

Exposure to Social Media Negativity Among Youth: Assessing the Hidden Mental Health Implications

Divya Wankhade

Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India

Abstract:

The extensive use of social media among young individuals has raised concerns about its cognitive and emotional effects. Prior research has demonstrated that frequent exposure to online negativity—including cyberbullying, hate speech, toxic interactions, and maladaptive behavioral patterns—can exacerbate stress, anxiety, insecurity, poor self-esteem, and depression among adolescents or developing brains. Continuous engagement with detrimental content may also lead to cognitive overload, reduced attention spans, and impaired decision-making. Additionally, social comparison and the fear of missing out (FOMO) can undermine self-esteem and distort perceptions of reality.

Long-term exposure to such negativity can shape neural pathways, alter reward systems, and diminish sensitivity to positive real-world experiences. These neurological alterations may influence emotional regulation, social cognition, and executive functions, thereby potentially fostering addictive behaviours. Persistent negativity can also result in a more pessimistic worldview. Consequently, promoting digital literacy and resilience is essential to help adolescents navigate online environments in healthier ways. By encouraging constructive digital engagement and emotional intelligence, targeted interventions can mitigate these risks and enhance overall well-being. This comprehension significantly contributes to both psychological theory and practical initiatives aimed at improving youth mental health in the digital era.

Keywords:

Social Media, Adolescents, Online Negativity, Mental Health, Cognitive Development, Emotional Well-Being, Digital Literacy, Resilience, FOMO, Neural Pathways, Psychological Effects.