

## Review on the Dual Impact of Social Media on Psychological Well-Being: From Nigeria context

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### Abstract

This research examines the psychological impacts of smartphone addiction, focusing specifically on its potential implications on mental well-being, in response to the growing prevalence of mobile device usage. Smartphone addiction, characterized by the excessive and dysfunctional use of cellphones, has emerged as a significant public health issue. This review aims to assess the correlation between smartphone addiction and psychiatric problems such as social isolation, anxiety, and depression by summarizing the existing literature. Empirical evidence demonstrates a definite correlation between excessive smartphone usage and a deterioration in mental well-being. Social media platforms intensify addiction by promoting the behavior of "phubbing," which involves disregarding one's surroundings in favor of using their smartphones. This behavior is responsible for the deterioration of interpersonal ties and the loss in life happiness. The paper advocates for the implementation of comprehensive strategies that integrate psychiatric therapy, public health initiatives, and technological solutions to promote digital wellness and improve technology usage patterns. To achieve effective interventions, it emphasizes the ambivalent nature of technology and promotes ongoing study and collaboration between the mental health and technology sectors. It highlights the potential of technology to both enhance and deteriorate mental health.

**Keyword:** Smartphone Addiction, Psychological Well-Being, Social Media Impact, Mental Health Disorders, Digital Wellness

### Introduction

The widespread adoption of social media platforms in recent years has fundamentally transformed worldwide communication and interaction among individuals. Social media, characterized as digital platforms that enable interactive communication and content sharing, has become an integral part of everyday life, exerting a significant impact on both individual and collective dynamics (Kemp, 2020). The extensive acceptance of this phenomenon has

generated much scholarly and public attention on its influence on mental well-being, which seems to have both positive and negative consequences.

Researchers have extensively recorded the significant impact of social media on the way groups interact and how individuals behave. This indicates that there are significant consequences for community dynamics, both in online and offline settings (Dhir et al., 2018; Tateno et al., 2019). Simultaneously, there is an increasing worry about the negative consequences of excessive utilization of social media. Significant concerns arise from the exacerbation of social isolation, the intensification of anxiety and sadness, and the risk of developing smartphone addiction (Kircaburun et al., 2020; Choi & Noh, 2019). These negative consequences are frequently linked to phenomena like 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO), which motivates constant digital involvement at the expense of in-person interactions (Swar & Hameed, 2017; Leong et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize the favorable aspects of utilizing social media, such as enhanced interconnectedness and support systems that have the ability to alleviate sensations of seclusion (Twenge & Campbell, 2019). Engaging with social media platforms can strengthen an individual's feeling of connection and offer valuable social resources by maintaining ongoing relationships with relatives, acquaintances, and larger virtual groups (Chen & Li, 2017).

Although there are advantages, the overall effect of social media on mental health is still a controversial subject that requires more investigation. Recent research indicates that the impact of social media on mental well-being is complex and can be altered by various factors, including the specific type of usage and the surrounding circumstances (David et al., 2018; Bano et al., 2019). This paper intends to investigate the relationship between social media consumption and mental health by using social capital theory as a framework. It responds to the need for more detailed research on this intricate issue, as suggested by Karikari et al. (2017) and Jiao et al. (2017).

### **Use of Social Media, Social Support, and Psychological Health**

The convergence of social media utilization, social assistance, and psychological well-being remains a subject of considerable scholarly interest. Mounting data indicates that social media platforms can have a dual impact on the development and maintenance of social capital, which subsequently affects psychological well-being both favorably and negatively (Brown & Michinov, 2019; Tefertiller et al., 2020).

Recent research emphasizes the direct relationship between the utilization of social media and the improvement of social capital, specifically among varied demographic categories such as overseas students. Research conducted on Chinese international students in the United States has demonstrated that regular engagement on social media platforms such as Facebook is linked to the development of both bridging and bonding social capital. These forms of social capital are essential for the psychological adaptation and overall well-being of these students (Chen & Li, 2017; Bano et al., 2019). These connections not only offer emotional and informational assistance, but also enhance the sensation of being part of a community and belongingness, reducing the sense of isolation sometimes felt while studying abroad.

Furthermore, the utilization of various connections via social media has been noted to expand users' social networks, thus improving their social capital and psychological resilience (Kim & Kim, 2017). The proliferation of social networks is especially advantageous in enhancing the perceived availability of support systems for individuals, which is a crucial element in enhancing mental health outcomes.

Nevertheless, the advantages of utilizing social media come with certain difficulties. Although it can enhance social support, excessive usage of online platforms has been associated with adverse psychological effects, such as heightened anxiety and depression. These negative results are typically attributed to the nature of online interactions and the pressure to maintain a positive online image (Ellison et al., 2007; Kross et al., 2013). The habit known as 'phubbing', which involves prioritizing smartphone use above real-life interactions, has been recognized as a harmful phenomena associated with decreased relationship satisfaction and well-being (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

The intricate nature of social media's influence on psychological health highlights the necessity for a sophisticated comprehension of how these digital connections mold mental well-being. It emphasizes the significance of maintaining a good balance between online involvement and real-life social contacts in order to maximize the advantages of social media while minimizing its potential negative effects. Further investigation is warranted to delve into these dynamics, specifically the processes by which social media usage impacts the psychological well-being of various populations.

### **Use of Social Media and Psychological Health: An Inverse Relationship**

The rapid proliferation of social media usage has undeniably revolutionized worldwide communication and community involvement, but it has also led to substantial worries surrounding mental well-being. This section explores the intricate correlation between frequent utilization of social media and its possible detrimental impact on mental health. Social media platforms, although enabling connection, can also result in psychological anguish, such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. The occurrence of smartphone addiction, which is characterized by the excessive utilization of smartphones at the expense of one's everyday activities (Gökçeşlan et al., 2018), illustrates the possible adverse effects of these digital connections. This addiction frequently originates from and contributes to the irresistible use of social media, establishing a pattern of reliance that might hinder personal and societal growth (Chatterjee, 2020; Jeong et al., 2016).

The phenomenon of 'phubbing,' which entails disregarding one's present companions in favor of concentrating on one's smartphone, serves as a clear example of the possible societal consequences of this addiction. Research suggests that phubbing can have a substantial negative impact on face-to-face social interactions, resulting in decreased relationship satisfaction and heightened emotions of being left out or socially rejected (Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas, 2016; Guazzini et al., 2019). This behavior not only impacts the phubber but also has a cascading influence on the emotional well-being of those in their vicinity.

Furthermore, the extensive utilization of cellphones and social media might result in a detachment from real-life pursuits and engagements, which are essential for mental health and overall wellness. This detachment is frequently linked to heightened feelings of isolation and diminished social aptitude, as individuals substitute authentic human engagement with digital communication (Chatterjee, 2020; Twenge and Campbell, 2019).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the correlation between social media usage and psychological well-being is not entirely harmful. Social media can provide important social support and a platform for self-expression, particularly for persons who have limited access to physical social networks. This can have positive effects on mental health (Ellison et al., 2007; Bano et al., 2019). Although there are considerable negative aspects, there are also possible benefits associated with social media usage. This emphasizes the importance of adopting a balanced approach towards using social media.

### **Theoretical Context: Attachment Style as Relatedness Requirement**

This research significantly relies on the theoretical framework of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), which highlight the crucial importance of relatedness in psychological well-being. The self-determination hypothesis suggests that the highest level of human functioning depends on fulfilling three essential needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The importance of relatedness, or the longing for a sense of connection with others, is especially significant when considering the usage of social media, as interactions on these platforms can either enhance or diminish one's social relationships.

Attachment theory enhances this viewpoint by elucidating how early interactions with caregivers influence an individual's anticipations for subsequent social relationships. Bowlby (1969) claimed that these initial encounters establish an internal working model of attachment, which subsequently impacts an individual's capacity to develop sound adult relationships. The attachment types of secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent, as established by Ainsworth et al. (1978), define distinct behavioral patterns in relationships and varying levels of demands for connection.

The interaction between different attachment patterns and social media usage is intricate. Individuals who possess secure attachment types may utilize social media platforms to strengthen and improve their current relationships, whereas individuals with avoidant attachment styles may gravitate towards online contacts that do not necessitate emotional intimacy. In contrast, individuals with anxious attachment styles may depend on social media as a means of obtaining continuous validation from others, resulting in compulsive behaviors that suggest problematic usage.

The significance of these theories in relation to the present study resides in their capacity to elucidate the diverse effects of social media on users' psychological well-being. Although social media can be used to fulfill the need for connection among persons who are securely connected, it can also intensify feelings of isolation and unease for those with insecure attachment styles. This paradigm facilitates comprehension of the intricate processes in action and emphasizes the necessity for a subtle approach to researching the influence of social media on mental health.

### **Effects of Social Networking Sites Usage on Psychological Well-Being of Nigerians**

With the increasing use of social media in Nigeria, where it ranks 35th worldwide in terms of Facebook users, the influence of these platforms on mental well-being becomes more important. The extensive participation in social networking sites (SNS) presents significant advantages and possible hazards to the psychological well-being of users.

Studies indicate that social networking platforms have a substantial impact on increasing social interaction and providing educational chances, leading to enhanced psychological well-being for users. These platforms facilitate the development of confidence and abilities in even

introverted individuals by offering a secure environment for social interaction and discovery of identity (Ashiekpe & Majaye, 2017). For several individuals, particularly the younger generation, these websites function as crucial platforms for gaining knowledge, participating in community activities, and building social connections.

Nevertheless, the swift transition from conventional in-person relations to digital communication has sparked worries over the possible adverse consequences linked to the excessive utilization of social media. Research has shown that excessive involvement on these platforms might result in psychological problems like anxiety, sadness, and other forms of antisocial conduct (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). The concept of 'hijacking childhood,' in which young users get excessively engrossed in virtual interactions, neglecting real-world experiences and learning, is highly concerning.

Furthermore, the impact of social media on the formation of users' moral and ethical perspectives has been subject to thorough scrutiny. The widespread impact of digital culture can occasionally erode conventional values and conventions, especially among susceptible young individuals (Matsika, 2012). The cultural transformation frequently gives rise to a conflict between the traditional moral principles of indigenous communities and the progressive values promoted on social media platforms, which may ultimately erode cultural heritage and ethical principles.

The empirical evidence regarding the impacts of social networking site (SNS) usage on well-being is inconclusive, indicating that the influence mostly relies on how individuals utilize these platforms. For instance, the degree and type of involvement, such as whether it involves simply consuming content or actively interacting with others, have a substantial impact on the user's psychological condition. According to Valkenburg et al. (2006), positive interactions on social media, such as receiving supportive comments and likes, have been found to be associated with enhancements in life satisfaction and self-esteem. In contrast, adverse encounters, such as cyberbullying or excessive comparison with others, can undermine a user's psychological well-being and general sense of contentment.

Moreover, the psychological impacts of using social media are not limited to the individual but are shaped by the wider social support systems accessible to the user. Individuals who have strong social connections in real life may be less affected by negative experiences online, in contrast to those who depend primarily on digital platforms for social support (Nabi et al., 2013).

Overall, social networking sites have the advantage of improving connectedness and offering educational and social resources. However, they also carry substantial hazards to psychological well-being, especially when used excessively or as a replacement for face-to-face contacts. The ambivalent effect of social media necessitates a measured approach to its utilization, highlighting the significance of keeping strong offline connections and pursuits in conjunction with online interactions.

### **Digital Literacy and Media Education**

The swift incorporation of social media into everyday existence has made it imperative to enhance digital literacy and media education as essential instruments in protecting psychological well-being. Digital literacy comprises a diverse set of abilities that are crucial for efficiently navigating online environments, including the capacity to comprehend and regulate one's presence and interactions on different platforms (Fraillon et al., 2020). These skills encompass not only technical expertise but also encompass critical thinking, awareness of the lasting nature of digital traces, and the ability to identify and handle misinformation.

Research has demonstrated that improved digital literacy can result in a more responsible and thoughtful utilization of social media. This, in turn, reduces the potential dangers associated with its improper use, such as being exposed to harmful content, experiencing cyberbullying, and suffering from psychological distress as a result of these encounters (Livingstone & Helsper, 2017). Moreover, educational initiatives centered on media literacy are progressively acknowledged for their contribution in fostering positive digital behaviors. Mihailidis (2018) emphasizes that these tools can provide individuals with the ability to analyze online information and relationships in a critical manner, which is crucial in the era of 'false news' and online manipulation.

Furthermore, treatments aimed at enhancing digital literacy have been discovered to have a favorable impact on mental well-being by mitigating emotions of anxiety and despair linked to adverse online interactions. A study conducted by Jones et al. (2021) demonstrated that students who participated in a digital literacy program reported enhanced online experiences and reduced levels of discomfort in comparison to their peers who did not get the same educational intervention. Similarly, Vraga and Tully (2019) provide evidence that instructing users on how to identify and verify questionable material can lessen the psychological effects of encountering deceptive or harmful content on the internet.

These studies emphasize the significance of incorporating digital literacy into educational curricula to provide a safer and mentally healthier online environment. Through the promotion of awareness and strategic thinking around the use of social media, digital literacy education not only improves individual competency but also strengthens society's ability to withstand the psychological dangers associated with the digital era.

### **Impact of Social Media on Adolescents' Identity Formation and Self-Esteem**

Nigerian adolescents are greatly impacted by social media platforms, which have a substantial influence on their development of identity and self-esteem. Adolescence is a crucial stage for the formation of self-concept and social identity. Social media offers a distinctive platform for self-expression, experimentation, and social interaction throughout this period (Valkenburg, Koutamanis, & Vossen, 2017). Nevertheless, the process of engaging in social interactions online poses difficulties, as the expectations of portraying oneself and the pursuit of social approval can significantly impact the self-worth and general psychological well-being of young individuals.

Recent research suggests that continuous exposure to idealized images and carefully selected portrayals of peers' lives can result in feelings of inadequacy and diminished self-esteem among adolescents. Twenge and Martin (2020) conducted a study that revealed a correlation between excessive usage of social media and decreased self-esteem. This relationship is commonly influenced by comparing oneself to others and feeling socially isolated. Moreover, the interactive character of these platforms might intensify the adverse consequences of cyberbullying, which has been demonstrated to have significant ramifications for the psychological welfare of impacted adolescents (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018).

Conversely, social media also provides chances for constructive social connections and assistance, which can be advantageous for the self-confidence and discovery of identity in adolescents. According to Best, Manktelow, and Taylor (2014), helpful interactions on social media, such as providing positive commentary on postings where individuals express themselves, can boost self-esteem and offer validation throughout important stages of developing one's identity. Furthermore, online platforms that foster identity discovery in a

non-judgmental environment, such as communities centered around shared interests, can facilitate the development of a more positive self-concept (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015).

However, the ability of social media to both negatively impact and positively influence teenage self-esteem requires the implementation of comprehensive solutions to reduce risks and enhance positive outcomes. It is essential to have educational programs that provide instruction in critical media literacy, coping mechanisms for cyberbullying, and recommendations for promoting positive online behavior. These interventions can enable teenagers to effectively and confidently use social media, promoting their growth into emotionally stable and well-adapted adults.

### **Conclusion**

The extensive reach of social media in several aspects of life highlights its substantial effect on the mental health of Nigerian teenagers. This study has shown that although social media provides valuable opportunities for self-expression, learning, and connection, it also presents significant risks, such as the possibility of reduced self-esteem and disruptions in the development of one's identity due to the pressures of self-presentation and cyberbullying. The duality of these effects necessitates a balanced strategy to engaging with social media. Enhancing digital literacy is becoming increasingly important as it empowers individuals to navigate online environments more efficiently and make well-informed decisions regarding their online activities. Enhancing digital literacy through educational activities can enable users to identify and navigate the intricacies of online interactions, hence fostering safer and more favorable encounters. Moreover, given that adolescents are especially vulnerable to the impacts of digital interactions, it is crucial to implement focused interventions to assist this specific group. These programs should encompass not only educational content about the potential dangers, but also promote positive social media practices and offer support for addressing adverse encounters like cyberbullying. By promoting a comprehensive comprehension of the advantages and difficulties of social media, individuals with a vested interest can contribute to the development of a technologically proficient society that sustains strong mental well-being in an ever more digitalized environment.

The impact of social media on the psychological well-being of its users, especially teenagers, is extremely significant. This review has emphasized the intricate interplay between social media usage and psychological well-being, indicating that the effect is deeply ambiguous. On one side, social media enables novel modes of social interaction and can have a beneficial impact on self-discovery and the establishment of communities. However, it can also result in considerable psychological anguish, marked by diminished self-worth and a sense of confusion about one's identity. These issues are made worse by cyberbullying and the need for social approval. The results recommend the implementation of a proactive strategy involving thorough education on digital literacy and strong support systems for mental health. These efforts should focus on both reducing the negative impacts and increasing the favorable psychological advantages of using social media. It is crucial for educators, parents, and legislators to work together in creating laws and programs that acknowledge and tackle the complex requirements of young people as they navigate their social and psychological development in the digital era. Society can enhance the ability of young individuals to succeed in both online and offline environments by giving priority to mental health and digital education. This will enable them to effectively utilize social media as a means for personal and communal development.

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