

The Analysis of Popularity of Depression and Anxiety Related to Social Media

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Abstract. Because of the development of social media, depression and anxiety have become hot topics for a long time and the public concentrates on whether they can be treated or not. This article clearly illustrates which factors influence these two symptoms, the consequences that they bring and ways to solve them through a combination of knowledge of social media and psychology. The study of masses and upward social comparison, shows that the increasing popularity of depression and anxiety is due to features of crowds that are infectious, emotional and suggestive. According to a generalized analysis, intimate relationships and social media are beneficial for treating these two mental problems. Intimate relationships mostly occur in schools and daily interpersonal communications. Meanwhile, social networks can produce shelters for people who suffer from exclusion and psychological disorders. However, not only the living environment, but also digital media can damage people a lot. In addition, threats of depression and anxiety include health, social and work issues that can continuously effect the normal progress of work. There are some appropriate strategies to reduce them are restricting the use of social media and social support by the study of Therapy interventions and Stage Environment Matching Theory. To sum up, it is clear that popularity of depression and anxiety can be solved but cannot be treated completely.

Keywords: Depression; anxiety; social media; psychological health.

1. Introduction

Because of the development of social media, depression and anxiety have become the hot topics for a long time and the public concentrates on whether they can be treated or not. The 2022-2023 National Depression Blue Book showed that 95 million people were suffering from depression in China, of which 50% were students; Depression patients under the age of 18 account for 30.28%, patients aged 18-24 account for 35.32%, patients aged 25-30 account for 16.82%, and patients aged 41-50 account for 2.75% lower than that of 18 (Figure 1). Also, after COVID-19, the global burden of mental disorders became heavier. The cases of major depression and anxiety increased by 28% and 26%, respectively. The number of patients with depression surged by 53 million, up 27.6% [1]. From this set of data, the age of depression patients in China is showing a younger trend and brings greater challenges to treatment of depression as stress of the epidemic. Moreover, depression is the second key factor of human health after cancer and it has been listed by the World Health Organization as one of the inducing factors that seriously affect human health and threaten life [2].

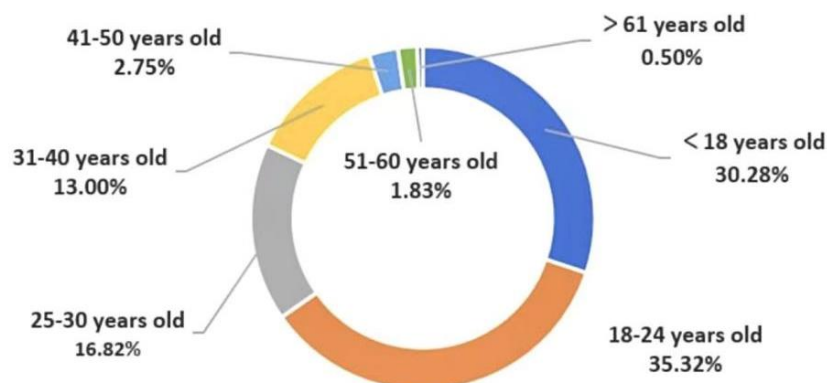


Fig. 1 Age of the population affected by depression [1]

When using social media, individuals, especially teenagers are more likely to engage in upward social comparison which is agreed by Impression Management Theory which can cause depression and anxiety [3]. Upward social comparison refers to individuals browsing information on social media and comparing their appearance, abilities, and abilities with others who are better than themselves comparing wealth, social status, and other aspects [4]. Individual anxiety and depression are related to social media use and upward social comparison plays a mediating role in it [5].

Social comparison in the media can have an indirect impact on adolescent depression due to the mediating effect of social anxiety, such as social phobia as a kind of popular internet language causes patients to exhibit fear and tension in public places, patients isolate themselves from the outside world and avoid interpersonal communication, leading to increasingly depressed emotions even depression.

People's nature can be influenced by various emotions, thoughts, and habits and humans have been in the era of crowds since ancient times. First, because of over-marketing of depression and anxiety, crowds can be led into a status and lose their independent thoughts that do not change anymore. From an emotional perspective, the performance of a group may be better or worse in the opposite directions and people may make extreme behaviors that cause depression or anxiety. Individuals respond and obey to stimuli that are given to them no matter what extent it has and it means that stimuli control crowds. Finally, masses are easily influenced and trusted. For example, a commercial account publish harmful impacts of anxiety at first. Through communication of masses, initial ideas will be known by everyone and it may become common sense. So they lose a crucial ability-critique as they are always gullible unconfirmed information and are in an area of unconsciousness [6].

It is clear that the popularity of depression and anxiety can be solved but cannot be treated completely the cure rate for them is generally around 80% for each. This article analyzes the popularity of depression and anxiety and how to solve them by the use of the literature analysis method. Then, the following will discuss the positive and negative impacts of social media to these two symptoms, consequences, influence factors and strategies to improve.

2. Factors that are Beneficial for Depression and Anxiety

2.1. Intimate Relationships

Teenagers can receive more support and comfort in interpersonal interactions through appropriate intimate relationships which can reduce stress and prevent the occurrence of depression [7]. They socialize with others most in schools, so building a harmonious campus environment is very important for schools. The school atmosphere is a key factor that has something to do with the bad emotions of students in school environment. According to the Stage Environment Matching theory, Eccles said that negative psychological changes are due to the resources required for individual development and the social environment provided due to mismatched opportunities. Teenagers have less self-awareness and self-control and they are extremely easily influenced by the external environment. A high-level structured campus atmosphere means that the school has clear goals, fair rules, and rationality so it is good for the development of the younger generation. In general, offering a high-level structured campus enables individuals to have higher perseverance and self-efficacy feeling, lower sense of despair, school stress, and symptoms of depression [8].

Besides schools, parents and friends can affect mental health of teenagers too. They provide appropriate interpersonal support to improve psychological resilience and in addition, mitigate stress from schoolwork. Another aspect, peer mutual aid groups help teachers and parents know mental status better, find and intervene mental crisis as soon as possible [6].

2.2. Social Media

Social media is a significant component of lives of many teenagers and a study taken place by Pew Institute showed that 97% of teenagers use social media platforms. The main advantage is offering a sharing platform is for them to entertain and self-expression without worrying about interpersonal

relationships as digital natives are not familiar with each other. They can set up digital identities and communicate with strangers to set up social networks [9]. These networks can produce shelters for people who suffer from exclusion and psychological disorders because they provide users with platforms that are related to interaction, information acquisition, and self-sharing by facing dilemma of offline emotional expression [10]. In addition, teenagers can also use social media to entertain and self-expression by interacting over geographical barriers like reading news, gaining all kinds of knowledge and publishing blogs to complain about unfairness and dissatisfaction reduce most stress of people even mitigate the extent of extra emotions.

Sharing negative emotions and information with people who are not closely related is easier and more comfortable, and people are less worried about the consequences of sharing loneliness. Secondly, fresh, objective, and constructive perspectives are often provided by non-close social support, making reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships between individuals simpler and eliminating the need to worry too much about the outcome of the relationship's development. Social media can let the quality of supportive interactions rise rapidly. This strategy enables some netizens to better understand the seeker's motivation and goals based on the content and framework of the information sought, and then invest more effort in providing more effective feedback. This communication method not only allows people to freely express their emotions and confusion, but also provides more opportunities for those seeking support, allowing them to receive more targeted support and assistance.

3. Factors that are Harmful for Depression and Anxiety

3.1. Living Environment

The living environment includes families, schools. Percentage of teenagers who have depression and anxiety have a strong relationship with their families of origin even these families have a direct impact on mental issues and developing mental health. According to one data, it is shown that the risk of depression among adolescents with poor family relationships is 5.01 times higher than that of those with good family relationships. So, it is evident that students are always optimistic and sunny in harmonious families while students are always pessimism and anxious in families full of contradictions. The factor of original families is harmful to teenagers and even influences all of their lifetime [6].

Moreover, in schools, a stressful atmosphere makes students depressed because of high competition among classmates that always occurs in China. For them, the only obligation is academic performance which determines the future of everyone. Students who fall behind others are very confused and desperate about their development prospects which will directly lead to psychological health by inferior about themselves. For undergraduate students, the most serious problem is unemployment which threatens college students a lot. The majority of them lose jobs as soon as graduating. When the majority of people obtain employment and choose carers, they setbacks encounter. These also form negative emotions, directly leading to the emergence of depression problems [2]. Nowadays, school bullying is an increasingly common problem no matter where it is, and it is illustrated that those who had experienced "group bullying" in childhood were 1.84 times more likely to develop depression when they grew up than those who had not. Childhood bullying as well as original families can affect students strongly.

3.2. Social Media

Social media has more drawbacks than benefits. It makes face-to-face skills decrease and distorts aesthetic judgments because of excessive marketing toward trends. Research has shown that upward social comparison on social media can not only directly affect social anxiety, but also have an indirect impact on social anxiety through the mediating effect of physical satisfaction [11,12].

With the development of digital media, ways of communication have expanded to online instead of offline. More and more people become digital natives the first generation who have grown up in the world where digital technology and the Internet have been born [13]. They keep in touch with online space every day when they wake up. Then, communication leads to an issue called online social anxiety refers to negative interpersonal experiences such as tension and fear that individuals experience in social media interactions [14]. The 2022-2023 National Depression Blue Book shows that interpersonal factors account for 77.39% of depression which cause depression, ranking first.

In addition, social media leads to distorted self-awareness and evaluation. Individuals are difficult to objectively and correctly understand and evaluate themselves through the distorted information of others online [15]. Bloggers and celebrities publish their excellent pictures on social media platforms so that many people may feel jealous. With the appearance of a palm face, Kazilan eyes, high skull as the new taste, more and more people experience varying degrees of appearance anxiety. A study from the University of West England in the UK shows that adolescents who are physically dissatisfied have a 50% -285% increased risk of developing depression in early adulthood. There is research confirming that the comparison of upward appearance on social media is related to appearance anxiety is significantly correlated. For example, Barbie mostly became the model of plastic surgery before in America. Its plump figure and beautiful face attract a large number of global citizens to have plastic surgeries. In the contract, there were some of them unsatisfied with their face after plastic surgery in order led to anxiety. According to data released by the China Plastic Surgery Association, the annual growth rate of plastic surgery accidents and disputes in China is currently as high as 10% to 15%. More and more failed cases of plastic surgery remind people that the risks of plastic surgery are constantly increasing as well as the increasing mental problems.

4. Consequences of Depression and Anxiety

4.1. Health Impact

Long-term depression and anxiety may lead to some physical symptoms, such as insomnia, anorexia, fatigue, body pain, etc., and exacerbate some chronic health diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes. In some extreme cases, it may also increase the risk of suicide for patients and lead to sustained emotional distress such as sadness, helplessness, anxiety, or fear, resulting in a decrease in self-worth and loss of interest in life.

4.2. Social Impact

Depression and anxiety greatly affect patients' learning, work, and social interactions, leading to work with drawing behavior. Patients find it difficult to concentrate, feel excessive anxiety when facing work or academic pressure, and even lose social skills. At the same time, they may avoid social activities or feel uneasy when facing new people or environments, as they feel lonely and isolated, which leads to a decline in academic or professional achievement and social distancing, resulting in a weakened or even zero ability to communicate and establish intimate relationships with others.

4.3. Work Behaviour

There are three basic impacts. The first one is reduced work efficiency: Severe depression and anxiety symptoms lead to a lack of concentration, fatigue, and delayed thinking, thereby affecting work efficiency and quality. Next, it will lead to increased work errors. They can cause changes in memory, attention, and other aspects of the body, which can easily lead to errors and the decline of work efficiency such as incomplete answers and shaking hands, especially in management or job positions that require attention to safety measures. Tight interpersonal relationships are also a tricky trouble. These symptoms lead to excessive emotional fluctuations, which can easily lead to conflicts with colleagues and decreased passion for work. As a result, it can affect the normal progress of work.

5. Strategies to Mitigate Depression and Anxiety

5.1. Restrict the Use of Social Media

Restricting using social media is a good way to reduce depression and anxiety through the study of therapy-based interventions. Researchers through a systematic search (January 1, 2004, to July 31, 2022) which was completed across 3 databases in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines and studied intervention measures for the use of social media in 23 studies from global participants showed that in over one-third of the studies (39%), and interventions in the use of social media improved mental health as well as 70% of the these showing a significant improvement in depression after the intervention (Figure 2). This research also analyzed some better ways to enhance mental health like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and Therapy based interventions (TBI) in the categories of social media use interventions. Among these interventions, TBI is the most effective. These include cognitive reconstruction, reminder cards, and diaries; one-hour mindfulness seminar per week and so on that can remind the public to be optimistic. 83% of these researches demonstrated psychological health was improved. In the case of limited use of social media, 20% of studies have found improvements in mental health and 25% of studies have effectively improved mental health by completely abandoning social media.

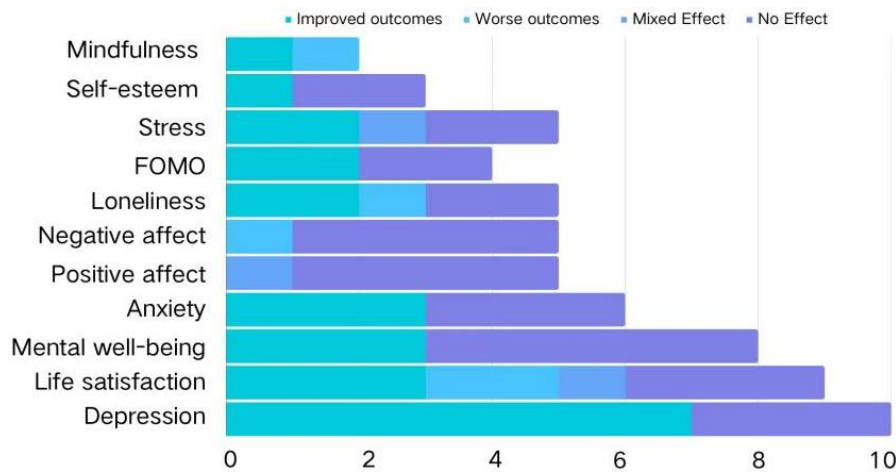


Fig. 2 Social media use intervention effects on mental well-being–related outcomes [16]

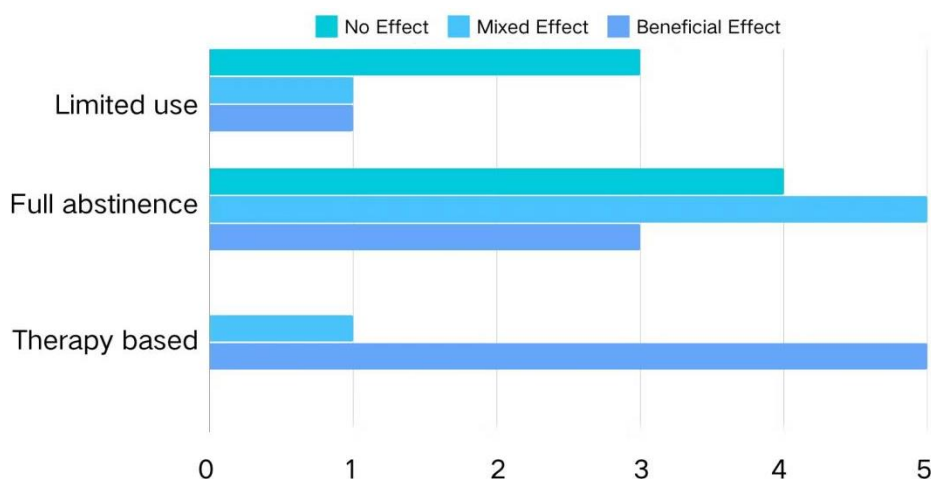


Fig. 3 Summary of the effectiveness of the different interventions on mental health outcomes [16]

In general, the number of people using social media is also increasing as the rise of psychological health issues. Only reducing excessive time on social media may also be beneficial for mental health (Figure 3). Dr. Patricia Schartau, the author and general practitioner of the study, added, Primary healthcare practitioners should actively explore the use of social media and its impact on the mental

health of patients, so that these patients can benefit from treatment and these are always based on specific interventions [16].

5.2. Social Support

Adolescence is one of the most important periods during people's lifetime, the mental health of teenagers develops quickly at this time and they experience large changes. If schools can take action they need like allocate time by themselves and meet a lot of friends so that they may be positive to campuses which leads to the decline of rate of depression. Therefore, it also confirms the Stage Environment Matching Theory. Constructing a good school environment helps improve mental health of students so that their quality of them rises too. As a result, schools benefit from it in that they will not pay too much attention to worry about students except for Academic performance. Schools should have fair teaching rules, clear teaching objectives, and excellent teacher resources, especially psychologists. Based on the direct impact on the psychological state of students, reducing conflicts between students and even between schools and teachers can create a more friendly interpersonal communication environment. By bringing in the relationship between students and parents, schools and families, home school linkage can be achieved to facilitate the formation of connections between both parties. These constitute the social support network and protection circle for teenagers. When they encounter emergencies, this "protection circle" can alleviate the negative impact of stress events, protect them from attacks from others, and thus reduce the risk of depression [5]. To sum up, establishing a structured school environment is meaningful for improving the depression and anxiety of students.

What is more, governments should be responsible for setting up psychological counseling centers. They should employ more specialized experts and psychologists to open more regular physical and mental health tests to accurately investigate and comprehensively analyze the psychological status of adolescents, intervene early and develop treatment measures, and establish a database tailored to individuals. In addition, regular training for psychologists is provided to ensure that they can provide services to citizens.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, intimate relationships and social media are beneficial for treating these two mental problems. Intimate relationships mostly occur in schools and daily interpersonal communications. Meanwhile, social networks can produce shelters for people who suffer from exclusion and psychological disorders. Teenagers have less self-awareness and self-control and they are extremely easily influenced by the external environment. It means that a high-level structured campus atmosphere and free internet identities allow teenagers to get support and comfort. However, not only the living environment, but also digital media can damage people a lot. Upward social comparison on social media has an indirect impact on social anxiety which leads to distorted self-awareness and evaluation through the mediating effect of physical satisfaction. There are great risks of having online social anxiety during communication between each other. In addition, threats of depression and anxiety include health, social and work issues that can continuously affect the normal progress of work. In some extreme cases, they may also increase the risk of suicide for patients, decrease social skills even to zero and reduce work efficiency. There are some appropriate strategies to reduce them are restricting the use of social media and social support through the study of Therapy interventions and Stage Environment Matching Theory. Encouraging the entire society to pay more attention to health problems for teenagers is very necessary, meaningful and valuable as the young have been a basement for the development of the Earth and they relate to the future of human beings

This research aims to figure out whether the popularity of depression and anxiety can be reduced or solved and how to improve it. It shows that this phenomenon can be reduced but cannot be solved completely because of restrictions and uncertainty. This analysis can provide doctors, especially psychological doctors, teachers, parents even the government with enough evidence to state the

impact of depression and anxiety to set a large amount of advice, strategies, policies and regulations so that protect teenagers a lot and limit the use of social media. Several factors and consequences are not mentioned in this article as there is great uncertainty that develops with the trend of the digital era and advanced technology. In the coming future, more research should concentrate more on the health of teenagers including the impact of technology on them, like artificial intelligence ChatGPT.

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