scientific investigations should analyze the individual effects on user mental health resulting from the distinct characteristics of Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok together with their unique features such as filters and likes and followers.
- **Impact of Emerging Technologies:** Future research must investigate how mental health of adolescents gets affected by new technology developments including augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) when used together with social media platforms. The field will require improved knowledge about digital immersion impacts since these digital technologies are becoming more widespread and prevalent among users.

Conclusion:

This research demonstrates the extensive way social media network platforms affect adolescent mental health status. Social media lets users express themselves yet its harmful consequences that cause anxiety and depression along with low self-esteem cannot be dismissed. The study demonstrates that extended social media usage by adolescents leads directly to worsened mental health performance especially in depression and anxiety development. The study established that cyberbullying alongside social comparison play major roles in creating mental health problems for young people.

Social media creates benefits through enhancements of creativity while providing adolescent help networks for mental health support. This research demonstrates the requirement of maintaining equilibrium in social media interactions as well as initiatives which support wholesome digital behavior. The relationship between young people's mental health and their usage of social media platforms will grow stronger in the coming years making it essential to discover methods which protect social network platforms' advantages over negative effects.

Additional investigations must analyze both short and long-term social media impacts as well as particular platform influences because of this study's restrictions. Professional and policy collaboration between educators and mental health specialists aims to create sustainable solutions which enable adolescents to safely interact online.

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