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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL WELL-BEING – A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Introduction.

Currently, technological advancements have given most people unlimited access to social media. This has both many advantages and disadvantages. Social media significantly facilitate access to information and communication. However, social media can also negatively impact the mental health of the population. The aim of this study is to review the literature to discover the correlation between social media use and its impact on mental health.

Materials and methods.

A review of the literature available in the “PubMed” and „Google Scholar” databases was conducted. The search was performed by using the following keywords: social media use, fear of missing out, social media depression, depressive syndromes.

Results.

Unrestricted access to social media has become an integral part of human life. This has led to improper use of social media, which can have detrimental effects on mental health. Specifically, it increases the risk of mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and depression. Moreover, it can lower self-esteem and life satisfaction. Additionally, it can foster the development of FOMO syndrome, which intensifies excessive social media use.

Conclusions.

Further research on the impact of social media on mental health is crucial to discover effective methods of appropriate social media use. This will help in avoiding mental health disorders associated with social media use.

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Introduction.

Currently, the development of technology is at a very high level. Almost half of the population of the world has unlimited access to the internet and social media through their smartphones, computers, and tablets. This has made communication with people around the world incomparably easier, turning the entire world into a global village (Akbari et al., 2021). Additionally, other positive effects of social media use were observed. It was noted that

adolescents who have communication problems in the real world and the lack of communication skills might increase their self-esteem through positive feedback received on social media. It was shown that adolescents, who enjoy high popularity on social media platforms exhibit a higher level of life satisfaction (Rajamohan et al., 2019). The study revealed that extended use of social media can positively affect cognitive and emotional empathy of adolescents. Researchers discovered that social media usage enhances empathy over time, enabling teenagers to better understand emotions and effectively communicate their own feelings (Vossen & Valkenburg, 2016).

On the other hand, using the internet and social media can also have negative consequences. It has been shown that up to 6% of the population overuses the internet (Cheng & Li, 2014) and among adolescents aged 13 to 17, 97% use at least one of the following seven social networking platforms: YouTube (85%), Instagram (72%), Snapchat (69%), Facebook (51%), Twitter (32%), Tumblr (9%), or Reddit (7%) (Vidal et al., 2020). This is becoming a significant problem as people neglect their responsibilities or endanger their health and lives, for instance, by using smartphones while driving (Cazzulino et al., 2014). Moreover, as higher overall social media use, nighttime-specific social media use, and emotional investment in social media were all linked to poorer sleep quality, increased anxiety and depression. These factors were also associated with lower self-esteem (Woods & Scott, 2016).

Another very significant phenomenon observed during the use of social media is the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO revolves around the perceived necessity to continuously stay connected with one's social network, leading to frequent and excessive use of social networking sites and messaging services (Elhai et al., 2021).

The objective of this study is to conduct an exhaustive literature review concerning the utilization of social media platforms, with particular emphasis on delineating the primary adverse effects on mental health conditions. This investigation seeks to provide a thorough examination of existing scholarly works, aiming to identify and analyze the significant ramifications associated with prolonged social media engagement. By focusing on mental health disorders and the fear of missing out, this study endeavors to offer insights into the intricate relationship between social media usage patterns and their potential impact on psychological well-being of individuals.

Material and methods.

A review of the literature available in the "PubMed" and „Google Scholar" databases was conducted. The search was performed by using the following keywords: social media use, fear of missing out, social media depression, depressive syndromes.

Results.

The use of social media has become a crucial part of many lives of the people. This has resulted in them exerting a significant influence on our daily functioning. For many individuals, using social media has become a daily routine. As a result, they cannot imagine life without the ability to check for the latest updates or respond to the messages. Improper use of social media can have a negative impact on mental health, particularly by increasing the likelihood of mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and depression. It can also contribute to a decrease in self-esteem and life satisfaction. Additionally, it can influence the development of FOMO syndrome, further exacerbating excessive social media use (O'Reilly et al., 2018).

Depression.

Depression is currently a global issue, with the number of people suffering from it continually increasing. There are many factors that can contribute to the onset of depression, and numerous studies now indicate that social media can play a role in the development of

mental health disorders. A study conducted in the USA on a group of young individuals showed a link between social media use and depression. Many studies have noted a strong correlation between excessive social media use and a decline in mood, well-being, and life satisfaction (Lin et al., 2016).

One possible explanation is that seeing highly idealized images of peers on social media can provoke envy and create the false belief that others are living happier or more successful lives. Over time, these feelings of envy can lead to a sense of inferiority and depression. Additionally, the perception of "wasting time" on insignificant social media activities can also negatively affect mood (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014).

Due to the huge prevalence of users showing signs of depression social media sites have started reaching out to users displaying signs of serious depression. For example, when someone searches for terms like "depressed," "suicidal," or "hopeless" on the blog site Tumblr, the search function redirects them to a message that starts with "Everything okay?" and offers links to relevant resources (Lin et al., 2016).

Low self-esteem.

Self-esteem is a self-assessment. It reflects how people view their own value and how important they believe they are to others.

One meta-analysis found that the average correlation between time spent on social media and mental well-being was low. Additionally, the correlation between time spent on social media and positive indicators, such as life satisfaction, is close to zero (Huang, 2017).

On the other hand, study showed that social media use promotes the internalization of appearance ideals, such as thinness and muscularity, and increases the tendency to compare oneself appearance to others. This leads to negative emotions, such as depression and low self-esteem (Rodgers et al., 2020).

Cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is a form of abuse that occurs on social media. It involves spreading false, hostile, and embarrassing information about others. The effects of cyberbullying on social media can include anxiety, feelings of loneliness, depression, and in some cases. Moreover, numerous cases of suicides among young people in America have been attributed to cyberbullying (Richards et al., 2015).

The research presents a case study of a cyberbullying victim who, after being urged by their parents to delete their social media accounts, committed suicide. This study highlights the profound impact social media can have on behavior. It also demonstrates the unique significance of an online identity for young people experiencing psychological difficulties (Sivashanker, 2013).

Fear of missing out.

A notable phenomenon linked to excessive social media use is the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). This is the widespread anxiety that others might be enjoying fulfilling experiences while you are not present. It is the desire to constantly stay updated on what others are doing. This feeling makes it difficult for people to disconnect from social media, as they want to ensure that nothing exciting happens without their knowledge (Przybylski et al., 2013).

A study was conducted in which students took a 24-hour break from using social media. The findings revealed heightened distress, increased FOMO, and a feeling of isolation. This likely stemmed from depriving young people of a communication tool essential for their sense of security (Roberts & Koliska, 2014). Additionally, according to addiction theory, feelings of anxiety and stress are most common at the beginning of the abstinence period. Over time, these feelings typically decrease as the adaptation process continues (Turel et al., 2018).

On the other side, another study compared the feelings of 61 individuals before and after 7 days of abstaining from social media use. It was demonstrated that after 7 days of abstinence, the level of FOMO significantly decreased, while the level of mental well-being significantly increased (Brown & Kuss, 2020).

Recommendations.

Given the pervasive presence of technology and smartphones in our lives, people should develop effective strategies to manage excessive social media use. Research (Hunt et al., 2018) has shown that limiting social media use to 10 minutes per day for 3 weeks can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness, depressive symptoms, FOMO, and anxiety.

In addition, doctors should screen for social media exposure to be able to catch patients who need help in a timely manner. In addition, those who are exposed to the negative impact of social media should be provided with appropriate face-to-face communication exercises and limited communication via social media (Hoge et al., 2017).

Discussion.

Based on the above literature review, a correlation between social media use and mental health might be identified. The widespread accessibility of social media offers numerous benefits, such as the ability to communicate with people worldwide and easy access to information. Additionally, receiving positive feedback on social media might enhance life satisfaction and self-esteem. It also provides an opportunity for those who struggle with face-to-face communication to develop their social skills.

However, the negative impact of social media on mental well-being is considerable. Social media often promotes an idealized view of the world, setting unrealistic standards for appearance and lifestyle. This can lead to self-comparison, resulting in lowered self-esteem and potentially causing mood disorders, anxiety, depression, or even suicidal behavior. Cyberbullying is another prevalent issue on social media, further harming mental health. The constant need to stay updated and the FOMO can trigger excessive social media use, leading to distress, neglect of real-world relationships, and feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Conclusions.

Social media has become an integral part of our lives, making it difficult to completely disengage from it. Therefore, further research and proactive measures are essential to help individuals, particularly adolescents, navigate the digital world in a healthy and positive manner. It's also crucial for society to be aware of the dangers present on social media that affect mental health disorders. This awareness is important for promoting proper relationship standards and forms of communication in the real world.

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Author's contribution.

Research concept and design – NP.

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Data analysis and interpretation – NP, OG.

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