Psychological Impacts of Social Media Across Intersectionalities of Race and Gender
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Introduction:

Social Media has become an integral part of our daily lives, especially among high schoolers and college students. A question all teenagers have to face is whether social media is a positive addition to their lives or a negative one. Significant decade-defining events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread adoption of social media show that social media can have outsized impacts on our lives, especially on mental health **(Gauthier et al., 2020)**[1]. Additionally, with the issue of cyberbullying and body image stereotypes, it is clear that our social groups, such as race and gender, play a big role in one's experience on social media — both in positive and negative ways **(Naslund et al., 2020)**[2]. This leads us to the question, how is the experience of social media affected by race and gender? This paper discusses recent findings and well-established facts to piece together how social media is experienced differently for different races, and how the experience is different across gender. The paper primarily focuses on young people.

Methods:

We used Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Springer, and Oxford Academic to perform a literature review. Our search went through three phases: first, we used the search query "Social Media Psychological Impact." 150+ papers were identified as being useful to the question. Next, inclusion and exclusion factors were considered to refine the papers to better answer the question, such as having been published within the past 5 years and concerning social media. We split the papers into two groups discussing effects across race and gender. Our conclusion was ~40 papers.

Results:

Problematic social media use is strongly correlated to negative mental health experiences. There is much literature on this topic. Social media addiction is defined as the inability to control use, general functional impairment, and continuing involvement in behavior regardless of its negative impacts **(Tullett-Prado et al., 2023)**[3]. In regards to adolescence, social media can intersect with adolescent development factors and gender sociocultural aspects to raise potential issues **(Bozzola et al., 2022)**[4]. The idea of the gender divide was sparsely mentioned. While some studies found problematic social media usage rates to be higher for young women than young men, most were inconclusive and barely mentioned a gender divide. However, based on context, readers can assume most volunteers are female, and there is considerably more research conducted for young women than young men. Most social media research is done on Facebook. Multiple studies correlated Facebook use to various negative mental health impacts **(Braghieri et al., 2022)**[5]. Many found correlations between posting on social media and insomnia. One found that 73% of people who posted

frequently on FB were self-reportedly poor sleepers, and 27% said they had SM disorder **(Azhari et al., 2022)**[6]. Many articles firmly concluded that social media can be correlated to higher feelings of social connection through specific social media features. A study found that watching or sharing funny videos with friends was positively related to feelings of happiness **(Marciano et al., 2022)**[7]. Many studies focused on social media's role in promoting LGBTQ youth's confidence and social well-being. Many concluded that LGBTQ youth are more eager to form social connections online **(Escobar-Viera et al., 2022)**[8]. On the topic of hate speech, some studies found that instances of hate speech increased despite social media platforms implementing prevention and intervention strategies **(Wang et al., 2023)**[9]. One found how social media can be a confirmed opportunity to experience online hate speech. 80% of people in the European Union have encountered hate speech online and 40% have felt attacked or threatened on social media, according to this study **(Castano-Pulgarin, 2021)**[10]. Traumatic world events can lead to increases in instances of hate speech, and Twitter was where a lot of this hate speech was posted. Cyber-racism has also been shown to promote poor self-esteem by classifying a group with misinformation and stereotypes **(Bliuc et al., 2018)**[11] **(Dubey, 2020)**[12]. Multiple studies found that viral videos of the detainment of undocumented immigrants in cages, as well as police killings of unarmed citizens, contributed to PTSD and depressive symptoms **(Tynes et al., 2019)**[13]. The people harmed in these videos are disproportionately people of color, and the people experiencing PTSD symptoms are disproportionately people of color. With social justice movements using social media to connect with a greater audience, youth of color are more exposed to social justice issues and cyber racism. Overall, social media racism and discrimination correlate to depressive symptoms and anxiety, especially due to people who disagree with the social issue as well as trolls and bigots who can promote hate speech **(Inara Rodis et al., 2023)**[14].

Conclusion:

      For children of color, exposure to topics about race and gender are double-edged swords: they help to introduce people early to important issues that get them to think critically, but they expose them to racism and cyberbullying before they might be ready for it, either due to age or maturity. For the majority of the population, social media inconclusively correlates to mental health outcomes. Much of the research is very broad, and one's experience on social media varies due to many emotional and social factors. Problematic social media usage has an almost exact causation to depressive symptoms, regardless of age, gender, or race. However, young people are especially susceptible. Due to the omnipresence of depressive symptoms towards emotional reactions on social media — affecting the emotional state of a developing brain — they are most at risk of mental health issues. Social media has many positive impacts: providing a safe space for people with disabilities to communicate, connecting high-risk individuals to mental health services, and generally connecting with others. However, there are potential issues that are exacerbated by pre-existing personal problems. In general, young people should limit their social media usage to healthy amounts to prevent harmful effects.

At-risk youth, due to personal and social issues, should limit social media use and prioritize addressing these issues first. All problems are likely to get worse before they get better, which is why it may be necessary for there to be an age cap to mitigate the harmful effects of social media.

Introduction

Social media has profoundly affected our world. 4.9 billion people are registered social media users as of 2022 **(Dixon, 2023)**[15]. That's 61% of the world's population of over 8 billion that uses social media, according to the United Nations "World Social Report" **(United Nations Board, 2023)**[16]. 90% of teens in the United States aged 13 to 17 years old use social media **(Indah, 2023)**[17]. And, most teens admit to spending 3 hours a day on social media, and some have reported up to 9 hours.

Number of people using social media platforms, 2004 to 2018

Estimates correspond to monthly active users (MAUs). Facebook, for example, measures MAUs as users that have logged in during the past 30 days. See source for more details.
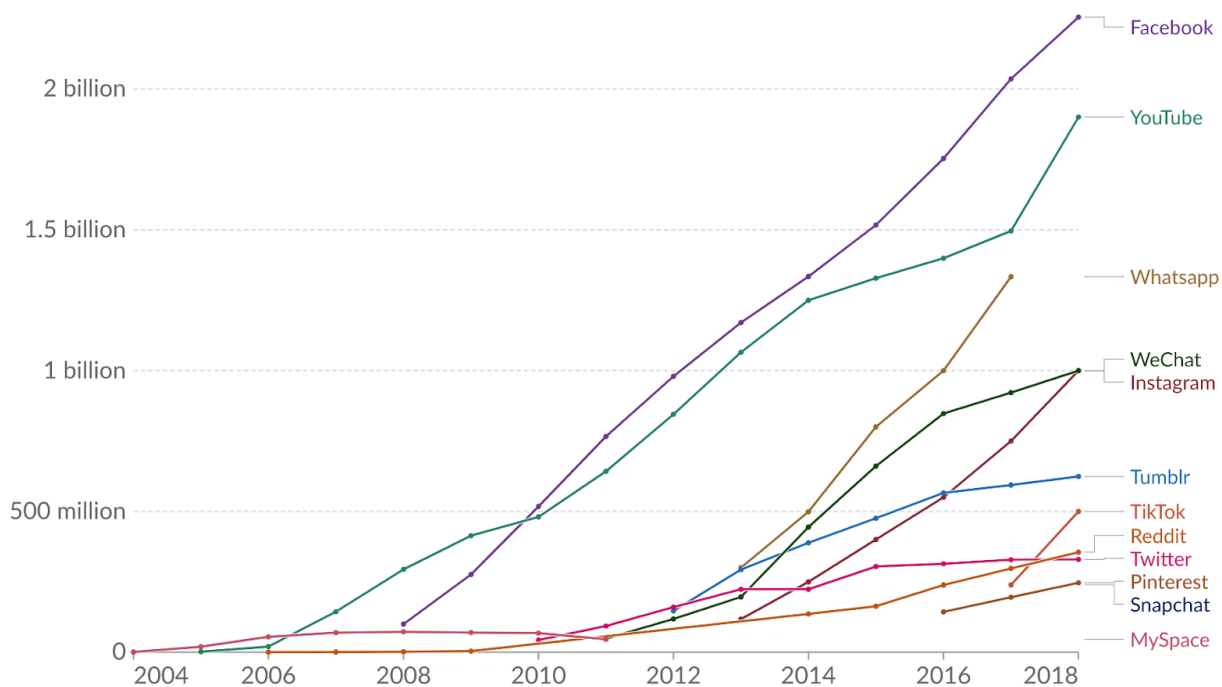
Our World in Data

Source: Statista and TNW (2019)   OurWorldInData.org/internet • CC BY

Social media is a large hive mind of ideas. Millions of people around the world share information, jokes, and photos that are accessible to almost everyone on social media. It's essentially one giant group chat. To illustrate the point, a student at school may not have met another student before, but they most likely have heard of the same social media jokes. If they share apps such as TikTok or Instagram, they can connect very easily over real-time internet trends. As an open and accessible online database of people, one can find those they haven't talked to in a while by looking them up on social media and reaching out to them. Long-distance relationships and friendships with those from other countries are made more possible through social media.

Social media gives humanity 24/7 access to reliable and impactful world news, at the touch of a button. Especially in places where that information is hard to get or very limited, social media bridges that gap by informing people of what is going on in the world at an astonishingly fast pace. Information about wars, economic crises, or natural disasters can be accessed in a significant way, through live images and videos. For example, the war in Ukraine is being heavily broadcasted and displayed all over social media, helping Ukraine gain the support of the international community and providing a platform for humanitarian organizations seeking donations **(Alvarado, 2023)**[18].

Those struggling with their mental health, which disproportionately affects people of gender minorities and those predisposed to mental health issues, can use social media to connect with others experiencing similar difficulties and find adequate health resources. This online form of communication about mental health struggles can be helpful for those who struggle with in-person communication. There is a stigma over speaking about mental health struggles, so the anonymity of the internet and social media provides a safe space for healthy discussion. Online peer support systems are incredibly positive and impactful **(Akhther et al., 2022)**[19]. Social media is a very powerful resource. It is a powerful thing that can be used for a lot of good, but there are potential dangers with such an impactful tool.

Nearly 9 in 10 teenagers experience mental health challenges regularly **(Blue Shield et al., 2023)**[20].
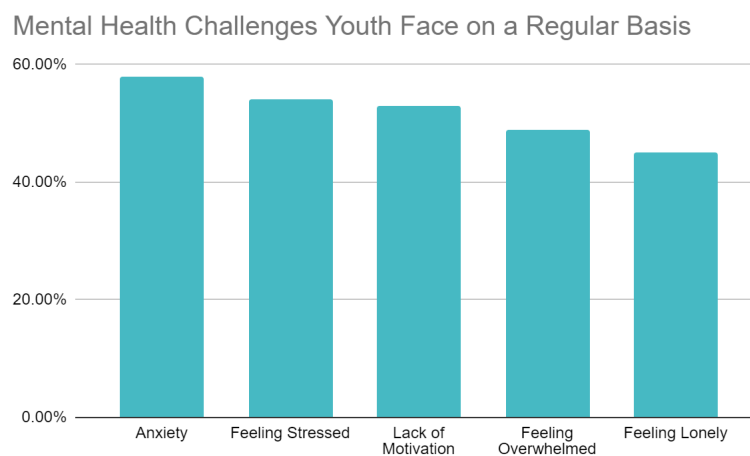
9 in 10 experience mental health struggles on a daily basis (Blue Shield)

The chances are the same for a teenager to graduate from high school in California, as it is that that same teenager experiences debilitating mental health challenges daily **(Wood, 2022)**[21].

90 percent of teens in the United States aged 13 to 17 use social media **(Indah, 2023)**[17].

In 2017, there was an infamous case where a teenage girl had convinced her boyfriend to commit suicide. 17-year-old Michelle Carter was in a long-distance relationship over social media, and she had sent hundreds of text messages seemingly encouraging her boyfriend to take his own life. The boyfriend, already predisposed to depressive symptoms, was pushed further into a mental health crisis by Michelle's texts, eventually taking his own life. This incident shows there are very clear ramifications to the negative effects of social media.

Social media has had an oversized impact on gender mental health

Gender has been a focus of study and discussion ever since social media took off in the 2010s. Numerous scandals in the 2010s revealed the frequent use of Photoshop tools in the presentation of women on newspaper front pages and social media, especially in fashion media. Ever since the informal adoption of photo editing and the popularization of the selfie, social media has seen a rise in the amount of photo editing done to image posts **(Chae, 2017)**[22]. The 2015 trend of "social media vs reality" demonstrates the pervasiveness and expectation of pristine photo editing in many social media posts **(Tiggemann et al., 2019)**[23].

The rapid adoption and expansion of social media have exposed children and teenagers to increasing levels of photoshopped "unrealistic" body images. This comes at a pivotal time in their lives when kids are defining and understanding themselves, and the absorption of photo-edited images during this process can obstruct healthy mental health growth **(Klein, 2013)**[24]. The author of this page remembers staring at photos of models in newspapers for hours and then suffering from eating disorders in her groundbreaking article titled "Why Don't I Look Like Her?" **(Klein, 2013)**[24].

Fashion newspapers and tabloid articles were places where one could encounter large amounts of photoshopped images of models, both men and women. As social media has expanded, it has replaced the newspapers. The "Cosmopolitan" or "Vanity Fair" of yesterday are now increasingly on social media, and people can see hundreds of new people on social media with just casual scrolling **(Tiggemann et al., 2019)**[23]. Similar to fashion magazines, people can spend hours staring and scrolling mindlessly.

If the practice of extreme photo-editing on fashion magazines exacerbated preexisting mental health issues and increased the chances of developing eating disorders in young women, how would social media use impact mental health? On platforms such as Instagram, there are thousands of posts made by people shared with each other every day. Photo editing can predispose a young person to social media body comparison, especially if the post is edited to unrealistic levels **(Lago, 2013)**[25]. With all these risks, are our children safe with social media?

Persistent Feelings of Sadness or Hopelessness Among US High School Students 2011-2021
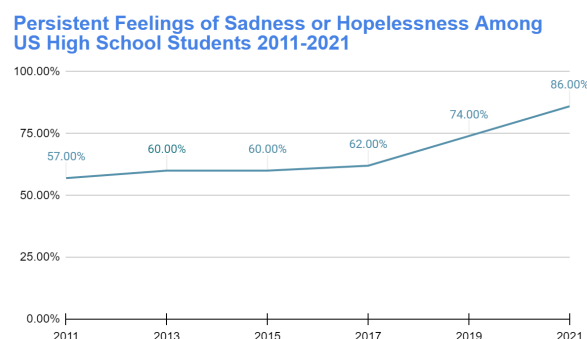
Our changing world has brought the conversation of the topic of race and gender into social media. Increasingly teenagers and young adults have become a part of the discussion. The George Floyd protests, the overturning of Roe v. Wade, and the issue of education have exposed young people to more significant ideas that are shaping our world.

Incidents of cyber racism have become more common over the past couple of years. These include people who are intent on harming others online and those who give racist remarks and threats. These types of comments are common on Instagram posts about a social justice topic or being directly message to someone. These comments blur the line between free speech and intended harm, and most often are ill-intentioned. Similar to the case with Michelle Carter, the protections of free speech appear to be more and more unjustifiable when open speech is used to harm others.

Cyberbullying, despite being anonymous, can exacerbate existing mental health disorders **(Naslund et al., 2020)**[2]. It has been well studied and researched. In addition, cyberbullying has been proven to have a relation between depressive and suicidal idealations, and the financial or other 'status' of perpetrators. Harmful negative effects may include exacerbation of preexisting mental health disorders, a predisposition to depressive symptoms, and an increase in the likelihood of suicidal thoughts. **(Ademiluyi et al., 2022)**[26].

Studies have proven a similarity between the causes of cyberbullying and the causes of cyber racism, and the effects of both **(Scott et al., 2023)**[27]. Cyber racism can have very similar impacts to cyberbullying, such as a predisposition to depressive symptoms and an increase in the likelihood of suicidal thoughts **(Tao et al., 2021)**[28]. Cyber racism can increase the likelihood of drug and alcohol abuse brought on by depressive symptoms, which disproportionately affects young people of color **(Tynes et al., 2019)**[13].

In all these cases and articles, almost all those impacted are young people, as more of them are exposed to social media. These are people with young impressionable brains figuring out their confidence and value systems. In this paper, we are interested in understanding the impacts of social media. It discusses recent findings and well-established facts to piece together how social media is experienced differently for different races, and how the experience is different across gender. We seek to help parents and social media companies make more informed decisions to maximize positive impacts while minimizing negative effects.

Methods

In conducting our literature review, we systematically utilized major academic databases, including Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Springer, and Oxford Academic. Our methodology encompassed three primary phases, each designed to ensure a methodical examination of the literature.

In the initial phase, we initiated the search with the query "Social media psychological impact," identifying over 150 relevant papers. We applied an exclusion criterion based on publication date, eliminating papers published more than 5 years ago, ultimately reducing the selection to approximately 80 papers. In the second phase, we shifted our focus to the topics of race and gender. Papers were categorized into two groups, one addressing the experiences of young people of color and the other concerning gender-related aspects. Approximately 20 papers that did not align with our specific focus were excluded. The final phase of our methodological approach concentrated on gender-related research, identifying around 60 pertinent papers. We emphasized the experiences of young men, women, and gender minorities in the context of social media. A primary goal was to address the underrepresentation of certain genders in existing research. Similar to previous phases, approximately 20 papers that did not meet our criteria were excluded.

In summary, our methodological approach to the literature review maintained a systematic and rigorous process, with careful paper selection in line with academic standards and research objectives.

Results

Social Media

A total of 108 papers were identified through Google Scholar searches. After inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, we narrowed it down to 32 papers that were used for evaluation. Of these studies, 24 studies focused on the connection between negative mental health experiences and problematic social media use, finding a strong connection. Social Media Addiction is defined as the inability to control use, functional impairment, and continuing involvement in behavior regardless of its negative impacts **(Tullett-Prado et al., 2023)**[3]. Most studies mentioned this, demonstrating a widespread acceptance of these ills and building off of past data. Leading into that, some studies focused specifically on youth mental health, finding young people are vulnerable to many issues. Specifically, one found how social media can intersect with adolescent development factors (of the salience of peer relationships) and sociocultural gender socialization processes (societal over-emphasis on girls' physical appearance) to raise potential issues **(Bozzola et al., 2022)**[4]. The other study focused on young people's connection with media, finding a present correlation to a strong need for media **(Choukas-Bradley et al., 2022)**[29].

On the topic of the gender divide, the difference between the experience of young men and young women was sparsely mentioned. One study found social media addiction rates to be higher for girls than boys **(Watson et al., 2021)**[30]. While boys and girls are rarely mentioned in papers, a reader can infer, based on context and the nature of the study, that most volunteers and subjects are female. There is more research for young women than young men. On the topic of specific social media sites, a study conducted a rollout of Instagram in a college and found that increased Instagram usage correlated to negative mental health impacts **(Braghieri et al., 2022)**[5]. A majority of studies focused solely on Facebook. Owing to its longevity in social media, research here is more concrete and established than other newer sites. One study conducted a rollout of Facebook in a college and found a correlation between increased usage and negative mental health impacts **(Braghieri et al., 2022)**[5]. Another study correlated posting on Facebook to less sleep on average **(Azhari et al., 2022)**[6]. Another study found that vague booking can predict suicidal idealizations **(Berryman et al., 2018)**[31]. For TikTok, one study examined how TikTok has been used for public health outreach **(McCashin et al., 2022)**[32]. It found a shortcoming in mental health outreach and misinformation issues and a positive in physical health outreach. Multiple studies found that Twitter has a big role in cyber-racism **(Dubey, 2020)**[12]. It is objectively easier to be exposed to cyber racism through Twitter, due to tweets, comments, and messages. Cyber racism during the COVID-19 pandemic was pervasive on Twitter. Additionally, Twitter is used for politics, and cyber-racism can affect people more easily this way **(Wang et al., 2023)**[9].

Mental Health

With the accessibility of the internet, young people are more likely to be exposed to social media content about substance use. One study found that exposure to this content correlated to a higher likelihood of engaging in these behaviors themselves **(Nesi, 2020)**[33]. Feelings of FOMO (the fear of missing out) are clear indicators of a bad social media experience **(Fumagalli et al., 2021)**[34]. A study found that general social media use increased feelings of loneliness via the role of FOMO **(Marciano et al., 2022)**[7]. Multiple studies found correlations between posting on social media and insomnia. One study found that 73% of people who posted frequently on FB were self-reportedly poor sleepers, and 27% said they had SM disorder **(Azhari et al., 2022)**[6]. These people with SMU disorder reported significantly more loneliness, fewer average hours of sleep, and fewer average hours of weekday sleep. One study found that among their volunteers, 40% of the adolescents reported using a mobile device within five minutes before going to sleep, and 36% reported waking up to check their device at least once during the night **(Nesi, 2020)**[34]. Overall, this can be labeled as poorer sleep outcomes.

A prominent topic that was mentioned frequently was the impact on psychological well-being. This is an umbrella term for loneliness, depression symptoms, distress, or anxiety. A study concluded that social media use was positively associated with COVID-19-related stress/anxiety **(Marciano et al., 2022)**[7]. An Italian study correlated higher screen time to a higher prevalence of loneliness **(Bozzola et al., 2022)**[4]. Towards the topic of general social media use disorder, a study found correlations to elevated loneliness. There wasn't a strong correlation between SMD and anxiety among the studies **(Azhari et al., 2022)**[6]. This study presented a hypothesis about loneliness. At its core, loneliness arises when an individual perceives a lack of meaning in relationships. Because texting and sending funny videos is less conversationally complex than in-person communication, social media can perpetuate loneliness. Two studies discussed the relationship between mental distress and suicidality with social media among youth and coined the term "dose-response relationship" **(Valkenburg et al., 2022**[35]; **Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020)**[36]. The 'dosage' of social media given correlates to the severity of mental distress, and many studies correlated time spent on social media to ill-being **(Marciano et al., 2022)**[7]. Although it isn't fully understood how severe mental distress symptoms are, there is a connection between using social platforms and higher psychopathological symptoms. A few papers talked about body comparison issues **(Watson et al., 2021)**[30]. Most studies made the connection between online social comparison and depressive symptoms in youth. One study said that appearance-specific comparison on social media may heighten the risk for disordered eating and body image concerns **(Nesi, 2020)**[33]. It found a significant correlation between body dissatisfaction and time spent engaged in social media comparison. The focus was on various female targets engaged in social comparisons online (with the thin ideal) **(Scully et al., 2020)**[37].

Suicide

In a recent study of over 400 youth who were psychiatrically hospitalized due to risk of harm to self or others, a small but meaningful proportion of youth reported viewing online content that promoted suicide (14.8%) or self-injury (16.6%) during the two weeks before their admission **(Nesi, 2020)**[33]. Content related to suicide and self-injury is readily available online, potentially increasing suicide risk among youth who are already vulnerable. The overall risk of suicides among young men and women due to social media use is unclear. While some papers found a strong correlation, others had mixed and less concrete connections. One of the more important takeaways from social media mental health research is that results are often almost always mixed. Symptoms related to social media usage are more conclusive, and they are more conclusive than direct correlations to suicide rates. Multiple studies found that exposure to videos of violence towards people of color can have negative mental health outcomes. One study found that viral videos of the detainment of undocumented immigrants in cages, as well as police killings of unarmed citizens, contributed to PTSD and depressive symptoms **(Tynes et al., 2019)**[13]. Especially for youth and girls of color, frequent experiences of traumatic events online in general were associated with PTSD symptoms **(Campbell et al., 2020)**[38].

Positive Social Connection + Feelings of Happiness

Many articles firmly concluded social media's correlation to higher feelings of social connections. One study reported that 81% of its teen participants feel more connected to their friends and family via social media **(Nesi, 2020)**[33]. Some articles focused on specific aspects of social media such as humorous coping and direct messages that were labeled as positive **(Marciano et al., 2022)**[7]. It found that watching or sharing funny videos was positively related to feelings of happiness, and these aspects did not influence loneliness or anxiety. This study confirmed an association between certain social media use and improved mental health. Two studies found that certain types of messaging on social media can reduce psychological symptoms such as the fear of missing out and loneliness. Messaging and the use of voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP) apps (such as Skype, Viber, and WhatsApp) were associated with lower levels of loneliness. A study of thirteen-year-old participants found that positive online experiences (such as feeling valued and receiving advice) decreased loneliness **(Marciano et al., 2022)**[7]. These studies highlight more "meaningful" forms of social connection as being beneficial to our social well-being. It found that young people have a developmental period during which connecting with peers is crucial for social well-being, and social media can positively satisfy this need.

Social Communities Specifically for LGBTQ+ Youth

Many studies focused on social media's role in promoting LGBTQ youth's confidence and social well-being. Two studies concluded that LGBTQ youth are more eager to form social connections online. LGBTQ youth typically have smaller in-person networks due to a lack of

readily available communities of similar peers. Youth who live in rural areas often struggle to be accepted by their communities, and they join social media groups to curb loneliness; often, they join more compared to their heterosexual peers **(Escobar-Viera et al., 2022)**[8]. One study identified key support points for LGBTQ persons **(Escobar-Viera et al., 2022)**[8]. These can be social media content and news that portray LGBTQ persons positively and in relatable ways. The study found that being able to vet new friends/followers on social media, through bios and posts, removed barriers for LGBTQ youth to make new connections. Another positive was online resources **(Escobar-Viera et al., 2022)**[8]. Multiple studies also concluded that social media can be a way to cope with COVID-19-related stresses for LGBTQ youth **(Abreu et al., 2023)**[39].

Race/Cyber Racism

Roughly 30 of these studies focused on hate speech. The internet can facilitate the expression and spread of racist views and ideologies. Both specific groups and isolated individuals share a high level of skill and sophistication when expressing cyber racism. One study found that instances of hate speech and violent messages continuously change and are fluid **(Balakrishnan et al., 2022)**[40]. Multiple studies discussed the challenge of regulation **(Mason et al., 2017)**[41]. One study found that instances of hate speech increased despite social media platforms implementing prevention and intervention strategies **(Wang et al., 2023)**[9]. There is a lack of consensus on defining unacceptable expressions of racism, and there is a lack of understanding of the indirect ways racism can be expressed **(Mason et al., 2017)**[41]. A study found how social media can be a confirmed opportunity for online hate speech. 80% of people in the European Union have encountered hate speech online, and 40% of people have felt attacked or threatened (according to this study **(Castano-Pulgarin, 2021)**[10]). One study found that topics of hate speech and racism focused often on eating habits, political hatred, and xenophobia on Twitter **(Andrew Jakubowicz et al., 2017)**[42]. Multiple studies found that cyber-racism is a form of cyberbullying, and it is becoming more common on the internet **(Mason et al., 2017)**[41]. One study found that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in hateful comments and posts **(Dubey, 2020)**[12]. It found that traumatic world events can lead to increases in instances of hate speech, and Twitter was where a lot of this hate speech was posted.

Misinformation and Harmful Images

People of Asian descent experienced negative mental health symptoms due to exposure to racism about COVID-19. Generally, people of color experienced negative mental health symptoms in exposure to videos of police brutality **(Eboigbe et al., 2023)**[43]. A study found that viral videos of the detainment of undocumented immigrants in cages, as well as police killings of unarmed citizens, contributed to PTSD and depressive symptoms. Especially for youth and girls of color, frequent experiences of traumatic events online were generally associated with PTSD symptoms **(Tynes et al., 2019)**[13]. Multiple studies established that experiencing racism can

lead to a range of negative outcomes including depression, hypertension, and coronary heart disease **(Bliuc et al., 2018)**[11]. Cyber-racism has also been shown to promote poor self-esteem **(Dubey, 2020)**[12]. Cyber-racism can classify certain social groups through misinformation and stereotypes and negatively affect mental health **(Bliuc et al., 2018)**[11]. Multiple studies found that exposure to multiple forms of cyber-racism can lead to mental stress and poor mental health outcomes. A study on how people, mainly women of color, respond to cyber-racism discussed the emotional effort of correcting misinformation and racism. For women of color, there is a present double standard towards the emotional labor of dealing with cyber racism/sexism. In the face of cyber racism/sexism, women of color's responses are framed by social expectations around appropriate behavior **(Inara Rodis et al., 2023)**[14]. The social expectation explained in this article is for them to act as though the cyber aggressors aren't trolls or bigots but well-meaning people who can be educated. These digital situations, places without "employers," can be emotionally exhaustive for women. One study focused on how people of certain racial/gender groups are portrayed in media and social media, and how negative images and stereotypes can prompt shame, and anger, and lead to self-esteem problems **(Mastro, 2017)**[44]. Conversely, favorable characterizations of a group can boost self-esteem.

Overall Mental Health Outcomes

Some studies focused on how increased social media use among youth of color affected mental health outcomes. With social justice movements using social media to connect with a greater audience, youth of color are more exposed to meaningful social justice issues, and cyber racism. Overall, social media racism and discrimination correlate to depressive symptoms and anxiety, especially due to people who disagree with the social issue as well as trolls and bigots who can promote hate speech **(Inara Rodis et al., 2023)**[14]. Viewing videos of violence towards people of color can lead to post-traumatic anxiety symptoms **(Tynes et al., 2019)**[13]. However, participating in social justice discussions has been positive.

Discussion

This study concludes the general theory that problematic social media use can be correlated with negative mental health experiences. Addiction is addiction, and social media use disorder is no different. Social media disorder affects children at a very vulnerable stage in their lives. Young people are figuring out their confidence and value systems, and social media features and websites can mess with these systems. They can even lead to permanent changes in brain structures of young people, due to adolescence being such an important time, and it exacerbates these issues in people with serious cases. Social media commonalities — such as posts of idealized versions of men and women, as well as likes being a sign of acceptance — can intersect with sociocultural gender socialization processes (societal over-emphasis on a girl's physical appearance) to create a mental health firestorm. Those who struggle with these intersections and confidence issues find themselves to be vulnerable, and social media addiction has a very strong correlation with negative mental health experiences such as anxiety, loneliness, and other psychological ills. And, what makes social media stand out from other common youth addictions is the widespread exposure of social media to young people. Almost everyone will have some form of social media presence throughout high school and college. And while other addictions are socially known to have dangerous effects, social media addiction isn't as well known. There is much less research on the topic despite how widespread social media is among youth.

As for general harms, the problematic research gaps prevent definitive answers on social media use. There are significant research gaps within social media effects on general psychological well-being. This paper set out to answer these questions, but there is great difficulty in making conclusive statements because of how different everyone's social media experience can be. There has to be more research done on the impact of jealousy and the fear of missing out — whether seeing posts of friends participating in fun activities without you leads immediately to negative mental experiences. There are research gaps in whether increased social media use correlates to anxiety in general. More research has to be done tracking suicide deaths as a correlation to social media. It appears social media effects are more dependent on the person, rather than the inherent nature of social media. However, it is this inherent nature of social media that can affect those who are vulnerable, due to social or societal factors.

One interesting idea presented was the correlation between social media and insomnia. A study collected data on people with self-described social media use disorder, and the data asked them about how well they slept at night. The study showed a correlation between posting on social media and insomnia. The idea has merit; young people may anxiously await responses to their posts and texts, and they may be wondering how many likes they get. Likes are a reward system, and they describe abstract things such as validation or exposure. People react very differently to likes. Some people react considerably to 'likes' and are very anxious about receiving them, explaining insomnia. This anxiousness to receive likes may signify a

prioritization of online social acceptance as opposed to in-person. This can be explained by a lack of intimacy and value in one's social relationships and personal social issues. For these people, it is not recommended to invest heavily in social media. It is unlikely those with strong in-person relationships will struggle with social media addiction, and it is unlikely social media will negatively affect these people. Another topic addressed was loneliness. While the data connecting social media to loneliness is mixed, the actual understanding of loneliness is clear. Loneliness is when an individual perceives a lack of meaning in relationships. Social media's design can explain instances of loneliness. If someone has very disconnected relationships through social media, they can experience this. Social media's ability to promote casual and disconnected relationships can lead to loneliness. The antidote to this unpleasant mental experience while on social media is to use the app to improve in-person relationships. And, prioritizing meaningful sources of communication (such as video calls) and mutual understanding can reduce mental distress.

Despite this, there are significant positives to social media use. Studies found that teen participants felt more connected to their friends and family through social media. Social media is a tool to improve present relationships. Many aspects of social media are considered therapeutic and incredibly positive — being described as humorous coping. Sending direct messages and watching or sharing funny videos with your friends is inherently positive and can reduce loneliness. One can have quality connections on social media through direct messages and video calling. Most studies point towards more "meaningful" forms of social connection as beneficial to our social well-being. Additionally, for marginalized communities, social media plays a big role in promoting improved mental health.

Social media also plays a big role in promoting LGBTQ youth's confidence and social well-being. They are eager to form social connections online especially when they are based in rural areas. The lack of acceptance for LGBTQ youth in rural areas is an issue social media can address: finding people similar to you when you come from an environment that doesn't easily accept your self-expression. Social media provides an anonymous environment where youth can freely express themselves. Having access to a large social media community makes it easier to find people with similar interests and qualities. However, much of LGBTQ youth's confidence and value systems are built off of and are more dependent on social media. There are research gaps as to whether social media relationships can replace in-person relationships in quality and meaningfulness, and whether there are potential negative mental health impacts in the future. I believe that there is a need for more widespread acceptance of LGBTQ youth in rural areas.

The prevalence of social justice movements in our everyday lives has been increasing. With the killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and George Floyd, and the subsequent media exposure, many social justice movements are becoming a larger part of people's lives. Designers and architects who design hospitals and public buildings are increasingly inspired by

important social concepts such as diversity and equity. Most of the people who frequent public buildings feel more comfortable when businesses and society take important stances on meaningful social issues. There are many positives to involvement in social justice movements especially for young people. Youth need to think critically about social justice and important discussions. However, they can be exposed to the negative impacts of social media. With social justice movements using social media to connect with a greater audience, youth of color can be exposed to hate speech and cyber racism. They can be exposed to videos of social injustice, where people who look just like them are being harmed and attacked in those videos. Overall, social media racism and discrimination correlate to depressive symptoms and anxiety. This can be due to people who disagree with the social issue, as well as trolls and bigots who can promote hate speech. Widespread videos of violence towards people of color can have negative mental health outcomes. Viral videos of the detainment of undocumented immigrants in cages, as well as police killings of unarmed citizens, contribute to post-traumatic stress disorder and depressive symptoms. These videos importantly call attention to these appalling injustices, but they can be mentally traumatizing to people who identify with those in the videos.

In young people especially, negative images and stereotypes can prompt shame, anger, and lower self-esteem. Multiple studies find that most people need media, and this media can be a platform for stereotypes and anger to spread. A great example of media bias was during Hurricane Katrina. News articles covering the situation covered people of different racial groups in questionably different ways. Before his most recent controversies, Kanye West made a famous statement in an interview about the situation, "The way the media portrays [African Americans], if you see a black family [the media] says they are looting, if you see a white family they are looking for food." These negative stereotypes are hurtful and should be called out. The media portrayal of white people was people that everyone could relate to. The portrayal of black people as looters and rioters continues a legacy of poor media depiction. It is difficult for that image to wear off, and these images greatly damage self-esteem and perpetuate impacts in aspects of daily life.

COVID-19 led to a dramatic increase in hateful comments. Very traumatic world moments can cause an increase in hate speech. Sadly, people vent their anger and sometimes cope with traumatic events through hate speech. These events can include police killings, world events, and elections. While we shouldn't sympathize with hate speech, we should understand its roots and impacts, and find a way to address it. Social media's nature has to be understood as well. Social media has many positive impacts: providing a safe space for people with disabilities to communicate, connecting high-risk individuals to mental health services, and generally connecting with others. However, there are potential issues that are exacerbated by pre-existing personal problems. In general, young people should limit their social media usage to healthy amounts to prevent harmful effects. At-risk youth due to personal and social issues should limit social media use and prioritize addressing these issues first. All problems are likely to get worse

before they get better, which is why it may be necessary for there to be an age cap to mitigate the harmful effects of social media.

Authors Note

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