

## Social Media's Effects on Relational Health: An Analysis of The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Use

Shambhavi Upadhyay<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Pragyan Dangwal<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This integrated literature review consolidates existing research regarding the effects of social media usage on persons' relational health. The review includes 16 primary studies published in English between January 2013 and December 2024, retrieved from databases including the American Psychological Association, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Web of Science, PubMed, and Science Direct. Research shows that social media use affects relationship health in both positive and negative ways. Social isolation, social comparison, and the caliber of online contacts are important mediating elements. The review emphasizes the intricate connection between relational health and social media use with evidence suggesting that excessive use can contribute to relational difficulties. In contrast intentional and moderate use can enhance existing relationships and support the development of new social connections. Further research is recommended to understand better the nuances of social media's influence on relational well-being.

**Keywords:** *Social media, Relational health, Social comparison, Social isolation, Online interactions, Relationships*

The term "social media" describes the online communities and networks that allow people to create, share, and interact with personal messages, ideas, and information. These platforms facilitate online connections, allowing individuals to share experiences, communicate, and participate in discussions across diverse social and cultural contexts. The rapid and widespread adoption of social media has sparked ongoing discourse in the 21st century regarding its influence on social relationships and the overall well-being of its users. Social media's development has been rapid and revolutionary. While mass communication predates the internet, over the past 20 years, the contemporary idea of social media has experienced substantial change. Early online communication tools, such as forums and email lists, have evolved into expansive social networking platforms, such as Facebook, which broadened the scope and scale of online social interactions. The proliferation of smartphones and widespread mobile internet access further accelerated this shift, making social media an omnipresent part of everyday life. The emergence of visually oriented platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, has emphasized image- and video-based communication, reshaping how users engage with content. Additionally, features such as

<sup>1</sup>Student, Amity University Lucknow Campus, Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, AIBAS, Amity University Lucknow Campus, Uttar Pradesh, India

\*Corresponding Author

Received: March 05, 2025; Revision Received: March 14, 2025; Accepted: March 18, 2025

## Social Media's Effects on Relational Health: An Analysis of The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Use

Instagram Stories and Snapchat have popularized ephemeral content, introducing new dynamics to online self-presentation and interaction. Moreover, the rise of niche platforms catering to specific interests and demographics has fostered more focused, interest-based communities. Collectively, these developments have transformed how individuals connect, communicate, and consume information, positioning social media as a powerful force shaping contemporary society. An important concept relevant to understanding the effects of social media use is relational health. A person's entire interpersonal interactions, which are crucial to their psychological and physical well-being, are referred to as their "relational health." Healthy relationships provide a sense of support, love, and belonging, which can enhance emotional resilience and buffer against stress. A lower risk of mental health conditions including anxiety and depression has also been linked to strong relational health. In addition to psychological benefits, research indicates that individuals with high-quality social connections experience better physical health outcomes, including stronger immune function, faster recovery from illness, and increased longevity. Conversely, social isolation and loneliness are linked to elevated risks for cardiovascular disease, stroke, and other chronic health conditions (Health as Vulnerability; Relationships and Interdependence, 2016).

Furthermore, relational health plays a critical role in personal development and self-awareness. Through interactions with others, individuals gain valuable insight into their strengths, weaknesses, and patterns of behaviour. Relationships provide opportunities for developing conflict resolution skills, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Meaningful relationships also contribute to a sense of purpose and fulfilment, fostering motivation for personal growth and positive contributions to society. Ultimately, relational health is not merely the absence of conflict or negative interactions; rather, it encompasses the cultivation of supportive, enriching, and nurturing relationships that contribute to overall well-being at psychological, physical, and social levels. By addressing both the possible advantages and disadvantages of social media use, this review seeks to add to the continuing conversation by synthesizing recent research on the intricate relationship between social media use and relational health.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Social Media's Effects on Relationship Health: Both Positive and Negative*

**Increased Communication and Connection:** A significant role played by social media in facilitating communication and maintaining relationships across physical distances. Through features like video conferencing, content sharing, and texting, social media platforms allow people to stay in touch with friends and family that live far away. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Zoom allow users to share updates, photos, and life events, contributing to ongoing relationship maintenance even when separated by geographical distance. Rich media features, including video calls and multimedia sharing, further enhance relational communication by fostering a sense of presence and emotional closeness (Cookingham & Ryan, 2015). Social media also reduces the time required to establish new relationships and transition from acquaintance to friend. Features such as video calls, private messaging, and social feeds allow individuals to gradually build intimacy, making it easier to form and deepen connections (Evans et al., 2022). These tools are particularly beneficial for long-distance relationships, including friendships, romantic partnerships, and family bonds.

## **Social Media's Effects on Relational Health: An Analysis of The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Use**

**Community Building and Social Support:** Beyond one-on-one communication, social media fosters community building by enabling individuals to join virtual groups and online communities that align with their interests, values, or life experiences. These virtual spaces can cultivate a sense of belonging and emotional support, contributing to relational health.

For young people in particular, social media offers avenues for both maintaining existing relationships and participating in global movements that promote collective well-being and social causes (Cookingham et al., 2014). Studies highlight that social media use is linked to positive outcomes such as enhanced social capital, improved self-concept, increased coping abilities, and greater overall happiness (JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting, 2022). These supportive online environments can buffer against stress and loneliness, particularly for individuals who lack strong offline support systems.

**Relationship Formation and Maintenance:** Social media also plays a vital role in relationship formation, particularly for individuals facing life transitions or geographical separation, such as military families. Cookingham and Ryan (2015) and Evans et al. (2022) found that military spouses rely heavily on social media platforms to maintain communication and relational closeness during deployments. Social media's diverse communication tools—such as messaging, video calls, photo and video sharing, and event planning—contribute to relationship development and maintenance across all age groups. Among older adults, social media use has been shown to reduce social isolation and loneliness, thereby enhancing relational well-being (Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem, 2022). Social platforms provide opportunities for positive self-expression, emotional validation, and meaningful exchanges, particularly for youth navigating identity formation and social integration.

**Social Comparison and Jealousy:** Social media exposes users to well chosen depictions of other people's lives, which can promote connections but can result in feelings of inadequacy and upward social comparison (Evans et al., 2022). Research on pathological social networking site (SNS) use has linked excessive comparison to relational dissatisfaction, jealousy, and poor self-regulation. These patterns can contribute to relational tension, particularly in romantic partnerships (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). The phenomenon of "social media envy" highlights how individuals, particularly emerging adults, experience negative emotional responses such as envy and shame when comparing their own lives to idealized online representations (Cookingham & Ryan, 2015). This cycle of comparison and negative affect can diminish relational health by fostering insecurity and relational distrust. Mediation analyses confirm that envy and shame partially mediate the relationship between social comparison and negative relational and psychological outcomes, including relational dissatisfaction and burnout. **Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:** Another significant risk associated with use of social media is cyberbullying, that is able to encompass devastating effects on both mental health and relational well-being. Adolescents who are cyberbullied report greater rates of anxiety, melancholy, loneliness, and suicide thoughts, according to numerous research (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). Cyberbullying victims also display elevated levels of aggression, delinquency, and substance use, which can further disrupt peer relationships and family dynamics. (Finkelhor et al,2016). found that approximately 32% of cyberbullying victims reported stress symptoms, while the Second Youth Internet Safety Survey indicated that 38% experienced significant emotional distress following online harassment. These results highlight how crucial it is to address online safety and promote good digital citizenship in order to safeguard the wellbeing of relationships. **Addiction and Time Displacement:** The addictive potential of social media is another area of concern for

## Social Media's Effects on Relational Health: An Analysis of The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Use

relational health. Social networking sites (SNSs) are designed to maximize user engagement through personalized feeds, notifications, and reward-based interactions, contributing to compulsive usage patterns. According to some research, social media addiction is a behavioural addiction that is typified by an excessive focus on online social connections at the detriment of relationships that occur offline (Cookingham & Ryan, 2015). Over time, excessive social media use can contribute to time displacement, reducing opportunities for face-to-face interaction and diminishing relational quality. Daily diary studies have found that individuals who spend more time communicating via smartphones engage in fewer in-person conversations, although within-person effects were not as strong as between-person comparisons (Evans et al., 2022). This suggests that individuals who are highly reliant on smartphone communication generally report lower overall face-to-face social engagement, which may impair relational health over time.

**Partner Phubbing and Relationship Satisfaction:** One specific manifestation of time displacement is partner phubbing (Pphubbing)—the act of ignoring one's partner to engage with a smartphone. Studies have shown that Pphubbing contributes to relational dissatisfaction by fostering relational conflict and reducing perceived attentiveness (Evans et al., 2022). In romantic relationships, frequent phubbing has been linked to lower relationship satisfaction, diminished emotional intimacy, and increased risk of depressive symptoms, mediated in part by perceived relational neglect. The reviewed literature highlights the complex and multifaceted connection between relationship health and social media use. Social media platforms offer valuable opportunities for maintaining long-distance relationships, fostering community support, and enhancing social capital. Through tools such as video chats, group messaging, and shared content, social media enhances social connectedness, providing emotional validation and enabling the development of fresh relationships founded on common interests and experiences. At the same time, the literature underscores several risks associated with excessive or problematic social media use. These include cyberbullying, compulsive comparison, relational jealousy, and time displacement, all of this can have negative impact on relationship satisfaction and emotional well-being. Even seemingly minor behaviours, such as glancing at a phone during conversations, can erode intimacy and foster relational dissatisfaction. Ultimately, whether social media contributes positively or negatively to relational health depends on how it is used. Purposeful, balanced use can enhance relational health, while excessive or maladaptive use can undermine it. Future research should focus on identifying protective factors and strategies that promote healthy social media engagement to foster relational well-being.

### CONCLUSION

The current research on the effects of social media use on relational health has been reviewed in this literature review. According to the results of several research, people's interpersonal relationships may suffer if they use social media excessively or problematically. On the other hand, the research review also points out that, if used responsibly and purposefully, social media could be a tool for fostering new connections and enhancing current ones.

Emphasize how intricate and multidimensional the connection is between relational health and social media. Depending on the frequency and purpose of use, as well as the larger social and cultural context, social media use may have both beneficial and detrimental effects on people's interpersonal connections, according to the body of research now

## Social Media's Effects on Relational Health: An Analysis of The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Use

available. According to the available studies, social media's influence on relationships is not one-way but rather varies depending on how the technology is used.

Stress the need for more study to completely comprehend the subtleties of this relationship and create evidence-based plans to maximize social media's potential advantages while reducing its risks.

### REFERENCES

- Barth, S., & De Jong, M. D. T. (2017). The privacy paradox – Investigating discrepancies between expressed privacy concerns and actual online behavior: A systematic literature review. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7), 1038-1058. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.04.013>
- Cookingham, L. M., & Ryan, G. L. (2015). The impact of social media on the sexual and social wellness of adolescents. *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*, 28(1), 2-5. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpag.2014.03.001>
- Evans, M. B., Allen, K. R., & Amanor-Boadu, Y. (2022). Social media use and relationship quality among military couples during deployment: A systematic review. *Journal of Family Issues*, 43(7), 1900-1923. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X211052672>
- Finkelhor, D., Turner, H. A., Shattuck, A., & Hamby, S. (2016). Prevalence of childhood exposure to violence, crime, and abuse: Results from the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(8), 746-754. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.0676>
- Hawi, N. S., & Samaha, M. (2017). The relations among social media addiction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction in university students. *Social Science Computer Review*, 35(5), 576-586. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439316660340>
- JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting. (2022). Youth perspectives on social media use and mental health: A qualitative study. *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting*, 5(1), e29927. <https://doi.org/10.2196/29927>
- Lim, M., & Yang, Y. (2015). Effects of users' envy and shame on social comparison that occurs on social network services. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 51, 300-311. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.04.064>
- Litwiller, B., & Brausch, A. M. (2013). Cyber bullying and suicide: A literature review and meta-analysis. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 17(2), 130-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2013.802628>
- Madden, M., Lenhart, A., Cortesi, S., Gasser, U., Duggan, M., Smith, A., & Beaton, M. (2013). *Teens, social media, and privacy*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2013/05/21/teens-social-media-and-privacy/>
- Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2014). Networked privacy: How teenagers negotiate context in social media. *New Media & Society*, 16(7), 1051-1067. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814543995>
- Nixon, C. L. (2014). Current perspectives: The impact of cyberbullying on adolescent health. *Adolescent Health, Medicine and Therapeutics*, 5, 143-158. <https://doi.org/10.2147/AHMT.S36456>
- Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem. (2022). The role of social media in reducing loneliness and social isolation among older adults: A review. *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem*, 30, e3585. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1518-8345.5079.3585>
- Roberts, J. A., & David, M. E. (2016). My life has become a major distraction from my cell phone: Partner phubbing and relationship satisfaction among romantic partners.

## Social Media's Effects on Relational Health: An Analysis of The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Use

*Computers in Human Behavior*, 54, 134-141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.07.058>

Verduyn, P., Schulte-Strathaus, J. C. C., Kross, E., & Hülshager, U. R. (2021). When do smartphones displace face-to-face interactions and what to do about it? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 114, 106550. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106550>

Vitak, J., Chadha, K., Steiner, L., & Ashktorab, Z. (2017). Identifying women's experiences with and strategies for mitigating negative effects of online harassment. In *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (pp.1231-1245). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2998181.2998336>

### ***Acknowledgment***

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Upadhyay, S., & Dangwal, P. (2025). Social Media's Effects on Relational Health: An Analysis of The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Use. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(1), 1993-1998. DIP:18.01.188.20251301, DOI:10.25215/1301.188