

## Social Media and Composite Psychological Ability: A Review on Impact of Social Media Usage on Optimism and Gratitude

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### ABSTRACT

This review paper explores the gendered impact of social media usage on optimism and gratitude. While social media fosters global connectivity and workplace efficiency, excessive usage is linked to diminished self-esteem, aggression, and sleep disruptions. Optimism serves as a buffer against stress and promotes resilience, whereas gratitude enhances well-being and social relationships. This paper synthesizes findings from various studies to highlight the need for balanced social media use and further research into gender-specific effects. The review underscores the importance of integrating digital literacy programs and gratitude-based interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of social media while fostering optimism and well-being.

**Keywords:** *Social Media, Optimism, Gratitude, Gender Differences*

Mental health, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), is a state of well-being that enables individuals to cope with life's stresses, realize their abilities, and contribute to their communities. It exists on a continuum and is influenced by various individual and social factors, including social media. Social media, defined as internet-based platforms that allow users to interact and self-present selectively (Carr & Hayes, 2015), has become an integral part of modern life. As of October 2024, there were 5.22 billion social media users worldwide, with the average user spending 2 hours and 19 minutes daily on these platforms (DataReportal, n.d.). In India, 462 million people were active social media users as of January 2024, with a significant gender disparity (68.6% male vs. 31.4% female) (Kemp, 2024).

While social media offers opportunities for connectivity and information sharing, its excessive use has been associated with negative psychological outcomes, including reduced self-esteem, increased aggression, and disrupted sleep patterns. Conversely, optimism and gratitude are psychological constructs that promote resilience and well-being. Optimism, defined as the tendency to expect positive outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 2018), and gratitude, described as a sense of thankfulness and appreciation (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.), have been shown to buffer against stress and enhance emotional resilience. This paper

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reviews the existing literature on the interplay between social media usage, optimism, and gratitude, with a focus on gender-specific effects.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The influence of social media on psychological well-being has been widely studied. Chnaider et al. (2022) found that prolonged social media use negatively affects self-esteem and social functioning, particularly among younger individuals. Similarly, Lin et al. (2016) reported a significant association between social media use and increased depression levels among U.S. young adults. Farooq et al. (2023) observed an inverse relationship between social media usage and self-esteem in teenagers, though text-based content engagement was associated with slightly higher self-esteem levels. Pakhi (2024) explored the relationship between social media addiction and aggression, finding a moderate positive correlation. The study emphasized the need for digital literacy and stress management techniques to address these issues. Zhang et al. (2022) studied problematic social media use (PSMU) among Italian adolescents and found that lifestyle habits, sleep quality, and physical activity significantly influenced the association between PSMU and happiness.

Social media's dual role in enhancing communication and exacerbating conflicts has also been documented. Nagar (2024) found that while social media improves communication, it can also foster depersonalized relationships and aggravate disputes. Godawa et al. (2019) highlighted that gratitude displayed on social media often reflects real-life interactions, underscoring the importance of offline connections for meaningful emotional exchanges. In the academic domain, Bhandarkar et al. (2021) found that higher social media usage among medical students was associated with poorer academic performance. Conversely, workplace social networking has been shown to enhance efficiency, with 65% of employees in European countries reporting its integration into daily work culture (Social Networking in the Workplace Increases Efficiency, n.d.-b).

Optimism has been widely studied for its positive impact on personal growth, social relationships, and stress management. Palani and Jayasurya (2023) found that higher levels of optimism and gratitude were associated with greater personal growth initiatives. Brissette et al. (2002) demonstrated that optimism is linked to increased perceived social support and larger friendship networks, serving as a predictor of changes in social support over time. Pacheco and Kamble (2016) explored the relationship between optimism, stress, and coping strategies among undergraduate students, finding that optimism was negatively correlated with stress and positively associated with adaptive coping mechanisms. In the context of close relationships, Srivastava et al. (2006) found that optimistic couples exhibited better conflict resolution skills and overall relationship satisfaction. Optimism also plays a protective role in occupational settings. Chang et al. (2000) found that optimism significantly predicted lower burnout risk among working college students, independent of stress levels. Additionally, Rasmussen et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analytic review linking optimism to better physical health outcomes, including reduced pain and improved physical functioning.

Gratitude has been shown to enhance interpersonal relationships, mental health, and overall well-being. Algoe et al. (2008) found that gratitude promotes relationship formation and maintenance, fostering a cycle of mutual appreciation. Lambert et al. (2009) explored the connection between gratitude and prayer, concluding that spiritual practices can increase gratitude levels, thereby enhancing emotional well-being. Kong et al. (2014) found that

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gratitude was associated with higher perceived social support, self-esteem, and life satisfaction among Chinese students. Tomczyk et al. (2022) demonstrated that gratitude helped women with depressive symptoms accept their condition, leading to improved mental health. A meta-analysis by Diniz et al. (2023) supported the psychological benefits of gratitude-based interventions, showing that practicing gratitude can enhance positive emotions and serve as a therapeutic adjunct for treating depression and anxiety. Gratitude has also been linked to improved sleep quality. Wood et al. (2008) found that gratitude predicted longer and more restful sleep, mediated by positive pre-sleep cognitions. Kaniuka et al. (2020) found that individuals who practice gratitude are less likely to engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse, highlighting its role in promoting healthier lifestyle choices.

### CONCLUSION

This review highlights the complex interplay between social media usage, optimism, and gratitude. While social media can diminish self-esteem and increase stress, optimism serves as a psychological buffer, and gratitude enhances emotional resilience. Gender-specific research remains scarce, necessitating further studies on how sociocultural norms shape these psychological variables. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to establish causal relationships and explore cross-cultural variations, particularly in the Indian context.

Integrating digital literacy programs and gratitude-based interventions may help mitigate the adverse effects of social media while fostering optimism and well-being. As social media continues to evolve, intentional and gender-aware engagement strategies are critical in safeguarding mental health in an increasingly digital world.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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