

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract: *This article discusses how social media affects human psychology, focusing on both its positive and negative influences. It explores how constant online communication changes people's emotion, behavior and self-perception.*

Key words: *social media, psychology, online life, technology, depression, digital communication.*

INTRODUCTION.

In recent years, social media has become a pivotal part of people's daily lives. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok allow users to connect, share and communicate instantly. However, the influence of social media on human psychology has raised serious concerns. This article aims to explore how social media affects people's behavior and mental health, highlighting both its good and bad sides.

Social media: Social media can bring about a great deal of change to human behavior, attitudes, or habits. They can be used to spread misconceptions about health or various diseases and can also be used to correct them is conceptions of people about those diseases. As in the case of HIV/AIDS, it was formerly a misconception (for example, it was circulated on social media that one could be infected just by touching an infected person), and the same misconception was also cleared through social media, television, radio, and other forms of media. Social media platforms have been used to spread information to people and correct or create awareness of so many other diseases that have gone through some misconceptions. Social media platforms have been used to spread misinformation (Merchant & Lurie, 2020), including positive information exchange during pandemics (COVID-19) (Zhao & Zhao, 2020). The exact reasons might be complicated, but some points can be pinpointed by relating them to social media behaviors (King University Online, 2019):

- To feel safe: Some social media users tend to feel safe when they post about their physical, mental, and financial security online. Based on this, people should be made to understand that their postings should also be safe.
- To build their esteem: People are suffering from low self-esteem but feel comfortable posting online because it gives them the freedom of expression that they cannot have in the real world. The online freedom of expression should be guided towards the positive use and sharing of verified health information such as during pandemic outbreaks.
- To gain physiological needs: Some people post online to give support or be a beneficiary of their loved ones' health or well-being.
- To feel loved and to belong: Some people post for the sake of being accepted or to feel loved by some group of persons or to have the feeling of been socially accepted. Their social posting should be acceptable to loved ones and the social media community at large.
- To gain the feeling of self-actualization: People post to pass a message of self-actualization to online users, such as sharing their success stories online and many others. These include graduations, getting a new job when a new project has been completed, travelling outside their country, and others.

To maximise their attractiveness: People who have a negative view of themselves get motivated by social media to build an entirely different identity. Social media has given people the avenue to trick others into viewing

them as a different personality, thereby pushing them into telling lies and fabricating their physical and psychological identities to present themselves to be more attractive than they are (King University Online, 2019).

The term psychology originated —from two Greek words, *psyche*”, which means —soul, spirit or mind, and —*logos*”, meaning the —study of a subject (Weiten, 2013:3) or humans. The study of psychology involves the human mind and behavior, which is called human psychology (Weiten, 2013). Human psychology is said to be the science that studies the mind and human behavior, which includes mental processes, feelings, and desires. Human psychological health can be regarded as a branch of psychology.

To understand the impacts of social media news on human (users) psychology, Plotnik and Kouyoumdjian (2013) suggest that the extent to which human psychology relates to events is regulated by their actions to describe, explain, predict, and control the behavior and mental processes of others. These four variables (describe, explain, predict and control) influence how humans (users) view and react to social media news, informing and reforming views, options, and human associations. Forming and reforming associations that direct and wheel human actions are methods used by human beings to express their nature (Mehrajet al., 2014). These associations are accountable for setting principles to be shadowed, preserved, liberating, and restraining human actions, which can be perceived as an accomplishment of life. The level of health-related news spreading on social media is built on user associations. This association is accountable for the accomplishment of life and it is referred to as society’ (Mehrajet al., 2014). Human beings in every society have gone through one problem or the other, including those in modern societies, and their behavior has been affected by most of these things – one of them being social media.

The Role of Social Media News on Human Psychology

Various factors link social media news and human psychology. Social media can be referred to as sedentary behavior, which, when abused, can create health risks to the human body and psychological state. A debate is ongoing on the negative impacts of social media on users (Abbas, Aman, Nurunnabi & Bano, 2019). For example, multitasking is familiar to social media users, giving them access to multiple platforms (Keles, McCrae & Grealish, 2019). Keles et al. (2019) showed that multitasking on social media platforms foretells signs of psychological disorders. It was also discovered that the number of social media accounts has a connection to the level of nervousness due to overpowering requests. Another link to social media and human psychology is social support. According to Keles et al. (2019), social media affects helping people build their relationships with existing friends and forming new friends online. The researchers believed social media helps users reduce their feeling of loneliness and social isolation and, in turn, plays its role in their psychological health. However, it was perceived that active social media users are happier because of online networking and connectivity; when slightly offline, they are psychologically dissatisfied (Christensen, 2018). People deprived of social support are expected to suffer from psychological problems such as anxiety, stress, depression, and psychological distress compared to people with high social support from relatives, associates, and neighbors (Keles et al., 2019). Zhang and Ma (2020) found that the pandemic outbreak, COVID-19, was associated with people’s psychological state being affected due to the information being released on social media platforms.

Conclusion

The impact of social media platforms on the health sectors and human psychology cannot be underrated. The effects are visible in human daily life and activities. Social media platforms enable the distribution of health news and information. This paper provided the effects of social media news on human psychology during pandemic outbreaks, the positive and negative impacts, the role of social media news on human psychology. The study further highlight show social media platforms can be used to manage human psychology during pandemic outbreaks. The management and control of social media information can lead to a positive impact on these users.

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