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Social Media and Wellbeing

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Social Media and Wellbeing: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This psychology thesis paper investigates the existing body of scientific literature surrounding the effects of social media on the wellbeing of adolescents and adults ages 18-29. The current body of scientific literature supports the overall finding that social media has a negative impact not only on mental health, but on physical health. There are also key findings showing the impact of social media on other facets of life such as sleep patterns, social interactions, and physical activity. Current intervention therapies need to be revisited and the DSM categorization of social media addiction needs to be investigated further.

Introduction

In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, transforming the way we communicate, interact, and share information (Nair, 2023). With the proliferation of smartphones and the widespread availability of internet access, social media use has skyrocketed (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2023). Social media platforms have provided unprecedented opportunities for people to connect with others, share information, and express themselves. However, the ease of access, constant connectivity, and addictive nature of social media have resulted in excessive usage patterns and negative effects on mental health (Hou et al., 2019).

Social media has become an essential part of our lives in this digital era and its usage has allowed people to stay connected despite long distances, explore their hobbies and interests, and even provided an online marketplace. However, its increased usage has also resulted in a considerable impact on various aspects of our lives, including mental health (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2020). The consequences of social media usage are both positive and negative, with recent studies indicating its adverse effects on mental health (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2020). The emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook (launched 2004) Instagram (launched 2010), Twitter (launched 2006), Snapchat (launched 2011), among others, has fundamentally transformed the way people communicate and interact with one another (Zhong, 2022).

Numerous studies have suggested that increased social media use is associated with a wide range of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem. The use of social media has been linked to negative impacts on body image, self-worth, social comparison, and fear of missing out (FOMO) (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2020). The idealized representations of lifestyles, appearances, and achievements portrayed on social media can create

unrealistic standards and foster feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Moreover, constant engagement with social media can disrupt sleep patterns, reduce in-person social interactions, and increase social isolation, further exacerbating mental health problems (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2020).

The negative effects of social media on mental health are not limited to specific populations, but rather cut across diverse age groups, genders, education levels, and even income (Pew Research Center, 2021). Adolescents and young adults, in particular, are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of social media due to their heavy reliance on these platforms for social interaction and identity formation (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2020). However, older adults, who may use social media for different purposes, such as maintaining social connections or staying updated with news and events, show more positive effects with social media use. One study used the Health and Retirement survey and found that senior citizens' risk of developing depression went down by 33% (Cotten et al., 2014). While senior citizens can expect to see slight mental health benefits from using social media, the overwhelming evidence from scientific literature shows how social media is negatively impacting the health of users who are in their teenage years up to their late 20s.

The implications of the worsening mental health associated with social media use are far-reaching, with significant consequences for individuals, families, communities, and society at large. Mental health problems can impact an individual's overall well-being, including their emotional, cognitive, and physical health (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2020). Given the number of studies showing significant correlations of social media use and worsening mental health conditions with the age group 18-29, this paper will narrow its focus to significant findings among this age group. This serves another purpose which is to keep the findings correlating social media as narrow and concise as the existing body of scientific literature is too broad. Other

articles in the literature include how using social media impacts physical health, regulates emotions, and even how the use of the internet itself can lead to problems in all areas of life.

Given the significant increase in social media use and its detrimental effects on mental health, it is crucial to further investigate and understand this complex phenomenon. This thesis seeks to contribute to the existing body of literature by examining the relationship between social media use and worsening mental health across different populations (specifically including young teenagers to people in their late 20s), exploring the underlying mechanisms and factors that contribute to this relationship, and proposing potential interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on mental health. This thesis paper will also describe a few key positive effects of social media as comparisons to the negative one and offer some generalized statements about the effects of social media.

Negative Findings:

Mental Health:

A recent study by Giuntella et al. (2020) wished to study the lifestyle changes and overall wellness changes in young adults during Covid-19. The researchers studied a group of 682 young adults aged 18-24 and repeated surveys to a group of young adults throughout a period from February 2019 to July 2020. Participants also wore Fitbits to track activity and sleep. Over a 3-month period, average steps (aka time spent walking) went down from 10,000 to 4,600, overall physical activity went down from 4.4 hours to 2.9 hours, sleep increased by 30 minutes, and screen time doubled to 5 hours a day on average. The study mentions that the screen time criterion was strictly controlled for screen time not used for working or for school/college, therefore it was purely for entertainment purposes. The researchers measured mental health

(particularly depression) using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) before and after the lockdown. They found that the risk for participants already at risk for clinical depression went up by 90% from 2 months before the pandemic to the end of April 2020. The CES-D scale scores went from 12.1 on average to 19.5 on average following the end of the lockdown. This is highly important as a 15 on the CES-D is the cut-off score for being diagnosed with clinical depression. This study is one of the latest in the scientific literature surrounding the topic that links increase in screen time to an increased risk of depression. The authors of this study discuss possible reasons that could account for the alarming increase on the CES-D scale and propose physical health as one of the driving factors. One of the central arguments for the mechanisms between physical health and depression the authors present is that screen time affected sleep patterns, which has been documented to increase depressive symptoms. One other possible explanation is the content of the screen time. While screen time use cannot be directly correlated to social media use, a recent statistic by Moody (2023) shows that 1/3 of Americans' screen time is used for social media. This signifies that a large chunk of the screen time studied could be social media use. It could be argued that the decrease in mental health seen in this study could be due to other factors such as an increase in social media usage. As this specific study points to a possible link that could exist between social media usage and mental health, it does not offer a solid conclusion. In order to examine if such a link exists, it is necessary to look to other studies.

One of the most compelling studies which allows the central argument that social media impacts mental health negatively is by Sadagheyani and Tatari (2020). They conducted a meta study which looked at a total of 501 scientific studies spanning the topic of social media and mental health. The researchers then selected 50 studies which had important and significant

findings through the use of three screenings. The first screening scanned through study titles, the second screening studied the abstract, and the third screening selected studies which were only explicitly relevant. The findings were then presented in a table form where specific studies are attributed to each correlated finding. Of note to negative mental health consequences, it was found that social media use has been linked with a) anxiety and depression, b) low self-esteem and poor body image, as well as c) increased risk for suicide and self-harm. The following studies allowed the authors to draw these conclusions:

- A) Depression was linked to social media use across many scientific studies and relevant studies were selected and filtered in a study by McCrae et al. (2017). Two main studies were filtered where one in particular showed a significant increase in baseline depressive mood in 12 months following the participants engaging in social comparisons across various social media platforms (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). Social comparisons in this context meant comparing lifestyles to one another through comparing posts and profiles. The authors made reference to another study which shows how girls might compare photos and judge physical attractiveness. One advantage from this study is that the study population's demographics such as socioeconomic status, gender, and race all matched the demographics from the district where the participants were from. This means that the results from the study can be applied to the population where the participants were from.
- B) To assess the impact of social media usage on body image among adolescent girls, Tiggemann and Slater's (2014) study administered various measures concerning body image and media exposure in the form of a questionnaire to a sample of 189 girls who were 11-12 years old. The results from the questionnaire showed that all of the girls who used the internet had a significant issue with body esteem and wished to achieve a thin

ideal. Of note to this paper, this study found that Facebook users among this group saw a marked increase in body image concerns on their questionnaire (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014).

- C) Hartas (2019) conducted a study to determine if a link existed between parenting, peer groups, and social media with self-harm risk. The authors considered parenting styles such as whether parents are controlling or whether the children were close to the parents. The authors also considered peer group interaction such as bullying, and time spent socializing. Using a self-report questionnaire with six measures regarding the above variables, it was determined that self-harm risk went up together with the hours social media was used in one day. In particular, results showed that participants who spent 5-7 hours using social media had a 44% higher risk for self-harm than those who spent less than 2 hours on social media daily (Hartas, 2019).

While this meta study provides the reader with a tabularized reference of effects and their significant studies, one major criticism of this paper is its use of the word “cause” when speaking about the effects of using social media from different studies. Implying causation in this context would be improper as the studies presented in the table only show a strong correlation, meaning that other factors could still be responsible for the negative effects. Additionally, the paper presents very little information regarding the study methods, participants, and study measures. This leaves a lot of room for doubt when trying to determine a general correlation effect on negative mental health from social media. However, this study is balanced in that it also presents negative effects as it relates to physical health, and also presents positive effects for both physical and mental health.

Since the previous two studies still leave room for doubt as to whether social media plays a role in worsening mental health, another way to investigate the relationship between social media and declining mental health is to look to exploratory survey studies. These studies can be used to directly survey the population and then empirically code their responses in a manner that will be significant to the scientific community. These studies are important because they do not have the limitations of a classical empirical study and are relatively easy for the general population to understand. Classical empirical studies have strict single blind or double-blind procedures and are limited to processing a single independent variable in order to measure a dependent variable. When both of these limitations are considered, one can see why empirical studies might be more time-consuming and tougher for the general public to understand. One exploratory study by O'Reilly et al., 2018 investigates empirically how social media is viewed by adolescents. The researchers wished to investigate the question, "What do adolescents think of social media and its relevance to mental health and emotional wellbeing?" (O'Reilly et al., 2018). The participants were 54 adolescents aged 11-18. They were divided into 6 focus groups who got the same questions across 3 months in 2016. The focus groups were then asked to participate in a discussion led by a researcher with each focus group designated with three coders. The coders' job was to identify common words heard and then code these accordingly. This method allows exploratory studies like this one to still retain empirical value. The researchers found an overwhelming response from the focus groups who expressed that they believed that social media was not good for their mental health. There were three main themes that this study found from the focus groups- 1) Social media causes stress, depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation, 2) social media leads to bullying and trolling, and 3) social media is addictive. Interestingly, they found that adolescents and children believed that social media was not good

for *others'* mental health. They almost never self-identified with the above themes but rather seemed to say it was happening to the others using social media. This is important as it relates to addiction because the focus groups did not feel as if they were vulnerable to any effects that social media could cause. This point of view could lead to an overuse of social media as it creates a feeling that nothing negative could ever come out of their use of social media. This could lead to a cyclical effect where their consumption increases as their addiction to it increases, and the negative impacts could keep increasing as well. One major criticism of this study is its use of coders, which decreases the validity of the study. This is because coders could be biased to hear what the researcher wishes to study and thus coders may specifically watch for words that tie into the general theme of the study. However, given that the coders identified the three main themes, the fact that the adolescents even identified social media with negative outcomes at all is a cause for concern itself.

Although the age groups in the studies discussed thus far differed, the main investigation is whether social media affects well-being in general for young children, adolescents, and those that fall in the age group described in the introduction. Additionally, the fact that there are not enough studies to make a case for a specific age group indicates that there is a massive research gap and that further research into a specific age group needs to be conducted.

The findings in the studies presented so far have lent their support to the argument that social media might have some kind of negative role in mental health decline. However, the next study that will be presented is crucial in cementing this argument. This study is perhaps the most valuable in the existing scientific literature on this topic as it spans the development of negative mental health and the rise of social media side-by-side across many years in a college aged population. A study by Braghieri et al., 2022 looked at the long-term use of social media on mental

health by following the development and growth of Facebook while comparing mental health through many years. The participants were university students enrolled in 775 USA universities, and they were all assessed using the USA Universities-wide National College Health Assessment (NCHA). A quasi-experiment was set with a difference-in-differences design to look at the effects of the introduction of Facebook. In simpler terms, the experiment looked at the NCHA survey before and after the implementation of Facebook and then compared it to which college the student attends. Controlling for this last factor is very important because this allows the researchers to rule out confounding variables. The figure the researchers provide using a back-of-the-envelope calculation is that the introduction of Facebook is directly responsible for a 24% increase in severe depression. The researchers found that the students who were already susceptible to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder saw the most effect on their mental health. These effects were: 1) an increase in depression diagnoses, 2) a marked increase in the use of medications for depression, and 3) an increase in psychotherapy for depression (Braghieri et al., 2022). There was also a finding which adds to the central argument where the negative mental health effects increased with the amount of time the college students used Facebook. Lastly, the researchers found that the negative effects did not just encompass worsening mental health but rather extended into the students' academic performance. This point will be re-visited at a later time in this paper. While this study is very valuable to the current scientific literature, it is not without its faults. The researchers themselves admit that they could not accurately consider whether long time social media users found ways to solve their negative effects from using Facebook (self-regulation). Additionally, the researchers point out that since this study relied on a survey, it falls under all the criticisms that survey studies do. The main concern is that participants will inflate their answers due to recall bias (Braghieri et al., 2022).

The literature surrounding this topic is very narrow as there are not enough new studies that directly look into the relationship between social media usage and mental health. Very few studies specifically investigate the two matters in one study which makes it necessary to look back towards slightly older scientific studies from around 10 years ago when social media was introduced to really understand how social media could be affecting mental health. Essentially, it is not enough to simply put forth the idea that social media is linked with bad mental health, but rather it is necessary to study the specific ways in which it might affect mental health. Looking to older studies allows one to understand the mechanism by which social media use is affecting mental health. Using an older study also highlights the importance of widening the research in this field. There is simply not enough research into this area. A 2014 study (Lloyd, 2014) wished to study the overall mechanisms into how social media affected mental health. The author started a scientific literature review as a previous paper showed a staggering statistic that 99% of 12–15-year-olds used the internet (Ofcom, 2013). The author wished to review causes for mental health decline in adolescent children who used the internet. The author highlights a study by the EU Kids Online network which found four important mechanisms as to how adolescents' mental health could be affected by using the internet: 1) violent videos, 2) pornography, 3) unwanted commercials, 4) extremist views (examples include suicide pact websites) (Lloyd, 2014). This paper uses this study because although the author describes how overall internet usage can affect mental health, over the past decade, social media itself has changed. Now, users can expect to find all of these four things on all social media sites, and hence this study's findings become applicable to today's problems as one can find all of these things circulating across social media. This same study found that there is a connection between internet use and cyberbullying, which is well-documented as causing a wide array of mental health issues (Alcera, 2020). Although the author presents good arguments

regarding the mechanisms as to how a mental health decline may occur, they also point to the fact that not many who use the internet actually experience a mental health decline (Alcera, 2020).

While this was true many years ago, the literature surrounding this has changed, as evidenced by previous studies. The reason the author brings up this finding was to illustrate the fact that social media is not explicitly bad for young people. The author highlights this by looking at some of the positive effects that social networking sites (aka social media sites) can generate. The studies used serve this paper's purpose specifically as it looks at social networking sites rather than internet usage in general. The past few studies have demonstrated negative findings directly relating to social media use. Next, the paper will look at positive findings related to using social media.

Positive Findings:

The previous study (Lloyd, 2014) looked at the positive effects that could come about from teenagers and adolescents engaging with social networking sites (SNS) and found that the most important benefit comes from helping teenagers form their self-identity. Lloyd (2014) says, "...SNSs have become such a feature in the life of a young person because it facilitates both aims: allowing individuals the chance to express themselves personally within the context of a larger social group." (p.4). What the author means by a larger social group in this context is the fact that SNSs allows teenagers to find like-minded people and to form a group with them. Although they are a part of a larger group, the positive effect of SNS is that they can still be themselves and do not have to change their views to conform with the group.

The previous meta study by Sadagheyani and Tatari (2020) also proved positive effects throughout the significant scientific studies along with the negative effects. The table shows that using social media is associated with the following benefits: a) self-expression, b) emotional support, c) increased self-esteem, and d) providing mental health resources. Each of these benefits

has at least one reference, and many have multiple showing a robust support for the benefits. The following are specific studies that were used as references:

- A) Self-expression is one of the most obvious benefit that can be derived from social media use. Orehek & Human's (2017) study shows that a person's Tweets can be accurately understood by the target audience, and the Tweeter is thus able to accurately express their thoughts and feelings. This study had their 128 undergraduate participants complete self-reports which assessed their impulsivity, attachment style, and self-esteem. Then, 10 selected Tweets were sent for them to assess. By comparing both the baseline self-reports as well as the responses to 10 Tweet assessments, the researcher investigated whether the audience found the Tweets similar to their baseline personality. Essentially- did the audience understand what the Tweeter was expressing and was it similar to their actual personality traits? The results from the statistical analysis showed that there was a significant level of accuracy when it came to self-esteem and positive traits (Orehek & Human, 2017).
- B) Social media usage has also been reported to have a role in emotional support. According to a statistic, "Nearly seven in 10 teens report receiving support on social media during tough or challenging times... – suggesting social media may be a catalyst for increased levels of this support." (RSPH, 2017).
- C) A study by Ellison et al. (2007) investigated how undergraduate students at Michigan State University interacted with one another using Facebook. One of the concepts the researchers wanted to study in detail is social capital. Kenton explains, "social capital refers to a positive product of human interaction" (2022). Several self-reports were used to assess the community and then standard statistical analysis was performed. The researchers found that

Facebook use was correlated strongly with bridging capital, which is the level at which Facebook friendships turned into personal relationships. The researchers found that those with low bridging capital had low-self-esteem and low satisfaction with their life at MSU and found the converse to be true as well (Ellison et al., 2007).

D) Social media has been shown to be a valuable resource for mental health screenings in teenagers and can serve as a bridge for positive interventions. This area of research represents a merging of computer science, data analytics, and psychology. One such study by Prabu and Stephen (2019) successfully designed an algorithm that was able to accurately predict depressive Tweets and detect whether a person was likely to be going through a depressive episode. The researchers selected certain keywords that would allow them to identify whether a user was depressed, and then created a small Twitter user list. They then examined all the Tweets the user made and collected various data point using data mining. After data mining, each Tweet was assigned sentiment values with a value of -1 to +1, resulting in an average score. The researchers concluded that this algorithm could predict whether the user was likely to be in a depressive mood by looking at the time of the Tweet or even the location of the Tweeter. The researchers then confirmed the likelihood of the user's depression with a psychologist. This algorithm could allow social media companies to detect and warn the user about an imminent depressive episode. This algorithm could be scaled to include other mental health conditions which arms the user with an early warning system.

Discussion:

This discussion will serve as a roadmap for the readers. It will provide the following in an attempt to clearly contextualize the key findings of this literature review: a) summarization of

key findings, b) research paper synthesis, c) implication of the findings and future intervention strategies, and d) limitations and considerations.

Summarization of key findings:

This literature review has summarized the positive and negative impacts of overall social media use across many social media sites and across many different ages, genders, and other categories. While this may provide a general overall set of findings, it is important to consider that most of the studies presented had participants that were in the midst of their undergraduate studies, with the average age of an undergraduate student being between 18 and 24 years old (The Hamilton Project, 2017). As the Pew Research Center found that the age group that regularly (?) used at least one social media site in the USA was the age group 18-29 (Pew Research Center, 2021), this gives most studies added validity. That is, since this age group uses at least one social media site, the findings regarding social media use might be applicable for them in particular. Along the same lines, most of the studies presented chiefly studied Facebook as the social networking platform, with a minority choosing platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, etc. This is in-line with the global statistics ranking Facebook as the number one social networking site, with just under 3 billion users worldwide, which represents close to 40% of the world's population (Lua, 2023). Combining the above statistics allows this literature review's findings to be considered narrow and significant for the average undergraduate using popular social media sites.

Studies which showed negative findings varied in their methodologies, statistical analyses, as well as their self-report measures for participants. However, their results often overlapped with each other showing that despite studies having different methods of investigating correlational relationships, the end relationship between social media and mental

health were the same. The most important findings showed that social media were strongly associated with depression (Cotton et al., 2014), poor self-esteem (O'Reilly et al., 2018), poor body image (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014), and higher risk of self-harm (Hartas, 2019). While the above findings present a condensed list of problems, other findings associate negative mental health with exposure to violent videos, pornography, unwanted ads, and cyberbullying (Lloyd, 2014). In this manner, the negative effects associated with using social media and the possible mechanisms leading to such effects were discussed.

In order to present the full picture of social media's impact on the well-being of its common users, it was necessary to look to the positive benefits from using it. Presenting these positive benefits then allows readers to obtain a full picture. Although the literature studies examined primarily used self-report measures to examine the positive benefits, the studies mostly had large sample sizes and had careful controlled statistical analyses. This supports the findings as well as giving the positive findings the same validity as the negative findings. The positive findings were as follows: increased self-identity (Lloyd, 2014), self-expression (Orehek & Human, 2017), serve as emotional support (RSPH, 2017), increased self-esteem (Ellison et al., 2007), and predict depression through mental health screenings (Prabu & Stephen, 2019). Moreover, presenting both findings may persuade the lay person engaging with social media to adopt a careful approach to consuming it for long periods of time. That is, the positive benefits may entice a person to engage with it while the negative consequences might encourage them to not engage in its overuse.

Scientific studies across the years have shown both positive and negative effects for social media, and determining whether social media use is inherently positive or negative is nearly impossible as the studies span various generations, kinds of social medias, ages, gender,

and other background information. More research in both horizontal and longitudinal manners is needed to develop the complete picture regarding social media's effects. However, given the prevalence of social media and its far reach, it is crucial that researchers take a deep look into its potential effects. Current research that was presented in this literature review points to some very alarming effects and given that the effects are so severe, it may be necessary to re-visit how young adolescents and young adults view and interact with social media. Heavier warnings and higher and stricter age restrictions might need to be placed on social media websites so that the problem of young people being caught up in the potential negative effects can be curbed upstream.

Current Interventions and Disease Identification:

Assessing social media's impact on mental health is a unique challenge because of the current approach taken by the American medical system. The American medical system currently does not include social media addiction as a category in the DSM (Block, 2008), despite the fact that about 10% of social media users are highly at-risk for social media addiction (Ricci, 2018). While the figure 10% may sound small, when factoring in the fact that there are 4.48 billion social media users worldwide, that points to about 448 million users at risk of addiction (Woodward, 2023). As social media is not categorized as a mental disease in the United States, it is currently viewed as a social problem, and it is thus not taken seriously as it should be by researchers and laypeople alike. Given the statistics available, the sheer number of people at risk should be enough reason to begin further research. If social media addiction is categorized in the DSM as a mental disease, it would help provide as a push for researchers to examine the current body of work, identify gaps, and take research forward. Categorizing social media addiction as a disease in the DSM V opens the doors for providers to treat addiction as well as alert most users

to the imminent danger of overuse. When trying to understand how the United States should categorize and treat social media addiction, one could look to other countries' perspectives on the issue. Other countries like China have currently taken a serious stance against social media addiction with drastic restrictions placed on young adults and adolescents. In fact, China was one of the first countries to take an early stance against social media addiction, having categorized it as a disease in 2008 (Williams, 2008). The following methods were implemented by China in 2021 in an attempt to curb young children and teenagers' use of Douyin which is the Chinese version of a popular app named TikTok (Kantrowitz, 2021)-

- 1) Limiting the use of the app to 40 minutes a day.
- 2) Using an app blackout between 10 pm to 6 am so young children and teenagers cannot use the app late into the night. This is in an attempt to restore normal circadian rhythms of sleep and reduce social pressure.
- 3) Showing more educational content to children such as science experiments, art exhibitions, etc. This is used to encourage children to take an interest in subjects which they could make a career out of.
- 4) Utilizing a five second pause between each video and incorporating positive messages such as "go to bed".

Apart from these relatively softer interventions, some older Chinese generations implemented the use of internet addiction boot camps where affected teenagers and children are forcefully kept away from any form of social media. These boot camps claim to instill a sense of discipline while at the same time allowing children and teenagers to reflect on their use of the internet (Phillips, 2017). However helpful these Chinese internet bootcamps claimed to be, many of them were reportedly using drastic punishments and military discipline measures in an attempt

to cure the young addicts. While the USA should not necessarily have to adopt China's drastic measures, it would certainly benefit from considering implementing the softer interventions that China has long since implemented.

One more country that is worth mentioning for its efforts in addressing the issue of social media in young people is Italy. Italy recently released its National Digital School Plan which outlines certain policies that the Italian school system will implement (European Commission, 2023). In this school plan, Italy has outlined its intentions to create educated social media users who are capable of critical thinking. One of the ways Italy has planned on achieving this goal is promoting media literacy and online safety both through non-formal and informal learning. Although it is not expressly stated what the Commission means by both of these forms of learning, it can be assumed that both styles will be carried out in a school setting with non-profit organizations teaching children how to use the internet responsibly and safely. The other approach the Commission takes is directly addressing the risks that social media carries directly by increasing children's awareness through "Parole Ostili", which is an awareness against violence using words. Lastly, Italian schools teach about online cyberbullying to address both victims and aggressors. In this way victims can learn about the appropriate methods to deal with cyberbullying should it happen as well as the resources that can support them. Additionally, this program also teaches aggressors the impacts cyberbullying has and raises awareness about it. If the USA were to implement modified versions of China's softer internet limitations and Italy's education system, there would be fewer negative effects stemming from young people using social media as the problem could be curbed upstream.

Limitations, Considerations, and Conclusions:

When considering social media's impact on well-being, it is necessary to consider how well-being is defined. Using the traditional definition that well-being is, "a state of being happy, healthy, or happy" (Oxford), this literature review examined how social media impacted its user's mental state. Considering all the different aspects of health, listing how social media impacts all aspects of health would provide a broad scope which would not relay any meaningful and significant information, mental health was specifically chosen. Therefore, one of the major limitations of this literature study is failing to showcase and/or explain how social media affects other forms of well-being. Even though mental health was specifically chosen for this study, physical health was still considered to be one of the primary driving mechanisms impacting mental health making the two near inseparable. Mechanisms linking physical health and mental health discussed above support this claim with sleep being an important example.

Driving this research forward is of utmost importance given the increasing statistics and alarming findings presented in this paper. Other research that should be undertaken are longitudinal studies that follow the rise of relatively new social media platforms Discord and Instagram. Longitudinal studies would follow one population who use one particular social media more which would allow researchers to see what happens with long-term use. Several more research ideas could be derived from long-term studies such as comparisons between short-term use and long-term use, the strength and duration of any negative effects, as well as addiction research. Future directives and literature reviews should consider questions of directionality when answering the question "Does social media impact mental health" as it could certainly be the case that negative mental health conditions themselves could lead a user to seek more social media. Inquiring into this topic further could yield tremendous benefits to a large population as the world seeks to re-connect after the Covid-19 pandemic and as we find

ourselves more connected than ever to the online world. Researching social media use and its effect on well-being should be a top priority for scholars because the use of social networking sites will only continue to grow as newer and more convenient (and potentially addictive) apps surface. Future research would help set up the next generation with the tools they need to successfully navigate and enjoy the digital world.

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