

Excessive Social Media Usage and Mental Health Problems Among Adolescents: A Critical Review

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms grew alongside in adolescent mental health which has sparked broad academic and public interest. The evaluation assesses multiple existing studies which investigate the various connections between social media use and adolescent mental health issues. The research evaluation uses a combination of thematic analysis to evaluate different sources of academic research which consist of systematic reviews, meta-analyses and longitudinal studies as well as cross-sectional surveys and qualitative research and market data. The research examines international adolescent populations (10-19 years of age). Researchers used thematic analysis to extract vital findings together with dominant themes as well as potential reasons from research materials. Research synthesis shows that greater SMU amounts directly relate to multiple teenage mental health problems which include depression and anxiety together with psychological stress and self-esteem reduction and body image concerns and sleep problems. Research shows that SMU forms a complex connection with adolescent mental health through specific factors which function as both modifiers and mediators. Research shows that excessive social media use leads to negative mental health outcomes by promoting upward social comparison and cyberbullying behaviours along with sleep deprivation and ruminative thinking. Different personality traits and pre-existing conditions together with age differences and gender characteristics and self-control levels affect this relationship. Research about neurodevelopment suggests adolescents are more vulnerable to social media effects because their brains show heightened sensitivity to social feedback during this developmental stage. The research shows how social media offers helpful functions for young people to build social connections and develop their identities as well as provide support networks for vulnerable youth. The connection between social media usage and adolescent mental health forms an intricate and complex dynamic which extends beyond simple cause-and-effect relationships. The research shows that individual social and contextual factors affect how much risk excessive social media use poses to mental health. The available evidence demands a shift from excessive panic towards implementing responsible social media practices combined with literacy education and intervention development. Future research needs to establish cause-effect relationships through longitudinal studies and study underlying neuroscientific and psychological elements while developing and testing interventions to protect youth mental health during the digital era.

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Adolescence is a very important phase of development during which many physical, cognitive and socio-emotional changes take place. During this period, the youth are in a Comatose state to mental health problems as they try to define themselves, make friends and become more independent. This is especially the case where social media has become an essential part of life for both children and adults. Sites like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Facebook are today almost as necessary for young people as food and shelter.

The concerns about the possible negative effects of using social networks on the mental health of adolescents. The beauty of online profiles, the necessity to be positive all the time, and the possibility of cyber bullying and online ostracism may lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression among students. In addition, the social media sites are additive in nature that is the constant notification and the fear of missing out can lead to poor sleep, less face-to-face interaction, and affect concentration in studies, which can worsen the mental health issues.

The aim of this research article is to discuss critically on social media usage and its impact on the mental health of adolescents. It will discuss the possible pathways through which the social media usage impacts mental health, describe the current evidence on the consequences of excessive use of social media for specific mental health problems.

The beginning of the twenty-first century saw technology expand rapidly into every human activity. The digital generation known as adolescents' experiences social media platforms as essential social and developmental elements since they have always known an environment with extensive digital connection (Uhls et al., 2017). These social media platforms have gained incredible popularity because statistics show most teenagers remain active users while dedicating major parts of their day to Facebook and Instagram alongside YouTube and TikTok (Lenhart, 2015; Uhls et al., 2017). Young people have experienced an alarming growth of mental health issues especially depression and anxiety alongside digital immersion during the last several decades (Twenge et al., 2018).

Research activity has surged because experts and authorities want to explain the connections between adolescents' social media usage (SMU) and their mental well-being. The social media debate presents itself as a "double-edged sword" Ying et al (2022) yet some studies call it a "triple-edged sword" Hollis et al (2020). These digital platforms give young people access to unique social benefits and help them build new identities while teaching them skills and providing support networks for marginalized youth (Ghali et al., 2023; Uhls et al., 2017). The platforms enable adolescents to complete developmental tasks by keeping friendships intact while practicing self-presentation and feeling peer connections (Uhls et al., 2017).

Research has developed multiple findings that reveal a more dangerous aspect. Social media stands accused of producing several negative results which include depression and anxiety alongside sleep problems and body image issues and cyberbullying (Keles et al., 2020; Neophytou et al., 2021). The combination of upward social comparison and fear of missing out, together with addictive design elements in platforms functions as primary drivers

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of negative impacts (Irmer & Schmiedek, 2023; Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2017). Users experience both beneficial outcomes from forming friendships and harmful effects through cyberbullying when they engage in online interactions because of the "disinhibiting" effect (Joinson, 1998; Whitty & Joinson, 2008).

The scientific community maintains ongoing disagreements about the existing research findings. This study evaluates academic studies by analysing major research findings that exist in the academic sources. Most studies face three major limitations which include their cross-sectional research methods that show correlation but not causation along with their reliance on self-reported data and their inability to explain the multiple elements of mental health (Keles et al., 2020; Prinstein et al., 2020). Longitudinal research conducted by Coyne et al. (2020) shows that the media's straightforward representation of mental health decline from social media use fails to capture the complex nature of this relationship. The scientific community now supports moving past the basic screen time discussion to research how social media use occurs and the online content and individual risk factors and specific digital behaviours (Coyne et al., 2020; Prinstein et al., 2020).

Research aims and objectives

The study investigates the current state of research evidence through a thorough evaluation of selected literature. The main goals of this research are:

1. The review aims to collect and analyse research evidence about how problematic or excessive social media use affects mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, stress and self-esteem) in adolescents.
2. The review identifies and examines the essential psychological factors alongside intervening elements (e.g., sleep quality, social comparison) and controlling elements (e.g., gender, age, personality, parental support) that affect this relationship.
3. The review aims to gather recommendations for future research as well as clinical practice and policy development based on the findings from the analysed literature.

METHODOLOGY

This critical review was carried out and reported in accordance with the standard practices in research. This study aimed to evaluate the literature on excessive technology usage particularly social media and its effects on adolescents' psychosocial functioning in mental health and well-being.

This research evaluated the studies Between 1998 and 2024, published in the MEDLINE bibliographical database PubMed, Google Scholar, PsycINFO and Elsevier. The research included social media AND mental health AND adolescents in the search strategy for evaluating impact or relation or effect or influence. The researcher performed a literature search using the search method to select papers that met inclusion eligibility criteria based on their titles and abstracts. The researcher obtained full texts of papers that met the inclusion criteria and performed a final evaluation for inclusion.

The research included studies which examined the effects of technology on adolescent psychosocial functioning and mental health and well-being. The research limited its analysis to studies in English language only while focusing on review articles and both longitudinal surveys and cross-sectional research. The researcher omitted English language

studies together with non-comparative research and case reports and non-reporting of results of interest.

RESULTS

The research of examined literature demonstrates that social media usage by adolescents consistently affects their mental health according to established research patterns. The analysis focuses on seven main themes which include (1) Prevalence and Patterns of Social Media and Internet Use; (2) Association with Depression; (3) Association with Anxiety and Stress; (4) The Role of Self-Esteem and Social Comparison; (5) Addictive and Problematic Use; (6) Key Mediating and Moderating Factors; and (7) Refined Perspectives and Positive Outcomes.

Theme 1. Prevalence and Patterns of Social Media and Internet Use

Social media usage and internet accessibility has been proven universally among adolescent populations worldwide according to the research findings. Research data indicates high levels of participation across various geographical regions. The research conducted in Sarawak Malaysia showed that 76.2% of adolescents used SNSs while spending an average of 298.93 minutes (nearly five hours) on these platforms (Ying et al., 2022). The research conducted in India demonstrated that young adults spent 3-5 hours each day using social media platforms (Yamini & Pujar, 2022). A study done by Griffiths and Kuss (2011) showed that a significant number of girls and boys devoted substantial time to Facebook since 40% of girls and 6% of boys considered Facebook their most vital thing (Coughlan, 2010).

Platform preferences vary by context. According to the Malaysian study YouTube stood as the most popular platform followed by Facebook and then Instagram (Ying et al., 2022). The research in India revealed WhatsApp served as the leading application in private educational institutions yet internet gaming prevailed in public schools (Masthi, 2017). Twitter served as the leading social media platform for a large group of youth users in Saudi Arabia (Faqihi et al., 2024).

Studies show that gender affects how people use digital media systems as an ongoing research finding. Research indicates girls use social networking sites primarily for communication whereas boys use video games (Griffiths & Kuss, 2011; King & Griffiths, 2010). Research indicates females develop better social competencies which leads them to choose platforms focused on communication (Griffiths, 2008)

Theme 2. Association with Depression

Many research studies have shown that heavy social media usage (SMU) directly relates to depression symptoms as one of the most frequently documented findings. The systematic review conducted by Keles et al (2020) showed a general link between social media usage and depression throughout multiple domains which include usage duration as well as activity categories and addiction patterns. The review of Ghali et al (2023) identified depression as the main psychological consequence that results from excessive social media and gaming activities. Different research conducted worldwide supports this association.

Saleem & Jan (2024) examined adolescents and young adults demonstrated a positive association between screen time and depressive symptoms. The study on digital addiction in India showed a positive correlation of $r=0.43$ between digital addiction and depression (Kaur & Mehndroo, 2024). Research conducted in Kerala India demonstrated a stronger correlation ($r=0.62$) between social media problems and depression (Jabbar et

al., 2022). Research conducted in Brazil demonstrated that excessive SMU led to increased depression risk (Vieira et al., 2022).

The research relationship contains complex elements. The systematic review conducted by Keles et al. (2020) demonstrated that all 13 studies used cross-sectional designs which prevented researchers from establishing cause-effect relationships. This study restriction remains an essential point to consider. The longitudinal research conducted by Coyne et al. (2020) which spanned eight years failed to detect any correlation between higher social media use and the subsequent development of depression in adolescents. The study established a relationship between social media use and depression levels but failed to find any within-person effect which suggests that time spent on social media may not directly cause depression. The "digital detox" intervention study conducted by Ramadhan et al. (2024) used meta-analysis to demonstrate that reducing social media usage resulted in significant depressive symptom reduction which offered experimental evidence for a cause-and-effect relationship.

Theme 3. Association with Anxiety and Stress

The symptoms of anxiety along with psychological stress show strong connections to high levels of social media use. The review conducted by Keles et al. (2020) demonstrated that time spent on social media together with investment and addiction levels were all associated with anxiety and psychological distress. A big study across India demonstrated that people who spent more time on screens experienced increased symptoms of anxiety and stress (Saleem & Jan, 2024). The time students devoted to Facebook usage correlated directly with rising anxiety measurements in a study that included nursing students (Labrague, 2014). Research in Brazil by Vieira et al. (2022) established a positive link between excessive social media use and anxiety alongside stress symptoms.

The survey of South Korean adolescents by Khan et al. (2021) demonstrated that heavy recreational internet usage produced substantial stress and sadness while demonstrating stronger effects on female participants. Heavy social media use of three hours per day or more led to a doubled risk of severe psychological distress among Ontario Canadian adolescents (Mougharbel et al., 2023). Serbian university students demonstrated rising symptoms of anxiety and stress during the COVID-19 pandemic according to a longitudinal study which showed their social media addiction scores also increased (Višnjić et al., 2023). The stress of always having to be online, the fear of what others think and the cyber bullying may all result in anxiety. In a study by Vannucci et al. (2017)

The existing research relies heavily on correlation-based findings. A longitudinal study conducted by Coyne et al. (2020) failed to detect time-based changes in anxiety or depression among participants who used social media. The study indicates that social media usage patterns among anxious people might serve as a coping method yet it does not create long-term anxiety problems for typical adolescents (Dutta et al., 2018).

Theme 4. The Role of Self-Esteem and Social Comparison

The relationship between social media usage and mental health is strongly influenced by low self-esteem and social comparison mechanisms. The relationship between SMU or SNS addiction has a negative effect on self-esteem (Saleem & Jan, 2024; Ying et al., 2022). Self-esteem served as the primary predictor of SNS addiction with 20.8% contribution in the Sarawak Malaysian study Ying et al. (2022) and lower self-esteem proved to be a strong indicator of higher addiction levels.

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The most commonly mentioned factor that explains this effect is upward social comparison which describes people's tendency to evaluate themselves against others who they believe are superior. A study using daily diary entries with German youth aged 10-14 revealed that social media use negatively affected their subjective well-being through the process of upward social comparison (Irmer & Schmiedek, 2023). Research showed that the belief that others possess better circumstances explains why social media use leads to lower self-worth. Social media platforms serve as identity expression spaces for adolescents until negative peer responses or unfavourable social comparisons harm their mental well-being and self-perceived worth (Livingstone, 2008; Valkenburg et al., 2006). The combination of photo editing on social media platforms was identified by adolescents as a stress factor that led to depression and reduced self-esteem (O'Reilly et al., 2018).

Social media giving people a wrong impression about the world as only the best happens in people's lives. This results in social comparison where adolescents compare themselves with others in a negative way such that others are happier, more successful, or better looking than them (Festinger, 1954). Such comparisons lower self-esteem, inspire envy and lack of confidence, and can lead to eating disorders especially among girls (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016).

Theme 5. Addictive and Problematic Use

Most research goes beyond monitoring online time usage by studying problematic or addictive use behaviours which share symptoms with addiction such as salience along with mood modification tolerance withdrawal conflict and relapse (Griffiths et al., 2011). Researchers support Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) as an officially recognized condition while many experts classify SNS addiction as an additional form of addictive online behaviour (Müller et al., 2016).

Multiple studies indicate that social media addiction exists at notable levels in various populations. The study conducted by Masthi (2017) in Bengaluru India revealed that 19.96% of participants exhibited social media addiction with a substantial higher prevalence rate (24.63%) among private school students compared to public school students (12.66%). A research conducted in Malaysia by Ying et al. (2022) showed higher results where 40.4% of adolescent users displayed addictive tendencies. Research conducted in Germany by Müller et al. (2016) established that SNS users who spent a lot of time on these platforms received higher internet addiction assessments. The improper utilization of social media leads to various negative results. Social media addiction linked to depression through the prediction of higher depressed mood (Vernon et al., 2017) and depression related to social media addiction (Li et al., 2021). The distinction between intense-but-managed use and problematic (addictive) use is highlighted as crucial. Research conducted by Boer and colleagues (2020) across nations revealed that problematic SMU consistently produced lower well-being levels worldwide yet intense SMU (high time commitment) operated as a standard practice in particular situations that linked to superior well-being and social connections. The pattern of use along with its resulting effects proves more important than the amount of time spent on social media.

Research on "addictive technological behaviours" has increased significantly since the last decade because digital technology proliferation has created new behavioural patterns (Andreassen et al., 2016). Social media addiction has emerged as a major concern because it affects primarily young people and adolescents. According to Andreassen et al. (2016) this addictive behaviour involves excessive preoccupation with online activities and

uncontrollable motivation to perform the behaviour while devoting excessive time and effort which damages important life areas. The OCD connection exists through FOMO behaviours that result in compulsive checking. The discovery of social media addiction linked to ADHD shows that people with attention deficits find the continuous stream of new stimuli on the platform highly appealing (Andreassen et al., 2017).

FOMO is the chronic expectation that others are having better experiences that one is not. This shows social media with their frequent posts and notification signals to exacerbate FOMO among the users, makes them feel anxious, tense and not happy with their own lives (Przybylski et al., 2013). This fear of missing out can also lead to increased social media checking which only serves to sustain the cycle of dissatisfaction and anxiety.

The relationship between personality traits and social media use is straightforward. People with low self-esteem use social media as their preferred space to express themselves because they seek validation which they do not receive in real life (Forest & Wood, 2012). Social media provides narcissistic individuals with an optimal platform to perform self-enhancing activities while they present their idealized self to the public.

Theme 6. Key Mediating and Moderating Factors

The connection between social media usage and adolescent mental health status varies because multiple variables affect this relationship. The data indicates girls demonstrate increased social networking activities (Griffiths & Kuss, 2011). The research shows that girls tend to experience more severe negative effects. The research conducted by Khan et al. (2021) demonstrated that high internet usage created stronger associations between stress and sadness for girls rather than boys. The research revealed that girls demonstrated greater suicidal thoughts because of cyber-victimization Kerr and Kingsbury (2023). Research conducted in India by Kaur & Mehndroo (2024) revealed that digital addiction scores were higher among male adolescents yet depression scores reached higher levels among female adolescents.

The research demonstrates that younger teens represent a most sensitive population during this stage, determined that adolescents between 10-14 years showed the strongest relationship between heavy social media use and psychological distress (Mougharbel et al., 2023). During this developmental phase social feedback sensitivity increases while brain structure changes occur which intensify social media effects (Fuhrmann et al., 2015; Maza et al., 2023).

The quality of sleep functions as the main variable that connects to other factors. Research shows that poor sleep quality functions as a fundamental variable which affects how people experience mental health problems (Saleem & Jan, 2024). Problematic social media investment led to depressed mood through sleep disruption as a mediating factor (Vernon et al. 2017). Research found social media addiction led to depression by causing insomnia (Li et al. 2021). Social media when used excessively and frequently, especially at night, have worse sleep quality, shorter sleep time, and higher levels of sleepiness during the day (Woods & Scott, 2016).

The individual traits people possess influence their tendency to become addicted to online resources. Wang et al. (2015) determined that neuroticism scores and conscientiousness levels influenced overall internet addiction. The research demonstrated that individuals with

higher neuroticism and extraversion scores displayed higher tendencies toward social networking addiction.

Neurological Factors: Emerging research using fMRI provides a biological basis for these associations. Through a three-year research period Maza et al. (2023) discovered separate neurodevelopmental paths among students who developed regular social media checking habits. Throughout the observed period the brains of these adolescents became more sensitive to anticipated social responses within amygdala and prefrontal cortex regions. These results indicate that regular social media use could lead to brain changes which enhance sensitivity toward social signals which later affects psychological well-being. Screen time produced both positive and negative mental health impacts (Saleem & Jan 2024).

Theme 7. Other Perspectives and Positive Outcomes

Research studies on social media show that the technology platform provides both advantages and disadvantages. According to Ghali et al. (2023) and Uhls et al. (2017) SMU enables essential developmental tasks by helping users preserve their friendships and discover their identities while obtaining social backing. The research of Magis-Weinberg et al. (2021) and Uhls et al. (2017) demonstrates that online networks serve as essential support systems for marginalized young people to connect with others who share similar interests and fight feelings of isolation.

The research conducted by Prinstein et al. (2020) suggests taking a more balanced approach by showing that the duration spent on digital media does not produce consistent negative effects. Several people need digital media to establish social bonds while finding emotional support. Boer et al. (2020) conducted a study which found that intensive SMU use in nations with high social media prevalence resulted in better life satisfaction and stronger family support which indicates that SMU can be a beneficial standard practice. This demonstrates the need to understand the context of use since high usage does not necessarily equal problematic usage. The review of negative outcomes by Ghali et al. (2023) discovered that moderate gaming leads to better moods and relaxation and stronger self-esteem.

DISCUSSION

The research synthesis presents an intricate yet clear understanding of how excessive social media usage affects adolescent mental health. Studies show that high levels of SMU strongly link to various adverse psychological consequences. The fundamental worth of this body of research exceeds its demonstration of a relationship between these factors because it explains all the complicated processes and influencing elements and environmental factors that shape this connection. This discussion evaluates research findings through an analysis of their meaning and explores their practical implications together with the sources.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The main conclusion derived from this review demonstrates the need to eliminate the basic screen time argument. The research evidence presented in this article challenges the widespread public understanding of direct and dose-dependent correlations between screen time and poor mental health. The research of Coyne et al. (2020) presents significant findings because it demonstrates no causal relationship between social media usage duration and subsequent development of depression or anxiety. Time appears to be a variable that represents other factors because the relationship between these two variables exists among different people rather than within the same person.

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The research indicates that particular psychological mechanisms produce negative results. The fundamental aspect in the development of negative outcomes results from social comparison (Irmer & Schmiedek, 2023). The adolescent must constantly compare their development to artificial peer representations in the digitally managed world they experience while forming their identity. The process stands as a direct attack on self-worth which leads to strong depressive and anxious symptoms instead of the technology itself. Sleep displacement functions as an effect of social media use that disrupts essential biological requirements for mental relaxation (Vernon et al., 2017). Research based on mechanisms offers more practical solutions than time-based explanations which indicates that treatment programs should focus on behavioural patterns of SMU instead of its duration.

The neurological findings from Maza et al. (2023) offer scientific evidence for why adolescents remain particularly vulnerable. The discovery that repeated checking behaviour creates changes in brain responses to social feedback throughout time holds great significance. The brain's natural sensitivity to peer approval in adolescents creates a feedback loop with social media platforms that use variable reward structures to engage users. The neural circuits become more sensitive due to this engagement which leads to increased social feedback dependency for validation and enhanced susceptibility to online emotional fluctuations. The neurodevelopmental viewpoint strengthens the understanding that adolescence represents an essential period which combines digital risks alongside opportunities.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Parenting

The conclusions from this study create multiple essential implications for various groups.

For Clinical practitioners and Educators:

The research demonstrates a need to transition from prohibition to educational practices. Telling adolescents to reduce their social media usage without providing alternative solutions proves ineffective because it disregards the developmental advantages of social media. Digital skills development should form the basis of intervention programs instead of time-based social media restrictions. Youth should learn media literacy to analyse online idealized images (Setia et al., 2024; Uhls et al., 2017) and develop critical thinking about social comparisons and emotional regulation methods to combat cyberbullying. Schools and clinical settings should perform screenings to identify adolescents who experience problematic use of social media and nomophobia and FoMO (Griffiths et al., 2011; Masthi, 2017)

For Parents:

The research advises against a purely restrictive approach. Instead, it encourages proactive engagement, supervision, and open communication (Griffiths et al., 2011). Parents should display positive technology habits and create technology-free areas and times to safeguard both sleep and personal interactions while discussing both positive and negative online encounters with their children (Faqihi et al., 2024).

For Policymakers and Industry:

There is an urgent call for industry to consider the developmental vulnerabilities of their youngest users (Uhls et al., 2017). Platform designers should work to redesign their systems so they minimize features that use variable reward schedules and encourage endless passive scrolling. The policy suggests funding nationwide studies to track trends and

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building scientific working groups and adding complete social media education to national school programs (Griffiths et al., 2011)

Gaps in the Existing Literature and Directions for Future Research

The existing research establishes essential groundwork but the studies repeatedly show the need for additional research that advances our current understanding. The most important research priorities are as follows:

Prioritizing Longitudinal and Experimental Research:

The analysis of causality requires immediate implementation of prospective longitudinal studies which monitor adolescents through time points where social media use and mental health and other confounding factors are measured (Ghali et al., 2023; Keles et al., 2020). Experimental designs represent a suitable method to evaluate causal relationships when ethical boundaries and practicality are possible (e.g., platform feature use reduction or change assignment to participants).

Moving Beyond "Screen Time":

Future research must adopt a more granular approach, moving beyond the crude metric of duration. Future studies should evaluate between active versus passive utilization together with content specifics and user motivations (social interaction or boredom) and online interaction valence (Prasad et al., 2023; Prinstein et al., 2020). Researchers need to establish clear boundaries between typical normal usage patterns and behaviours which suggest addictive problems (Boer et al., 2020).

Integrating Multi-Method Approaches:

The use of self-report questionnaires stands as a fundamental weakness in current research. Future research must utilize diverse methods which combine questionnaire surveys with phone usage log data alongside ecological momentary assessment reports and clinical mental health evaluations and qualitative interviews to capture participants' experiences.

Expanding Research to Underrepresented Populations:

Most of the research literature has concentrated its focus on Western adolescents from high-income backgrounds. The existing research fails to provide adequate insights about digital technology use among youth from low-and-middle-income countries because their access patterns and cultural practices and parental involvement differ substantially (Magis-Weinberg et al., 2021). The upcoming research needs to focus on analysing how early exposure affects 10-12 year olds since this age group has not received adequate investigation.

Investigating Interventions:

The majority of existing research investigates the problems but very little research exists about proven solutions. A thorough evaluation of interventions needs to be performed. Researchers should investigate the success of digital detox programs (Ramadhan et al., 2024) and develop school-based digital literacy and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum (Setia et al., 2024) and explore ways parents can effectively communicate with their children in digital spaces.

The research gaps provide an opportunity for the field to establish a robust evidence base that guides policy development and clinical practice and public education for adolescent well-being.

CONCLUSION

The extensive body of research examined in this review shows that excessive social media usage creates multiple adverse mental health problems in adolescents although the relationship remains complex. Research shows that the discussion must shift from basic screen time measurements toward comprehensive investigations of psychological factors and social elements and neurodevelopmental aspects that affect social media use. Social media impacts people differently because individual characteristics and platform usage patterns determine how these platforms affects users.

Social media functions as a fundamental complex system that produces both positive and negative effects during contemporary adolescence. Social media produces concrete dangers because of upward social comparison and cyberbullying and sleep disturbance yet it provides substantial advantages through social connection and identity development. The real challenge consists of reducing technology's harmful aspects while utilizing its advantages effectively. Multiple stakeholders need to unite their efforts to develop resilience alongside digital literacy programs and better digital environment health standards.

The limited current research shows that our understanding remains in development due to insufficient longitudinal and experimental studies that could clarify cause-and-effect relationships. The next stage of research should uncover the detailed connections between particular online actions and their corresponding results and develop evidence-based interventions for young people to handle their digital and offline situations effectively. The present scientific evidence does not justify basic causal fears about the negative effects of digital technology. The "moral panic" which appears in public discourse oversimplifies how social media functions as a fundamental platform for social interaction and personal growth alongside emotional assistance (O'Reilly et al., 2018). Social media functions as a dual tool which produces both positive and negative effects because these outcomes result from the complex relationship between personal risks and protective elements together with usage patterns and social environment. Building mentally healthy resilient discerning digital citizens represents a fundamental public health requirement for the twenty-first century.

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Conflict of Interest

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