

Understanding Social Media Behavior: A Systematic Review of Patterns, Influences, and Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Social media has revolutionized global communication, with over 5.24 billion users engaging on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram. This systematic review examines social media behavior, focusing on patterns, influencing factors, and outcomes. A comprehensive literature search across databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Web of Science identified 36 studies, predominantly cross-sectional, with limited longitudinal and experimental research. Key findings highlight the psychological impacts of social comparison, self-presentation, and social media addiction, particularly among younger users. Cultural influences shape engagement patterns, with Indian youth displaying unique digital behaviours. Mental and physical health effects range from increased anxiety and depression to benefits like social connectivity. Furthermore, social media significantly influences public opinion, digital activism, and consumer behavior. While offering advantages, excessive use contributes to misinformation, addiction, and mental health concerns. The study underscores the need for more longitudinal research on algorithmic influence and platform-specific behaviours. Future interventions should focus on digital literacy, regulatory measures, and responsible social media use to mitigate negative consequences while leveraging its benefits.

Keywords: *Social media behavior, mental health, online identity, psychological effects, social networking, digital well-being, screen time, regulatory measures, cross-sectional studies*

Social media has revolutionized the way individuals communicate, share information, and interact with the world. The term "social media" refers to digital platforms that enable users to create, share, and exchange content in virtual communities and networks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The origins of social media can be traced back to the early 2000s, with the launch of platforms like Friendster (2002) and MySpace (2003). However, the landscape changed dramatically with the introduction of Facebook in 2004, which quickly became the dominant platform, amassing over 2.9 billion monthly active users as of 2023 (Statista, 2023). Other platforms, such as Twitter (now X), Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and Snapchat, have also gained significant power, each catering to different user needs and preferences.

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The global penetration of social media is staggering. As of January 2025, global social media usage has continued its rapid growth. There are now approximately 5.24 billion social media users worldwide, accounting for 63.9% of the global population. This marks an increase from 4.9 billion users in 2023, reflecting an annual growth rate of 4.1% (Data Reportal, 2025). In terms of platform popularity, Facebook remains the leader with over 3.04 billion users. YouTube follows with 2.5 billion users, while both WhatsApp and Instagram have reached 2 billion users each (Prioritized, 2025). These statistics underscore the pervasive and growing influence of social media on a global scale. This widespread adoption has been fuelled by the proliferation of smartphones and affordable internet access, particularly in developing regions. For instance, countries in Asia and Africa have seen exponential growth in social media usage, with platforms like WhatsApp and TikTok becoming integral to daily life (Kemp, 2023).

Statistics on Social Media Usage

The following statistics highlight the scale and intensity of social media usage. As of 2024, Facebook remains the most widely used platform, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram (Statista, 2024). TikTok, launched in 2016, has rapidly grown to over 1.5 billion users, particularly among younger demographics (Wallaroo, 2023). Now, short videos have drastically changed the way people engage with social media. The word of 2024, 'brain rot,' has emerged from this era.

Globally, people average 6 hours and 40 minutes of screen time per day. Daily screen time has increased by over 30 minutes per day since 2013. The average American spends 7 hours and 3 minutes looking at a screen each day. Gen Z averages around 9 hours of screen time per day. On average, internet users spend 2 hours and 31 minutes daily on social media, with significant variations across regions. For example, users in the Indians spend an average of 4 hours per day, while those in Japan spend approximately 51 minutes (Data Reportal, 2024). Younger generations, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, are the most active social media users. However, older adults are increasingly adopting these platforms, with 75% of internet users aged 50-64 and 50% of those aged 65+ using social media (Pew Research Centre, 2024).

The Importance of Studying Social Media Behavior

Social media use has been linked to both positive and negative outcomes for mental health. On one hand, it fosters social connectivity, provides emotional support, and enhances self-expression (Valkenburg et al., 2017). On the other hand, excessive use has been associated with anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Twenge et al., 2018). Studying these behaviours can help identify risk factors and promote healthier usage patterns.

Social media has transformed how people form and maintain relationships. It enables instant communication across geographical boundaries but can also lead to superficial interactions and reduced face-to-face communication (Turkle, 2015). Understanding these dynamics is essential for addressing challenges such as cyberbullying and online harassment (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

Social media plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, political discourse, and cultural norms. It has been instrumental in social movements, such as the Arab Spring and #BlackLivesMatter, but has also been criticized for spreading misinformation and fostering polarization (Tufekci, 2017). Analysing social media behavior can inform strategies to combat these issues and promote digital literacy. Social media has become a powerful tool

for businesses, enabling targeted advertising, customer engagement, and brand building. Understanding user behavior is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies and ensuring ethical practices (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

The rise of social media and its global penetration have fundamentally altered human interaction and societal dynamics. By studying social media behavior, researchers can address its multifaceted implications and guide individuals, organizations, and policymakers in navigating the digital age.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding social media behavior requires a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on theories from communication studies, psychology, sociology, and information systems. This section introduces four key theoretical frameworks that have been widely used to explain social media behavior: Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), Social Comparison Theory (SCT), Self-Presentation Theory (SPT), and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Each theory provides unique insights into why individuals engage with social media, how they interact with others, and the psychological and social outcomes of their behavior.

1. Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973): Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is a communication theory that focuses on why and how individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs or desires. Unlike earlier media theories that viewed audiences as passive recipients, UGT posits that individuals are active participants who choose media based on their goals and motivations (Katz et al., 1973).

Social media platforms provide a wide range of functionalities that cater to diverse user needs. UGT has been widely applied to understand why individuals use social media and what gratifications they derive from it. Key gratifications include, Users engage with social media to connect with friends, family, and communities (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Platforms like Twitter and Reddit are used to access news, knowledge, and updates (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Social media provides entertainment through videos, memes, and interactive content (Smock et al., 2011). Users share personal content to express their identity and opinions (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). While UGT is useful for understanding motivations, it has been criticized for being too individualistic and not accounting for the broader social and cultural contexts that shape media use (Ruggiero, 2000). Additionally, the theory does not fully explain the unintended consequences of social media use, such as addiction or negative mental health outcomes.

2. Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954): Social Comparison Theory (SCT), proposed by Leon Festinger, suggests that individuals evaluate their own abilities and opinions by comparing themselves to others. Festinger argued that people have an innate drive to assess themselves, and when objective standards are unavailable, they turn to social comparisons (Festinger, 1954).

Social media platforms amplify opportunities for social comparison by providing constant access to curated representations of others' lives. Key aspects include, comparing oneself to those perceived as better off, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy or envy (Vogel et al., 2014). Comparing oneself to those perceived as worse off, which can boost self-esteem but may also foster guilt or pity (Wills, 1981). Comparing oneself to peers, which can provide a sense of belonging or competition (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2011). SCT has been criticized for its focus on individual-level comparisons and its limited attention to cultural and

contextual factors. Additionally, the theory does not fully account for the role of platform design (e.g., algorithms) in shaping comparison behaviours (Fardouly et al., 2015).

3. Self-Presentation Theory (Goffman, 1959): Self-Presentation Theory, introduced by Erving Goffman, posits that individuals perform roles in social interactions, much like actors on a stage. Goffman argued that people manage their impressions to control how others perceive them (Goffman, 1959).

Social media provides a platform for curated self-presentation, where users can selectively share content to construct desired identities. Key concepts include, Users carefully curate profiles, posts, and photos to present an idealized version of themselves (Zhao et al., 2008). Social media blurs the line between public (front stage) and private (back stage) behaviours, as users often share personal moments publicly (boyd, 2014). While some users strive for authenticity, others engage in deceptive practices, such as using filters or editing photos (Chua & Chang, 2016). Self-Presentation Theory has been critiqued for its focus on individual agency, overlooking the role of platform constraints (e.g., character limits, algorithmic curation) in shaping self-presentation (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

4. Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989): The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis, explains how users come to accept and use technology. TAM posits that two key factors—perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use—determine an individual's intention to use a technology (Davis, 1989).

TAM has been widely applied to understand the adoption and use of social media platforms. Key aspects include, Users adopt social media if they believe it will help them achieve their goals, such as staying connected or accessing information (Rauniar et al., 2014). Platforms with intuitive interfaces and minimal learning curves are more likely to be adopted (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). The decision to use social media is influenced by attitudes, social norms, and perceived control (Ajzen, 1991). TAM has been criticized for its narrow focus on utilitarian aspects of technology use, neglecting emotional and social factors that influence behavior (Bagozzi, 2007).

These theories are not mutually exclusive; rather, they complement each other in explaining different facets of social media behavior. UGT explains why individuals choose specific platforms or features. SCT highlights the psychological consequences of social comparisons on these platforms. SPT explores how users present themselves to others. TAM provides insights into the adoption and continued use of social media technologies.

The Significance and need of the Study

Social media has become a dominant force in communication, influencing personal interactions, mental health, and societal trends. With over 5.24 billion users globally in 2025, its impact is undeniable. While research on social media behavior exists, it is often fragmented, lacking a comprehensive perspective that integrates psychological, sociological, and technological viewpoints.

This review is necessary to synthesize existing research, evaluate study quality, and identify key patterns in social media behavior. By consolidating findings across multiple disciplines, this study aims to highlight both the benefits and risks of social media use, informing researchers, policymakers, and mental health professionals about best practices for digital engagement.

Existing Gaps in Research

Despite the growing body of research on social media, several gaps remain. Most studies rely on cross-sectional data, which limits the ability to establish cause-and-effect relationships. Longitudinal and experimental research is needed to understand long-term behavioural consequences. Furthermore, social media behavior studies are heavily Western-centric, with limited research on Indian, Asian, and African users. Cultural differences, regional digital policies, and platform preferences are often overlooked, reducing the generalizability of findings. Moreover, research has predominantly focused on adolescents and young adults, while older adults, children, and neurodivergent individuals remain underrepresented.

Emerging trends, such as AI-driven content, short-form video culture (Shorts, Reels), and the impact of algorithms on user behavior, require further investigation. There is also a need for platform-specific studies, as user behavior varies significantly across different social media environments.

How This Review Contributes to the Field

This systematic review integrates multiple theoretical frameworks, such as Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Comparison Theory, Self-Presentation Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model, to provide a structured explanation of why and how people engage with social media.

By assessing the quality and methodology of existing research, this review highlights strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement in social media studies. It also identifies behavioural patterns, cultural variations, and emerging trends, offering a broader perspective on digital engagement. Practically, the findings of this review can inform mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers about digital well-being, online safety, and responsible technology use. It also provides guidance for regulatory bodies on addressing issues such as misinformation, cyberbullying, and data privacy.

This review plays a crucial role in bridging research gaps, synthesizing findings, and guiding future studies on social media behavior. By addressing methodological inconsistencies, cultural limitations, and evolving digital trends, it provides valuable insights for academics, industry leaders, and policymakers.

Objectives

- To identify common patterns of social media behavior, categorized by user demographics, usage intent, and platform engagement.
- To analyse key psychological, cultural, and technological factors influencing social media behaviours.
- To examine the short-term and long-term psychological, social, and behavioural outcomes of social media use.
- To provide recommendations for ethical, healthy, and constructive social media engagement.

METHODS

The methodology section of a systematic review is critical for ensuring transparency, reproducibility, and rigor. Below is a detailed expansion of the methods section, including

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the search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data extraction and synthesis, and quality assessment.

Search Strategy:

The search strategy was designed to identify all relevant studies on social media behavior, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the literature.

- 1. Databases Searched:** The following electronic databases were systematically searched: PubMed for biomedical and psychological literature. PsycINFO for studies in psychology and behavioural sciences. Scopus for multidisciplinary coverage, including social sciences and technology. Web of Science for high-impact studies across disciplines. Google Scholar to identify gray literature and additional relevant studies.
- 2. Keywords and Boolean Operators:** A combination of keywords and Boolean operators was used to maximize the search sensitivity and specificity. The search terms were grouped into three categories, Social Media Terms for "social media," "social networking sites," "Facebook," "Twitter," "Instagram," "TikTok," "YouTube." Behavior Terms for "behavior," "usage," "engagement," "interaction," "participation." Outcome Terms for "mental health," "well-being," "addiction," "cyberbullying," "social comparison."
- 3. Inclusion of Gray Literature:** To minimize publication bias, Gray literature was included, Conference proceedings (e.g., ACM Digital Library, IEEE Xplore). Theses and dissertations (e.g., ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global). Preprints (e.g., arXiv, SSRN). Reports from reputable organizations (e.g., Pew Research Centre, World Health Organization).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the relevance and quality of the studies included in the review.

1. Types of Studies

Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) and Peer-reviewed journal articles and Gray literature were included in this research.

Editorials, opinion pieces, and non-empirical reviews. Studies not focused on human behavior and studies lacking sufficient methodological detail and Research lacking methodological details. were excluded in this research.

2. Populations Studied

Studies involving human participants of all ages (e.g., adolescents, adults, older adults) and studies from diverse cultural and geographic contexts were included in this research.

Studies focused on non-human subjects (e.g., animal studies) and studies with highly specific populations not generalizable to broader contexts (e.g., clinical samples without relevance to general social media behavior) were excluded in this research.

3. Timeframe

Studies published between January 2014 and December 2024 were included in this research. Studies published before 2014, as they may not reflect current social media trends and technologies were excluded in this research.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

The systematic review process for analysing social media behavior studies followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure a rigorous and structured approach. This process

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involved several stages, including identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of studies relevant to the research.

A. Identification: The initial search identified a total of 315 records from multiple sources. The records were gathered from five major academic databases: PubMed (n = 45), PsycINFO (n = 40), Scopus (n = 60), Web of Science (n = 50), and Google Scholar (n = 75). Additionally, supplementary records were obtained from conference proceedings (n = 15), reports (n = 10), and citation searching (n = 20). This broad search strategy ensured a comprehensive collection of studies related to social media behavior patterns, influences, and outcomes.

B. Screening: After identifying the records, a deduplication process was conducted to remove duplicate entries, resulting in the elimination of 50 redundant records. This left 265 unique records to be screened based on their titles and abstracts. During this stage, 150 records were excluded for reasons such as lack of relevance to the research topic, superficial content, or being outside the defined study period. Following this, 115 full-text articles were sought for retrieval. However, 10 articles could not be retrieved due to restricted access or unavailability.

C. Eligibility: The next phase involved a detailed assessment of the full-text articles to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the systematic review. A total of 105 full-text articles were thoroughly examined based on methodological rigor, empirical data, relevance to social media behavior patterns, and sample size adequacy. After this critical evaluation, 40 studies were excluded for the following reasons:

- Methodological flaws (n = 15): These studies had issues related to data collection, research design, or bias in participant selection.
- Lack of empirical data (n = 10): Studies that were purely theoretical or lacked measurable evidence were excluded.
- Irrelevance to social media behavior patterns (n = 8): Some articles did not focus directly on behavioural aspects of social media use.
- Limited sample size and generalizability (n = 7): Research with insufficient sample sizes or limited applicability to broader populations was removed.

D. Included: Following the rigorous selection process, a total of 65 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis, which involved thematic analysis and in-depth interpretation of social media behavior trends. Additionally, 36 studies met the criteria for quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis), allowing statistical analysis of the findings.

Quality Assessment

The quality of included studies was assessed to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

- Quantitative Studies: The Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool was used to assess randomized controlled trials (Higgins et al., 2011).
- Observational Studies: The Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) was used to evaluate cohort and cross-sectional studies (Wells et al., 2014).
- Qualitative Studies: The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist was used to assess methodological rigor (CASP, 2018).

Quality Assessment Table:

Study	Study Design	Quality Rating	Strengths	Limitations
Rauniar et al. (2014)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Application of TAM to social media, large sample size.	Cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report data.
Loss et al. (2014)	Qualitative	Moderate	Examines impression management on Facebook, rich qualitative data.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Vogel et al. (2014)	Cross-sectional	High	Examines social comparison and self-esteem, validated measures.	Cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report data.
Fardouly et al. (2015)	Cross-sectional	High	Large sample size, validated measures for body image and mood.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design limits causal inferences.
Chua & Chang (2016)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Focus on self-presentation and peer comparison, culturally specific context.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Sheldon & Bryant (2016)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines Instagram use and narcissism, validated measures.	Cross-sectional design, limited generalizability.
Thadathil & Limaye (2016)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Focus on Indian youth, culturally specific context.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Longstreet & Brooks (2017)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines life satisfaction and social media addiction, validated measures.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Munjial & Sabbarwal (2017)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Focus on Indian youth, culturally specific context.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Singh et al. (2017)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Focus on Indian youth, culturally specific context.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Brunborg & Andreas (2019)	Longitudinal	High	Examines time spent on social media and mental health, robust design.	Limited generalizability due to specific population focus.
Orben & Przybylski (2019)	Cross-sectional	High	Large sample size, examines digital technology use and well-being.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Boer et al.	Cross-	High	Large international	Reliance on self-

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Study	Study Design	Quality Rating	Strengths	Limitations
(2020)	sectional		sample, examines well-being across 29 countries.	report data, cross-sectional design.
Kumar & Singh (2020)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines social media and social transformation, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Buda et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines health behaviours and perceptions, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Klavina et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines problematic internet use and health behaviours, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Marttila et al. (2021)	Longitudinal	High	Examines excessive social media use and well-being, robust design.	Limited generalizability due to specific population focus.
Paakkari et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines problematic social media use and health, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Serenko et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines social media use and health outcomes, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Sharma et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines NaMo App and Twitter, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Ahmed (2021)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Focus on Indian youth, culturally specific context.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Bonieli-Nissim et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional	High	International perspective, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Vohra et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines situational awareness during COVID-19, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Koźybska et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Focus on medical students, culturally specific context.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Lee et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines social media use and physical health, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.

Study	Study Design	Quality Rating	Strengths	Limitations
Lenzi et al. (2023)	Cross-sectional	High	Examines social media use across 43 countries, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Armstrong-Carter et al. (2023)	Longitudinal	High	Examines social media use and peer susceptibility, robust design.	Limited generalizability due to specific population focus.
Masur (2023)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Large-scale survey data, specification curve analysis.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Patel & Patel (2023)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Examines social media marketing in India, culturally specific context.	Small sample size, limited generalizability.
Sun (2023)	Experimental	High	Digital mindfulness intervention, robust experimental design.	Small sample size, limited follow-up period.
Gordesli et al. (2024)	Cross-cultural	High	Large sample size, cross-cultural comparison.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
Lahti et al. (2024)	Cross-sectional	High	Examines counteractions to problematic social media use, large sample size.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.
van Duin et al. (2024)	Cross-sectional	Moderate	Large-scale survey data, exploratory analysis.	Reliance on self-report data, cross-sectional design.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Study Design Distributions

A major observation from the table is the overwhelming reliance on cross-sectional studies, with 30 out of 36 studies using this methodology. Cross-sectional studies provide a snapshot of social media behavior at a given time, primarily through surveys and observational data. While these studies offer valuable insights, their limitation lies in their inability to establish causal relationships. This highlights the need for more longitudinal and experimental research in the field.

In contrast, longitudinal studies (such as those by Brunborg & Andreas, 2019; Marttila et al., 2021; and Armstrong-Carter et al., 2023) track changes over time, providing a stronger foundation for understanding long-term effects. These studies are particularly important when investigating the psychological and behavioural consequences of social media, such as addiction and mental health impacts.

Moreover, experimental research (e.g., Sun, 2023) is relatively rare but crucial for establishing causal inferences. Experimental designs allow researchers to manipulate

variables and observe their effects under controlled conditions. Moreover, cross-cultural studies (such as Gordesli et al., 2024) offer broader perspectives by comparing social media behavior across different countries, adding a global dimension to the research.

2. Quality Ratings of Studies

The quality of the studies in the table is assessed as high, moderate, or low based on their methodology, sample size, and research design.

High-Quality Studies (10 studies): These studies exhibit robust methodologies, large sample sizes, and validated measurement tools. Many of them, such as Lenzi et al. (2023) and Boniel-Nissim et al. (2022), incorporate international perspectives, increasing the generalizability of their findings. Longitudinal research (e.g., Marttila et al., 2021; Armstrong-Carter et al., 2023) also falls into this category due to its ability to track behavioral changes over time.

Moderate-Quality Studies (26 studies): Most of the research falls under this category. These studies often rely on self-report surveys and have smaller sample sizes, limiting their generalizability. While they contribute significantly to our understanding of social media behavior, their cross-sectional nature prevents definitive conclusions about cause and effect.

Absence of Low-Quality Studies: Encouragingly, the table does not include any studies rated as low quality, suggesting that all included research meets a minimum threshold for reliability and validity.

3. Research Themes and Patterns Identified

The studies reviewed in the table collectively explore multiple dimensions of social media behavior, including self-presentation, social comparison, mental health implications, cultural variations, and marketing influences. Below are key themes emerging from the systematic review:

A. Psychological and Behavioural Aspects of Social Media Use:

A significant portion of the research examines how individuals curate their online personas, compare themselves to others, and develop psychological dependencies on social media platforms.

Studies such as Sheldon & Bryant (2016) and Chua & Chang (2016) explore how social media users carefully craft their online identities. Many users tend to present an idealized version of themselves, often leading to unrealistic self-expectations and increased self-consciousness.

Research by Vogel et al. (2014) and Fardouly et al. (2015) highlights the detrimental effects of social media on self-esteem and body image. Social platforms facilitate upward comparisons, where individuals compare themselves to those perceived as more successful, attractive, or accomplished. This behavior can contribute to lower self-worth, increased anxiety, and depressive symptoms.

Several studies, including those by Longstreet & Brooks (2017) and Brunborg & Andreas (2019), focus on excessive social media use and its links to addiction, stress, and life dissatisfaction. Research indicates that compulsive engagement with social media can negatively impact mental well-being, especially among younger users.

B. Cultural and Regional Influences

Many studies emphasize the culturally specific aspects of social media behavior, particularly in India. Several research papers focus on Indian youth and their engagement with social media platforms.

Studies such as Thadathil & Limaye (2016), Munjial & Sabbarwal (2017), Singh et al. (2017), and Ahmed (2021) provide insights into how social media shapes identity, peer interactions, and digital communication styles among Indian adolescents and young adults. While these studies contribute to understanding regional patterns, they often have small sample sizes, limiting the ability to generalize findings beyond specific demographic groups.

C. Health and Well-being

The intersection between social media use and physical or mental health outcomes is another recurring theme.

Research by Buda et al. (2021) and Paakkari et al. (2021) investigates how problematic social media use correlates with stress, anxiety, and depression. Many studies suggest that increased screen time, online harassment, and exposure to unrealistic portrayals of life contribute to negative psychological effects.

Studies such as Lee et al. (2022) examine how social media influences physical activity, sleep patterns, and dietary habits. The findings suggest that excessive engagement in digital platforms can lead to sedentary lifestyles and disrupted sleep cycles.

D. Political and Marketing Influences

Social media plays a pivotal role in political discourse and marketing strategies, with studies exploring how users interact with online content in these domains. Studies such as Sharma et al. (2021) analyse Twitter discussions around the NaMo App, providing insights into political engagement and digital propaganda. Also, Research by Patel & Patel (2023) examines how social media influences consumer purchasing decisions in India. The study highlights how brands leverage digital platforms for advertising, consumer engagement, and market expansion.

4. Common Limitations Across Studies

Despite the valuable insights provided, several methodological limitations are consistently observed across the studies:

- Most studies use survey-based methods, which may introduce biases in participant responses. Self-reported behaviours and attitudes may not always reflect actual usage patterns.
- A significant limitation is the predominant use of cross-sectional studies, which do not allow researchers to establish causal relationships. Longitudinal or experimental research is needed to determine the long-term effects of social media behavior.
- Several studies, particularly those focusing on specific cultural or demographic groups, lack diverse participant pools, reducing their applicability to broader populations.

5. Results and Implications for Future Research

Based on the systematic review of these studies, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Social media plays a dominant role in shaping behavior, mental health, and consumer decisions. Its effects can be both positive (social connectivity, information access) and negative (addiction, self-esteem issues, misinformation).
- Indian-specific research is growing, but more longitudinal and comparative cross-cultural studies are needed to establish universal patterns versus culturally unique behaviours.
- Regulatory policies and interventions may be necessary to mitigate the adverse effects of social media, particularly concerning mental health risks and privacy concerns.
- Future research should focus on platform-specific behaviours, the influence of algorithms, and emerging trends such as AI-driven interactions, influencer culture, and virtual reality integration in social media spaces.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review highlights a strong research base on social media behavior. However, there remains a need for more rigorous methodologies, larger sample sizes, and diverse participant demographics to enhance the reliability and applicability of findings. As social media continues to evolve, research must adapt to emerging digital trends to provide meaningful insights into its societal impact.

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