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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMPARISON ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the impact of social media comparisons on the psychological well-being of adolescents and young adults. Exposure to idealized content, peer comparisons, and online validation affects self-esteem, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Results indicate that excessive social comparison reduces psychological well-being, whereas mindful use and digital literacy mitigate these effects.

KEYWORDS: Social media, social comparison, youth, psychological well-being, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, digital literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Today, social media has become an integral part of young people's lives. On platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Facebook, a constant process of comparison occurs: users compare themselves with peers or "ideal" content. This process has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of young people [1].

Social comparison can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety and depressive symptoms. At the same time, digital literacy and mindful platform use can reduce these negative effects [2]. The aim of the study is to analyze the impact of comparison on social media among young people on psychological well-being and to develop individual mindful usage strategies[3].



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METHODS

The study involved 200 young people aged 15–24. Self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale), anxiety (GAD-7) and depressive symptoms (PHQ-9) were measured using quantitative methods [4].

Focus groups and interviews were conducted using qualitative methods. Participants were asked about their frequency of social media use, type of content viewed, social pressure, and coping strategies [5].

Correlation and regression analyses were used to identify the relationship between social comparison and psychological well-being [6]. The protective role of digital literacy and mindful use was also examined [10].

RESULTS

The analyses showed that constant comparison on social media reduces self-esteem and increases anxiety and depressive symptoms [7]. Interviews showed that young people were more likely to have low self-esteem after viewing “ideal” content.

In addition, young people with high digital literacy were able to reduce negative effects due to their critical perception of content. Regression analyses showed that mindful use and time-limiting strategies can increase psychological well-being by 30% [8].

DISCUSSION

Research findings confirm that the process of comparison on social media has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of young people [9]. Constantly comparing oneself with peers leads to low self-esteem, anxiety, and depressive symptoms.



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Digital literacy and mindful platform use also significantly reduce these effects. For example, when young people perceive content critically, they reduce self-comparison with others and maintain psychological well-being [10].

The results show that transforming young people into mindful social media users through education and psychological support is important in maintaining their psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

The study showed that constant comparison on social media among young people reduces self-esteem, increases anxiety, and depressive symptoms. At the same time, digital literacy and mindful platform use reduce negative effects. Education and psychological support are important in transforming young people into mindful social media users.

At the same time, parents, educators, and psychologists can contribute to maintaining psychological well-being by teaching young people to critically perceive content, manage screen time, and be mindful of social media activity.

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