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## Analyze the effect of social media on mental health or how it has changed communication patterns

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### Abstract

Social media has a dual impact on human health, offering benefits like increased social connection and access to information, but also presenting risks such as heightened anxiety, depression, poor sleep, and body image issues, particularly among young adults.

Excessive or vulnerable use is linked to negative outcomes like depression and anxiety, while some positive effects may come from using it to find social support or build relationships. Ultimately, its impact is complex and depends on usage patterns, with research ongoing to fully understand the causality and develop strategies for healthier use.

**Keywords:** Mental health, social media, psychiatry, digital health

### Introduction

Social media has become a prominent fixture in the lives of many individuals facing the challenges of mental illness. Social media refers broadly to web and mobile platforms that allow individuals to connect with others within a virtual network (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, or LinkedIn), where they can share, co-create, or exchange various forms of digital content, including information, messages, photos, or videos (Ahmed, Ahmad, Ahmad, & Zakaria, 2019) [19]. Studies have reported that individuals living with a range of mental disorders, including depression, psychotic disorders, or other severe mental illnesses, use social media platforms at comparable rates as the general population, with use ranging from about 70% among middle-age and older individuals, to upwards of 97% among younger individuals (Aschbrenner, Naslund, Grinley, *et al.*, 2018; M. L. Birnbaum, Rizvi, Correll, Kane, & Confino, 2017; Brunette *et al.*, 2019; Naslund, Aschbrenner, & Bartels, 2016) [25, 26, 27, 29]. Other exploratory studies have found that many of these individuals with mental illness appear to turn to social media to share their personal experiences, seek information about their mental health and treatment options, and give and receive support from others facing similar mental health challenges (Bucci, Schwannauer, & Berry, 2019; Naslund, Aschbrenner, Marsch, & Bartels, 2016b) [28, 29]. Across the United States and globally, very few people living with mental illness have access to adequate mental health services (Patel *et al.*, 2018) [30]. The wide reach and near ubiquitous use of social media platforms may afford novel opportunities to address these shortfalls in existing mental health care, by enhancing the quality, availability, and reach of services. Recent studies have explored patterns of social media use, impact of social media use on mental health and wellbeing, and the potential to leverage the popularity and interactive features of social media to enhance the delivery of interventions. However, there remains uncertainty regarding the risks and potential harms of social media for mental health (Orben & Przybylski, 2019) [1], and how best to weigh these concerns against potential benefits.

In this commentary, we summarized current research on the use of social media among individuals with mental illness, with consideration of the impact of social media on mental wellbeing, as well as early efforts using social media for delivery of evidence-based programs for addressing mental health problems. We searched for recent peer reviewed publications in Medline and Google Scholar using the search terms "mental health" or "mental illness" and "social media", and searched the reference lists of recent reviews and

other relevant studies. We reviewed the risks, potential harms, and necessary safety precautions with using social media for mental health. Overall, our goal was to consider the role of social media as a potentially viable intervention platform for offering support to persons with mental disorders, promoting engagement and retention in care, and enhancing existing mental health services, while balancing the need for safety. Given this broad objective, we did not perform a systematic search of the literature and we did not apply specific inclusion criteria based on study design or type of mental disorder.



### Positive Effects

#### 1. Mental Health awareness & support

- Destigmatization
- Access to resources
- Peer support communities

#### 2. Social connection & Belonging

- Support networks
- Reduced isolation
- Validation & Empathy

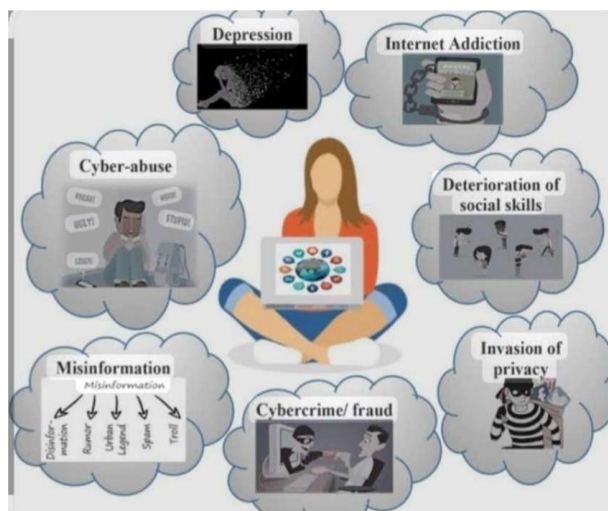
#### 3. Positive Effects on Communication pattern

- Enhanced Openness & Vulnerability
- Real-time, global communication
- Creative - self-expression
- Asynchronous Interaction

### Negative Effects

- Anti/self-esteem: Constant comparison with others, "highlight reels" curated and often idealized versions of their lives can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth.
- Cyber bullying - social media platforms can be used for Online Harassment, which have severe impacts on mental health, including a higher likelihood of depression and anxiety.
- Addiction, time displacement
- Superficial interaction
- Reduced face to face skills
- Misinformation & polarization
- Emotional Burn Out

### Effects of social media on mental health



#### 1. Cyber Bullying

(Cyber harassment or online bullying) is a form of bullying or harassment using electronic means. Since the 2000s, it has become increasingly common, especially among teenagers and adolescents, due to young people's increased use of social media. Related issues include online harassment and trolling. In 2015, according to cyber bullying statistics from the i-Safe Foundation, over half of adolescents and teens had been bullied online, and about the same number had engaged in cyber bullying. Both the bully and the victim are negatively affected, and the intensity, duration, and frequency of bullying are three aspects that increase the negative effects on both of them.

Intimidation, Emotional damage, & Suicide: According to the Cyber bullying Research Center, "there have been several high-profile cases involving teenagers taking their

own lives in part because of being harassed and mistreated over the Internet, a phenomenon we have termed cyber bulicide - suicide indirectly or directly influenced by experiences with online aggression."Cyber bullying is an intense form of psychological abuse, whose victims are more than twice as likely to suffer from mental disorders compared to traditional bullying.

On Youth and Teenagers: The effects of cyber bullying vary, but research illustrates that cyber bullying adversely affects youth to a higher degree than adolescents and adults. Youth are more likely to suffer since they are still growing mentally and physically. Jennifer N. Caudle, a certified family physician, says, "Kids that are bullied are likely to experience anxiety, depression, loneliness, unhappiness and poor sleep



## 2. Addiction

- **Decreases self-esteem:** Excessive exposure to highly curated and filtered content from others often triggers negative social comparisons. Constantly viewing an unrealistic "highlight reel" of other people's lives can diminish an individual's sense of self-worth and trigger feelings of inadequacy.
- **Promotes loneliness and isolation:** Although designed for connection, problematic social media use can lead to greater social isolation and loneliness. When virtual interactions replace face-to-face contact, individuals may experience a lower quality of relationships.
- **Increases stress and fatigue:** The continuous stream of updates, notifications, and emotional content can over stimulate the brain, leading to mental fatigue and higher stress levels. The constant fear of missing out (FOMO) contributes to this state of perpetual alertness.
- **Disrupts sleep:** The habit of scrolling through social media late at night is directly linked to disrupted sleep patterns. The blue light from screens can interfere with the body's natural sleep cycle, which in turn negatively affects mood, focus, and emotional regulation.
- **Impairs focus and concentration:** Social media platforms thrive on fast-paced, bite-sized content that trains the brain to expect constant stimulation. This can make it difficult to focus on tasks that require sustained attention, like schoolwork or a job.

## 3. Impact on affection and focus

- **Reduced attention span:** Constant multitasking and a never-ending feed of information train the brain to expect and crave constant, rapid stimulation, making it difficult to maintain focus on single tasks.
- **Increased distractibility:** Notifications from social media demand immediate attention, pulling your mind away from other activities and increasing mind-wandering.
- **Impaired cognitive functions:** Media multitasking is linked to poorer memory, increased impulsivity, and a reduced ability to sustain attention and perform cognitive tasks.
- **Mental fatigue:** The effort to constantly switch between tasks, manage online interactions, and process information can lead to cognitive overload and mental exhaustion.
- **Impact on working memory:** Simply seeing a smart phone, even without using it, can lower working memory capacity and decrease performance on cognitive tasks.

- A **"dopamine loop"**: Likes and other positive reactions on social media release dopamine, creating a reward cycle that makes it feel compelling to keep checking, reinforcing the habit and hindering focus.

## 4. Sleep problem

- **Blue light exposure:** The blue light from screens suppresses melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep, making it harder to fall asleep.
- **Information overload and stress:** The constant stream of information and notifications can be overwhelming, causing stress and making it difficult to wind down at night.
- **Circadian rhythm disruption:** Using social media, especially late at night, interferes with your natural sleep wake cycle, leading to sleep deprivation and lower sleep quality.
- **Cognitive arousal:** Engaging with social media before bed can increase cognitive arousal, which can delay sleep and make it harder to stay asleep.
- **Displacement of sleep:** Time spent on social media can directly reduce the amount of time available for sleep.
- **Vicious cycle:** Poor sleep quality caused by social media use is strongly linked to an increased risk of mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety.
- **Worsening symptoms:** Sleep deprivation can exacerbate existing mental health conditions and contribute to emotional distress.

## 5. Disturb Reality

Social media disturbs reality by creating an unrealistic view of life, leading to mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem through social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), and cyber bullying. It can also cause sleep disturbances and addiction by disrupting sleep patterns and promoting compulsive use, ultimately leading to withdrawal from real-life interactions.

Curated and unrealistic portrayals: People often post highlights of their lives, creating a distorted and unrealistic view of others' experiences.

- **Social comparison:** Constantly comparing your own life to the curated "perfect" lives of others can lead to diminished self-esteem.
- **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** Seeing others at events or on vacation can create feelings of jealousy and anxiety about missing out on these experiences.
- **Cyber bullying and harassment:** Social media can be a platform for online harassment, which has severe mental health impacts, particularly on young people.

## 6. Poor Self Esteem

Social media contributes to poor self-esteem through social comparison with idealized content, leading to feelings of my inadequacy. This is compounded by seeking validation through likes and comments, the negative impact of cyber bullying, and the fear of missing out (FOMO), which can increase anxiety and loneliness.

- **Social comparison:** Users often compare their lives to the "highlight reels" of others, which are frequently curated and idealized. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with one's own life.
- **Validation seeking:** Platforms are designed to be addictive, and the instant gratification from likes,



comments, and shares can create a dependence on external validation for self-worth. A lack of engagement can feel like a personal rejection.

- **Cyber bullying:** Exposure to harassment, insults, and threats online can significantly damage self-esteem and lead to increased anxiety, depression, and emotional distress.
- **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** Seeing others at parties, on vacations, or achieving milestones can trigger feelings of exclusion, loneliness, and anxiety. This can lead to compulsive checking of social media to stay connected.
- **Body image issues:** The constant exposure to edited and unrealistic body types can lead to negative self-perception, especially among adolescents, impacting self-esteem and contributing to body dissatisfaction.

## Prevention

### 1. Addiction

To prevent social media addiction and its negative effects on mental health, limit screen time by setting app limits, take regular breaks, and be mindful of your usage and its impact. Prioritize real-world activities and connections, curate your feed to be positive, and turn off notifications to reduce distraction set boundaries for usage

- **Track and limit screen time:** Use your phone's built-in tools to monitor how much time you spend on social media and set daily limits.
- **Schedule specific times:** Designate specific times of day for social media and use a timer to stick to the limit.
- **Take breaks:** Schedule regular, full days off from social media to disconnect and recharge.
- **Create tech-free zones:** Establish certain areas, like the dinner table, as device free spaces. Manage your social media environment.
- **Be selective with connections:** Unfollow or unfriend accounts that make you feel bad about yourself or are inflammatory.
- **Curate your feed:** Actively seek out and follow content that is positive, uplifting, and beneficial for your mental health.
- **Turn off notifications:** Disable push notifications to reduce constant interruptions and the urge to check your phone.
- **Use social media with purpose:** Instead of aimlessly scrolling, use it for intentional interactions, like messaging family or engaging in meaningful conversations.

### Prioritize offline life.

- **Engage in offline activities:** Find hobbies and activities you enjoy, such as hiking, reading, or exercising, to build a life outside of your phone.
- **Focus on in-person connections:** Make an effort to see friends and family in person, which can improve your mental well-being and decrease reliance on social media for social interaction. Seek professional help.
- **Consider therapy:** If you are struggling to manage your social media use, therapies like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) can be effective in addressing negative thought patterns associated with addiction.

- **Talk to a professional:** Speak with a mental health professional to develop a personalized strategy for managing social media use.

### 2. Anxiety and Depression

To prevent social media from leading to anxiety and depression, it's crucial to limit screen time and be more intentional with usage. Key prevention strategies include setting time limits and specific hours for use, disabling non-essential notifications, and unfollowing accounts that cause negative feelings. Prioritizing in-person connections and finding fulfillment in offline hobbies are also important for improving your relationship with social media.

- **Less social comparison:** Social media often presents a curated "highlight reel" of other people's lives, which can fuel feelings of envy, inadequacy, and low self-esteem. Reducing your exposure to these idealized images can improve your satisfaction with your own life.
- **Decreased fear of missing out (FOMO):** The constant stream of updates about social events and experiences can trigger FOMO and anxiety. Studies have found that limiting social media use can lead to lower feelings of loneliness and FOMO.
- **Reduced exposure to cyberbullying and negative content:** Social media can be a breeding ground for cyber bullying, rumors, and abuse. Taking a break removes this source of stress and emotional harm.
- **Improved sleep:** The blue light from screens and the constant mental stimulation of social media can disrupt sleep patterns. Reducing use, especially before bed, can improve sleep quality, which has a positive impact on mental health.
- **Strengthened real-life connections:** Excessive social media use can replace meaningful, face-to-face interactions. By pulling back from online platforms, you have more time to invest in your offline relationships, which are a critical component of mental well-being.

### 3. Sleep Problem

To prevent sleep problems from social media use, establish a digital curfew and stop all screen time at least one hour before bed. Keep your phone out of the bedroom at night and use a traditional alarm clock instead of your phone. Create a calming, screen-free bedtime routine and limit overall daily social media use to a set amount, such as two hours

Track your time - How much time are you actually spending on social media? It's easy to get absorbed and lose track of time. Numerous apps are available to help you monitor and track your time on social media.

Turn off notifications from social media apps to help minimize the distraction and frequent interruptions.

Temporarily (or permanently) downsize your social media use. Reduce the number of social media platforms you regularly use. Work with a partner. Take on this challenge with a partner who can provide encouragement and motivation and hold you accountable. Set aside a specific time, with a time limit, to use social media (and use a timer). Set offline times at specific times during the day/week when you'll be completely offline. Take a temporary break, such as a day or more without using social media.

Based on his experience with intentionally cutting back on social media, Blogger Geshan Manandhar encourages people to "take control of where you want to spend your valuable time"

— break the social media habit and "enjoy our liberation."

#### 4. Cyberbullying

- **Secure your accounts:** Use strong, private passwords and adjust privacy settings on social media to control who can see your profile and posts.
- **Protect personal information:** Avoid sharing identifying details like your full name, address, phone number, or school online.
- **Think before you post:** Consider how your words and posts might affect others, and remember that what you share can be forwarded or saved.
- **Be a positive digital citizen:** Avoid participating in cyberbullying by not engaging with mean comments or sharing incidents.
- **Do not respond to the bully:** Engaging with a cyberbully can escalate.

#### Case Studies

##### Case study-1

A Mr. Manoj (Name changed) male adolescent with age of 17 years was admitted to male psychiatric ward with complaints of mood swings, depressive mood, irritability, loss of touch with surroundings since many days. He was not had previous history of psychiatric illnesses and present history of illness reveled that, he started playing video games since two years when he got his mobile phone with internet facility. He started playing simple games initially and

gradually it went to playing online games. He constantly increased time for playing online games and started playing online games with group of friends, eventually lost control over use. He gradually lost interest in other activities, his studies, social activities, bunking his classes and most of the time he would not leave his room and found online playing video games.

The Internet gave him relief by providing an escape from his life problems. Irritated when his parents took away his mobile phone, he become restless, irritable and sometimes verbally and physical abused them.

Brought to hospital with force, he showed depressed mood, irritable and found himself searching for something. In the hospital diagnosed him as depressive disorder related to overuse of internet. Patient was prescribed with mild antipsychotics, antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs. His fluid and nutrition was taken care in hospital stay. Individual counseling was done during hospital stay and engaged him in physical activities. Mr. Manoj was discharged after 2 weeks of treatment, showing mood stabilization and partial sense about his problem. Outpatient treatment was indicated



#### Case study-2

##### Sexual Harassment Case Study: Air India

A woman Air India pilot has allegedly accused a senior captain of harassment. The woman pilot was being trained under the captain.

According to the Times of India, the woman in her complaint said, "The instructor reportedly suggested the two to have dinner at a city restaurant in Hyderabad on May 5 2019 after the training session and while having dinner, the instructor sexually propositioned the trainee.

The instructor was suspended after found guilty by an internal committee of the airline but has been reinstated as an instructor after he appealed to the internal committee.

##### Air India: Sexual Harassment Complaints on the Rise

During 2018, 10 complaints of sexual harassment have been filed at Air India. Between January 1 and July 1 of 2019, eight complaints of sexual harassment have been received.



#### Case study-3

He was being bullied and blackmailed. He was asked to perform heinous sexual acts & favours or pay up a huge ransom amount.<sup>19</sup>

years old Dev (name changed) was extremely nervous, scared & suicidal when he sent an email to me seeking help. He was being bullied and blackmailed. He was asked to perform heinous sexual acts & favours or pay up a huge ransom amount.

Dev was just surfing the net on his smart phone and a banner caught his eye. He clicked on it which opened a WhatsApp chat window with a pretty girls face as the display picture. After a very brief chat with that girl they decided to get on a video chat and he made the call to that number. There was no one on other end, just a black screen. So assuming its poor connection he disconnected within a few seconds. Immediately he got a video of screen showing incoming call from his number with his display pic. The girl (as he assumes seeing the DP) messages him, "I am going to report to police for harassment as I have the evidence that you are calling me at night odd hours". She had deleted all previous messages of their conversation so he could not have the chat were she had written okay let's do video chat. Dev apologised feeling he had offended but the girl started bullying with her threat to lodge a complaint & asked him to perform indecent sexual acts or pay up XXX amount.

Our team of psychologist & investigators helped Dev fight & overcame the bullies, speak up to his parents about this incident & move on in his life without any fears.



#### Case study-4

A notable cyber bullying case study in India is the Ritu Kohli cyberstalking case, which was the first of its kind to be filed in 2001. A perpetrator used her name and personal information to send abusive messages and calls to her, leading her to file a complaint under Section 509 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). While this specific section was not initially applicable to cyberstalking, the case highlighted the need for specific cyber laws, which led to amendments and the later introduction of Section 354D of the IPC for cyberstalking.

Ritu Kohli case summary

Victim: Ritu Kohli

Perpetrator: Manish Khaturia

Incident: Khaturia used Kohli's identity and personal information online, leading to her receiving harassing and abusive calls and messages.

Legal filing: An FIR was filed under Section 509 of the IPC, which deals with outraging the modesty of a woman.

Impact: The case brought attention to the inadequacy of existing laws for cybercrimes. It spurred the Indian government to introduce more specific legislation, such as the creation of Section 354D of the IPC, which specifically addresses cyber stalking.



#### Case Study- 5: Instagram and Adolescent Mental Health Background:

Instagram is one of the most popular platforms among teenagers, known for photo and video sharing. However, its visual nature often encourages social comparison and unrealistic body image expectations.

#### Scenario

A 16-year-old high school student, Riya (fictionalized composite case based on APA and Meta data), spends 4-5 hours daily on Instagram, mostly following influencers and fashion models. Over time, Riya begins to feel inadequate about her own body and lifestyle.

#### Observations

Riya starts skipping meals to lose weight and avoids social gatherings. She constantly checks "likes" and compares her posts with peers.

Gradually, she develops anxiety and insomnia due to constant online validation pressure.

#### Research Connection

A leaked Meta (Facebook) internal study (2021) found that 32% of teen girls felt worse about their bodies after using Instagram.

Further, the American Psychological Association (2023) reported that adolescents who use image-based platforms for

more than 3 hours a day are 60% more likely to develop symptoms of depression.

#### Psychological Explanation

- **Social Comparison Theory:** People evaluate themselves by comparing with others; filtered posts worsen this.
- **Dopamine Loop:** Likes and comments trigger short-term pleasure, reinforcing compulsive use.

#### Conclusion

This case shows how excessive social media exposure can cause low self-esteem, eating issues, and social anxiety among adolescents.

Interventions such as digital literacy programs, body positivity campaigns, and parental awareness can help reduce these effects.



#### Case study-6

James is a 42-year-old male who owns his own construction company. He works in both the office as well as on site helping with his crew. 3 months ago James began developing LBP. He denies a MOI and reports that it has become constant and has made his job increasingly difficult. To control the pain he has been taking frequent breaks during the workday to lie down in his truck but feels that his crew is judging him for not pushing through the pain. He also reports that his pain has been preventing him from sleeping, which has been affecting his ability to run his company. He was hoping that the pain would resolve on it's own but recently he has felt that he should "just give up" on trying to get better. He is starting to find that he is always tired and reports that he "kind of doesn't care if the business fails" because he believes working is the reason he is in pain. After a friend recommended him to PT, he decided that he would try anything to make the pain go away but he is unsure of how exercise will help him. James currently smokes half a pack of cigarettes a day and has no outstanding past medical history.

#### Analysis of conducted survey

Surveys show that excessive social media use is strongly linked to increased anxiety, depression, and stress, with negative impacts on sleep and self-esteem, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Problematic use is more strongly associated with mental health issues than casual use, and factors like constant comparison, social media burnout, and online bullying contribute to these negative outcomes. Some research suggests that active use,



such as frequent posting, may have a stronger link to mental health problems than passive viewing.

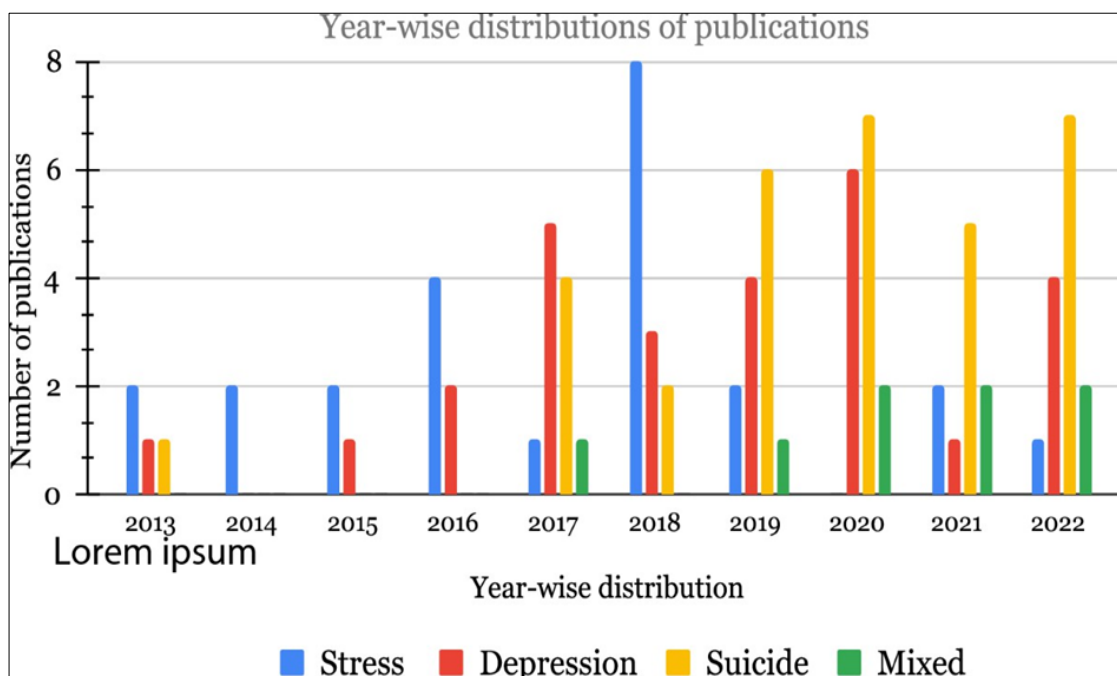
#### Key findings from surveys

- **Increased mental health issues:** Excessive social media use is correlated with higher rates of stress, anxiety, depression, and a reduced sense of overall well-being.
- **Impact on sleep:** Heavy use can lead to poor sleep quality, insomnia, and disrupted circadian rhythms due to late-night scrolling and screen time before bed.
- **Unhealthy Comparisons:** Social media can foster social comparison, especially with altered images, which leads to lower self-esteem, body image issues, and a feeling of not measuring up to unrealistic standards.
- **Problems use:** "Problematic" social media use is more consistently linked to mental health problems than general use. This includes compulsive behaviors and is associated with symptoms like anxiety, depression, and sleep issues.

- **Active vs. passive use:** Some research indicates that certain types of active use, such as frequent posting, may be more strongly linked to negative mental health outcomes than passive use, like just viewing content.
- **Fear of missing out (FOMO):** Seeing others' activities online can trigger FOMO, which is associated with anxiety and lower life satisfaction.
- **Cyber bullying and trolling:** The anonymous and public nature of social media can facilitate trolling and cyber bullying, which can have severe consequences including anxiety, stress, isolation, and depression.

#### Vulnerable groups

- **Adolescents:** Surveys indicate that adolescents, particularly females, are more susceptible to the negative effects of social media, including increased rates of anxiety, depression, and self-harm.
- **Young adults:** This demographic also shows increased rates of anxiety, depression, and sleep issues linked to heavy social media use.



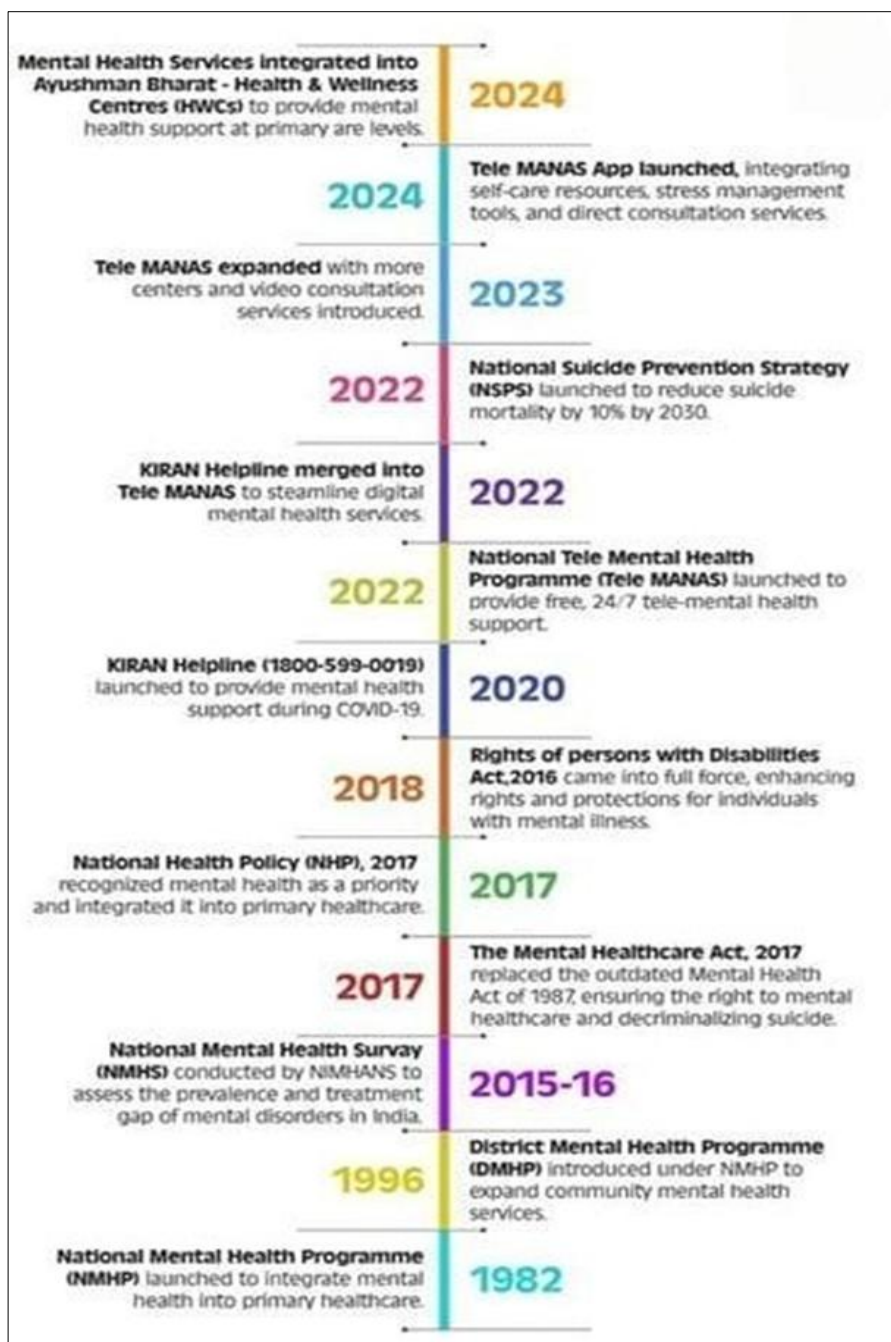
#### Indian Government Initiatives and Legal Provisions National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) - 1982

Recognizing the growing burden of mental disorders and the shortage of mental health services, India launched the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 1982. The primary goal was to ensure that mental healthcare becomes an integral part of the general healthcare system, rather than being confined to specialized hospitals.

#### Key components include

District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) was introduced under NMHP to expand community mental health services.

- Covers 767 districts
- Provides counselling, outpatient services, suicide prevention programs, and awareness initiatives.
- 10-bedded inpatient mental health facilities at the district level.



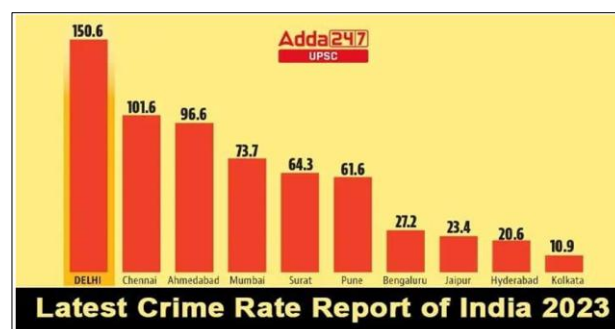
### Growth rate studies

Studies show that cases of mental health issues related to social media use are increasing, particularly among adolescents and young adults. For instance, the rate of adolescents reporting symptoms of major depression increased by 52% between 2005 and 2017, while young adults aged 18-25 saw a 63% increase in the same period. Problematic social media use in adolescents rose from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). This growth is linked to factors like increased time spent online, social comparison, cyber bullying, sleep disruption, and the constant seeking of validation through likes and comments.

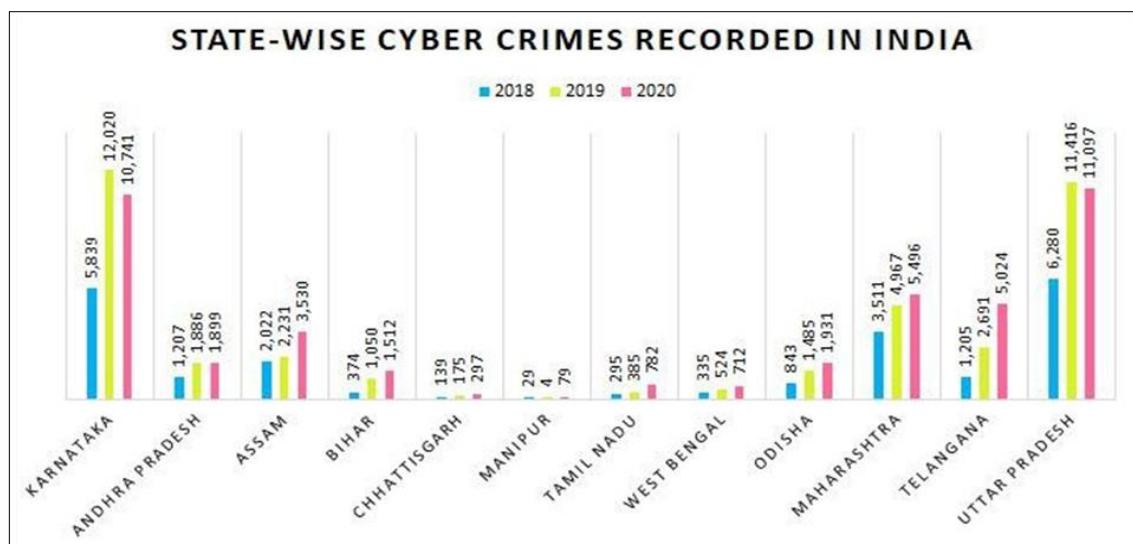
### Pandemic-related social media abuse

Social media use increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic due to lockdowns and quarantine. During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, an online study was conducted over a nationally representative sample of Chinese citizens from 31 different provinces to assess any mental health

problems potentially associated with social media exposure. More than 80% of the total participants reported frequent exposure to social networks. The results revealed that 48.3% of the participants were found to have depression, 22.6% suffered from anxiety, and 19.4% had both. Moreover, more frequent exposure to social media was found to be linked to higher odds of anxiety and 'combined anxiety and depression'<sup>20</sup>.







## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

The relationship between social media and mental health is complex, representing a double-edged sword with both positive and negative consequences. While social media offers platforms for connection, support, and information, its misuse is linked to serious mental health risks, particularly for adolescents and young adults.

Key drivers of negative outcomes include social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), Cyber bullying, addiction-like reward cycles, and sleep disruption. Curated online realities can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression by prompting users to compare their lives with idealized versions of others' experiences. Ultimately, social media's impact depends heavily on an individual's usage patterns, resilience, and personal circumstances. Conscious and mindful use is critical to minimizing harm and maximizing the potential benefits of digital platforms.

### Recommendation

Set usage limits. Track screen time and establish daily or weekly time limits to prevent excessive use. Turning off notifications can help reduce the compulsive urge to check for updates.

Curate a positive feed. Consciously unfollow or mute accounts that provoke negative feelings or unhelpful comparisons. Instead, seek out and follow accounts that inspire, educate, or provide genuine social support.

Prioritize real-life connections. Schedule regular face-to-face interactions with friends and family. A healthy balance of online and offline social experiences can combat feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Practice digital detoxes. Take intentional, multi-day breaks from social media to reset your relationship with online platforms and recharge.

Increase self-awareness. Pay attention to how social media makes you feel. If passive scrolling leads to dissatisfaction, shift to more active, purposeful engagement or find healthier offline alternatives.

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