


Chapter 3

Exploring the Digital Abyss: The Consequences of Problematic Social Media Use on Mental Wellbeing

Elaine Mora

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1355-5091>

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the impact of problematic social media use on mental well-being, examining its diverse effects across various age groups and demographics, including individuals with disabilities. It synthesizes empirical research and practical insights and intends to create awareness regarding the detriments of excessive social media engagement, while also offering effective strategies for treatment and intervention. The chapter delves into the symptoms of social media addiction, like excessive use and withdrawal, and outlines treatment options, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), group therapy, and the promotion of digital literacy. By integrating robust case studies, empirical research, and relevant statistical analyses, this chapter aims to clarify the underlying issues surrounding problematic social media use, highlight its varied implications, and propose effective strategies for treatment and intervention.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-0518-9.ch003

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, social media has profoundly reshaped how individuals connect, communicate, and perceive the world around them. Platforms like Facebook, Myspace, Instagram, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube, WhatsApp, Reddit, and TikTok have become ubiquitous, prompting widespread conversations concerning their influence on mental health. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of social media and its effects on individuals, highlighting its potential for both positive and negative outcomes. Although these digital spaces offer unprecedented opportunities for connection and information sharing, they have also contributed to the emergence of behavioral addictions, often characterized by compulsive platform use, which can have detrimental consequences for personal, social, and professional spheres (Tang et al., 2017). This chapter examines the complex phenomenon of social media addiction, investigating its manifestations across diverse populations, encompassing adolescents, adults, older adults, and individuals with disabilities. The increasing integration of social media into everyday life has fueled significant debate regarding its effects on mental well-being. While providing tools for instantaneous connection and global communication, social media environments can also inadvertently encourage excessive engagement, leading to potentially harmful behaviors and outcomes (Blackwell et al., 2017).

According to the Pew Research Center (2021), approximately 69% of U.S. adults and an overwhelming 84% of adolescents report using social media regularly, raising significant concerns about mental health and addiction-related behaviors. The Pew Research Center's survey also revealed significant differences across age groups, gender, and ethnicity in social media platform usage. For example, they found that age significantly correlated with platform preference and engagement, with YouTube usage high across all age groups (93% of 18–29-year-olds). Similarly, Facebook usage was prevalent among this group (68%). Instagram and Snapchat, according to the Pew Research Center (2024), were more popular among younger adults, decreasing with age, with only 19% of those 65+ using Instagram and 4% using Snapchat. The Pew Research Center (2024) also found that gender influenced social media habits, with women reporting higher use of Facebook (78%) than men (61%). Women also tended to use Instagram, Pinterest, and TikTok more than men. Men, however, used Reddit and X (formerly Twitter) more than women (Pew Research Center, 2024).

Therefore, it is essential to consider these findings in the context of developing effective strategies to promote digital literacy and responsible social media use among diverse user groups. By integrating robust case studies, empirical research, and relevant statistical analyses, this chapter aims to clarify the underlying issues surrounding problematic social media use, highlight its varied implications, and propose effective strategies for treatment and intervention.

28 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/exploring-the-digital-abysse/383381

Related Content

August Bover, "El contagi" (2021): Pandemic, Isolation, and the Therapeutic Power of Poetry

Veronica Orazi (2023). *Managing Pandemic Isolation With Literature as Therapy* (pp. 63-85).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/august-bover-el-contagi-2021/314169

Clicks and Cravings: The Psychology of Smartphone and Social Media Addiction

Sowmya D. S., V. Anokha and L. Nithya (2025). *Smartphone Addiction, Phone Snubbing, and Effects on Interpersonal Relationships and Mental Health* (pp. 211-236).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/clicks-and-cravings/374886

Street Children

Tsungirirai Lucas (2022). *Provision of Psychosocial Support and Education of Vulnerable Children* (pp. 208-226).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/street-children/298253

Adoption

Catherine J. Howe and Laura F. Weber (2023). *The Role of Child Life Specialists in Community Settings* (pp. 341-354).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/adoption/313819

Challenging Picturebooks and Domestic Geographies: A Multimodal Learning Path to Discuss the Consequences of the COVID-19 Lockdowns in the Classroom

Margarida Castellano Sanz (2023). *Managing Pandemic Isolation With Literature as Therapy* (pp. 213-235).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/challenging-picturebooks-and-domestic-geographies/314179