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Exploring social media and its effects on adolescents: A critique

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Abstract
The study of social media is a relatively new area, yet it is quickly growing in importance. There are important advantages and disadvantages to be considered when discussing the influence of social media on adolescents. Platforms like TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat, can be lifesavers for adolescents who feel alone or stigmatized. Social media also made youngsters feel more connected and less lonely throughout the pandemic. However, the influence of social media on adolescents can be considered deleterious to their mental health. Social media and depression in adolescents are inextricably intertwined. Additionally, excessive usage of the applications exposes young people to cyberbullying, concerns with their bodies, and computer addiction, and reduces the amount of time they spend engaging in healthy, outside activities. Physical communication is therefore still the most effective form of communication for sharing concerns with others, regardless of how advanced we get. This paper's primary goal is to investigate the many ways in which social media may affect adolescents. To that end, several research publications have been evaluated and summarised and 10 respondents were interviewed concerning their views regarding social media usage.

1. Introduction
Adolescence is a developmental period that is characterized by change or transition. Parents may begin to observe physical, developmental, emotional, and social changes in their pre-teen as early as age 11. Adolescents frequently go through emotional ups and downs, a desire for independence, the formation of new friendship circles, and scholastic expectations. Social media is a digital communication channel and different scales of interactions exist here. Text messages, photos, videos, audio, and video calls are all acceptable forms of communication. Adolescents' constant access to social media has an influence on their life in today's technology environment in both positive and negative ways, and studies are currently being conducted to find out how youngsters are being affected.

1.1 Positive effects of social media
Connecting people via social media may have certain advantages. Friendships and the ability to interact with others their age and who share their interests are important to young people, and social media makes it possible to do so whenever and wherever one chooses. It is also seen that social media platforms may provide comfort for adolescents who may find it difficult to communicate in person or who belong to a stigmatized group. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, Messenger, and Myspace mimic how connections are made in the real world and offer that information through a collection of tools that let users exchange content like news, events, images, and videos.
Similarly, adolescents are inspired to be creative and think outside the box through social media. It is the perfect platform for young people who enjoy writing, making graphics, and designing digitally to share their work, receive inspiration from others, and gain feedback. In addition, adolescents can also pick up self-defence skills. Sixty percent of Facebook users between the ages of 12 and 17 had their profiles set to private, according to Pew Research Centre research. Most youngsters are aware of the advantages of Internet security, even if many still need to improve their security, as seen by this statistic. It is also seen that social media offers a chance for evaluation and critical thought.

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Adolescents can study, examine the facts, and create their judgments if they have the necessary critical thinking abilities. Because of their hasty reactions, everyone has fallen for a lie at some time, but teens may learn the skills necessary to pause and consider something before spreading it without a second thought. Social networking is another tool that may be used to inspire teenagers to participate in charitable and humanitarian endeavours. It is clear how the Internet has altered the way of life of adolescents. Research, hotel and flight reservations, shopping, instant messaging with loved ones, meeting new people, and other activities are all possible because of social media.

Moreover, many people may showcase themselves, engage with others, and locate career and business possibilities using social media. Connecting recruiters and job seekers via sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, works both ways. Social networking has recently evolved into a new marketplace for consumers and sellers, not only for professionals. When the world was put on hold for Covid 19, it aided commerce in making sales. They locate groups that support their interests and particular skills. Many are also better able to develop a positive digital footprint for a strong portfolio. Nowadays, every young person wants to be a "Start-up Founder" and for them, networking is essential for success. Building these ties has been significantly aided by social media for many such "founders."

Furthermore, the use of social media also empowers students and instructors. Together, educators may share ideas and work on projects. Students may debate numerous subjects and tasks and have quick access to a variety of study resources, viewpoints, and worldviews. The youth of today heavily rely on social media for news and current events. Most breaking news these days circulates more quickly online, educating, and empowering people. Because the Internet is spreading quickly, it raises awareness among the general public as well.

1.2 Negative effects of social media

The most frequent emotional condition linked to social media use is depression. Adolescents who experience depression frequently feel inferior to their peers on social media. They may develop this kind of emotional condition because of the need to fit in, be acknowledged, and be accepted by their distinctive media buddies. They are finding it challenging to acquire good public speaking abilities and are becoming more susceptible to psychological issues as a result of spending more time on social networking sites than connecting with actual people offline. Further, young people who are just starting to explore their sexuality may be badly impacted by exposure to erotic content that portrays hazardous sexual habits (Figure 1). They could be prompted by this to build unrealistic expectations that make it challenging for them to establish healthy romantic relationships or to adopt risky sexual practices.

Interaction via online apps and communication has been a big contributor to addictive behaviour. Multiuser role-playing games are also reportedly being played excessively by adolescents. When individuals rely too much on technology, they develop social withdrawal, avoid working in collaborative teams, dread face-to-face interaction, and prefer exclusively online communication. This leads to new societal issues. This may be the explanation for the social networks' recent exponential growth. It is conceivable that certain settings help people feel more heard or that they make it easier for them to share their struggles and worries. As a result, on the one hand, the virtual world isolates, and on another, it also links individuals.

A negative effect of social media is cyberbullying [4]. In the past, cyberbullying took the form of trolling in chat rooms and forums, uploading improper images, spreading rumours online, and other activities. This becomes much more deadly when bullies incite victims to commit suicide or crime or become targets of terrorism, among other things. Social media may be used in an unethical way to incite hatred and damage the reputations of businesses and people.

Addiction is another negative side effect of social networking. Regardless of the amount of unfinished business they have piling up, people become accustomed to it and begin utilizing it often. Inappropriate sleep, mental tension, low self-esteem, and other health problems may result from this. All of these are negative psychological consequences that social media has on young people. People losing their employment and being unproductive at work produce a lot of societal unrest and impede the development of the youth. It harms their psychological health when young children and even adolescents opt to stay at home and use the Internet instead of going outside to play with other children. Because user personal information is not secure, privacy is an issue while utilizing social media sites. Internet consumers will remember for a long time the failure of industry titans like Facebook which resulted in a significant data breach that revealed the phone numbers of its 419 million members. On social networks, sharing private images and information may lead to misuse and abuse. For this reason, the government of India has imposed a ban on Chinese apps.

Because of its value as a tool for productivity, it is challenging to distinguish between good and harmful Internet usage. To better comprehend the most frequent causes of people seeking therapy, therapists are increasingly more aware of how harmful interactive apps like online role-playing games, sexual chat rooms, interactive porn sites, or multi-user Internet gambling sites may be. These offer theoretical frameworks to direct the design of the evaluation process and the course of therapy.

The important relationships are nourished and fostered in the real world, even though the casual ties created on social media may appear real. In truth, these interactions created on social media increase loneliness and unhappiness, and the harm they cause to relationships offline is immeasurable. This is relevant to happiness, particularly in terms of face-to-face encounters, idealized imagery, sleep habits, and so on.
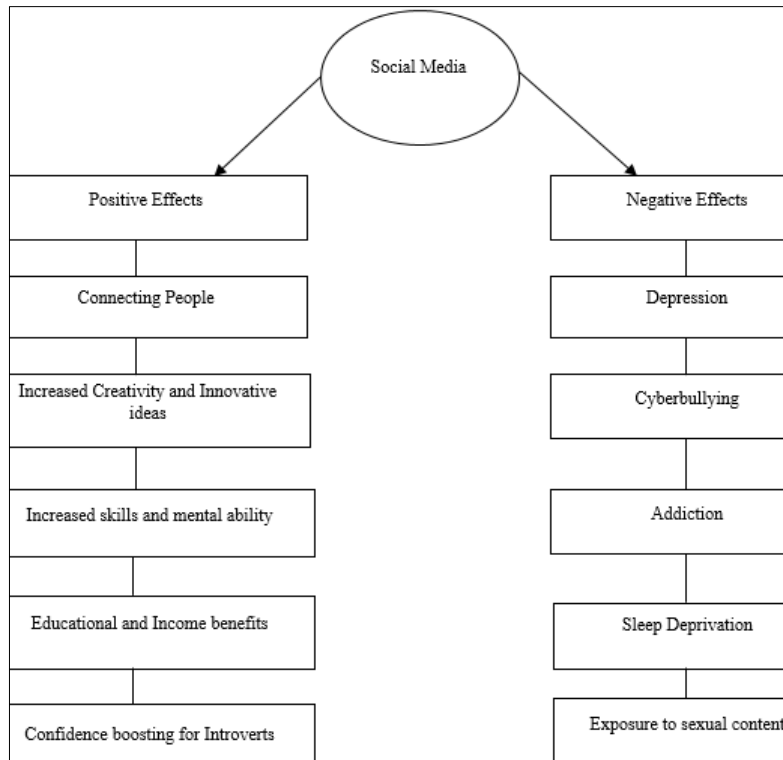
Fig 1: Positive and Negative Effects of social media.

2. Literature Review

In a study on the influence of social media on mental health during the outbreak of covid19, [9] discovered that social media use was associated with both depression and secondary trauma, which also predicted health behaviour change. However, no link was found between health behaviour modification and mental health issues. As the virus spread, Wuhan residents found that sharing health information through social media provided them with knowledge, emotional support, and peer support. However, over-usage of social media resulted in mental health difficulties. Their findings suggested that taking a social media break during the pandemic increased well-being, which was critical for minimizing the pandemic's mental health impact.

Zheng, Liu, Yang, Sun, Lu, and Chen (2022) investigated the link between social media use and depression in China during the COVID-19 outbreak. According to their findings, the fresh wave of the pandemic induced a significant frequency of depression (38.9%) among the general populace. Disadvantaged groups experienced more depression than comparatively advantaged groups. Due to the optimization of the social media environment, the prevalence of social media use throughout the pandemic significantly reduced depression. This was especially evident in vulnerable populations. A shift in the association between social media usage and resident depression was found. More significantly, a greater link between social media use and depression was discovered in more underprivileged groups. It was found that actively improving the social media environment had a major and beneficial impact on citizens' mental health, especially that of vulnerable groups, throughout the pandemic.

Sharma, John, and Sahu (2020) investigated the effect of social media on mental health. They found that social media had grown significantly. It had wide-reaching consequences, but there were also advantages, according to their analyses.

Technology progress is without a doubt to blame for the increase in social media access that has negative repercussions. Social media and its usage in education were analyzed by [4]. According to their report, younger generations mostly utilize social media. The most popular social networking site for this was Facebook. They also claimed that excessive social media use has an impact on all aspects of life, with education being the area most impacted. The importance of education in everyone's life makes it necessary to perform additional study in this field. In their 2018 study on adolescents, social media, and technology, Anderson & Jiang highlighted the popularity of a select few social networking sites among adolescents, including YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat. Adolescents are not particularly conscious of social media in their life, according to polls that were done.

According to a new Pew Research Center poll, Facebook was no longer the most popular online platform among adolescents, despite previously dominating the social media scene among young people in America. According to many of the adolescents questioned, social media had a positive effect. Since the Center's most recent survey of youth and technology usage in 2014-2015, the environment of technology for young people had changed in several ways, one of which was how adolescents' use of social media had changed. Most significantly, having a smartphone has practically become a need for adolescents. Nowadays, 95% of adolescents claim to own or have access to a smartphone. In consequence, more consistent online activities are being fuelled by these mobile connections and 45% of adolescents claim to be online almost constantly. Social media use and adolescent mental health in Sweden were explored by Beeres *et al*. in 2020. However, there was no proof of a long-term link between greater usage and mental health issues. Adolescents who used social media more often reported more signs of mental health problems. Their study

showed that social media may be more of a sign of mental illness than a risk factor.

According to [6], social media can lead to aggressive and hazardous behaviour, which is bad for a person's mental health, especially for young people. The effects of living online depend on how it is used; for example, someone who uses social media excessively risks harming himself. According to [5], young people now spend an average of 12 to 15 hours a day using different social devices, such as phones, computers, workstations, and TVs, in addition to other technology. They utilize apps like WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other services thanks to these gadgets. According to Felix Richter's 2019 data, 2.7 billion individuals use Facebook, Instagram, or Messenger monthly, and more than 2.1 billion use one or more of them daily. The youth do not believe that almost all friends' bio information is accessible there and that a mysterious friend would be able to access their information, even if there are more than 1 billion active users of Facebook, the most frequented website. There were just under 1 billion active users of YouTube, over 4 million active users of WhatsApp, 4 million active users of Instagram, and over 3 million active users of Twitter. Similarly, the number of online users has been steadily growing, posing a real risk to the mental health of young people.

Social media usage and adolescent mental health were examined by [3]. Their correlational study investigated 467 young adults' use of social media, how important it was in their life, and whether they were more likely to indulge in vague booking (posting unclear but alarming sounding posts to get attention). Symptoms of general mental health, suicidal thoughts, feelings of loneliness, and social anxiety, as well as a decline in empathy, were among the outcomes considered. According to their findings, using social media did not predict poor mental health functioning. The fact that vague booking was a predictor of suicide thoughts, however, indicated that this specific behaviour may be an indication of more significant problems. The findings of their study indicated that, overall, reservations about social media use may be unwarranted, except for vague booking.

3. Objective
1. To examine and integrate the most recent empirical data concerning both social media's positive and negative effects on adolescents.
2. To examine the effects of social media on adolescent students.

4. Method
The study examines the data on how social media affects adolescent mental health. In this study, a systematic review of studies published between 2000 and 2022 was conducted utilizing several databases, including Psyc INFO, Scopus, and Pubmed.gov. The reviewing procedure has an impact on the methodological tenets that underpin this study. Due to the nature of the study issue and the research methods included in this review, a narrative review methodology was used in place of a statistical metanalysis of the data.

Since data was only gathered once, a qualitative cross-sectional study was also a component of the research. Ten adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 who attended different colleges in Odisha were included in the sample. The study's respondents were undergraduates and +2

students. The participants came from a variety of academic disciplines, including History, Education, and English. Because they own smartphones and are familiar with social media phone apps, these individuals were chosen. 50 percent of the total participants were boys and 50 percent were girls. The 10 participants were chosen using the purposive sampling approach, although one student from each department was chosen to ensure the sample's representativeness. The following questions were asked in the interview:
1. In what ways does social media help you?
2. Which social networking sites do you often use?
3. Do you believe social media affects you positively or negatively?
4. How long do you spend on social media each day?
5. Do you believe social media has a different impact today than it did in the past?
6. Do you consider social media to be essential for you? if so, why?
7. Do you encounter any obstacles when using social media platforms?

5. Results
When examining the research on the impact of social media on adolescents, the findings were inconsistent. Numerous research included a gender-mixed sample, which was primarily longitudinal studies, and had varied findings regarding depression, aggression, and cyberbullying. When the analysis of the research is considered, there were both good and negative impacts as well as neutral ones.

All study participants whose replies were recorded were included in the second phase of the investigation. After waking up in the morning, all the participants said they check their phones to see whether they missed any calls or if any notifications had arrived. To stay up to date on news and happenings, eight students indicated they required social media. One of the students claimed that he had few acquaintances in real life and that social media helped him feel more "social."

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp were discovered to be the most popular social media networks for users. Eight of the students claimed that social media had a beneficial impact on their lives, enabling them to make new friends, learn new things, or succeed academically. While the other two students stated that social media had a negative impact on them, whether it was the fact that they were unable to dedicate as much time to their academics or that they had easier access to explicit information online. Regarding the amount of time students spend on social media, 60% spend approximately 5 hours per day using it, while the other 40% use it for about 3 hours per day. This demonstrates the growing requirement for the adolescents' understanding of the effects of social media.

Some participants also expressed their opinions on social media as it is today and as it was in the past. Four of the participants said that social media started in the early 1990s with the development of the World Wide Web. Then chat rooms and instant messaging emerged, one of the earliest types of social media. It was mostly simply usernames and text, as opposed to the emoticons and stickers that are frequently used now. There were no pictures, status updates, or live broadcasts of key political events, breaking news, or weather updates. All the interviewees acknowledged using Facebook to submit photos or videos and learning the

meanings of "likes," "shares," and "comments." Additionally, customization was another shift to social media that allowed users to develop their brands and garner attention.

Ninety percent of the respondents cited communication, opinions and reviews, brand monitoring, entertainment, media sharing and advertisement, and online marketing as their primary motivations for using social media. Cyberbullying, sexting, selfies, self-obsession, the difficulty to be alone, and continual parental attention or having "helicopter parents" were cited by 80% of respondents as obstacles to using social media. However, there was a

difference in the use of social media between boys and girls. While the guys claimed that when they posted pictures, the emphasis was usually on what the boy was doing or what he had seen, the girls claimed that when they posted pictures, the attention was on their beauty. Boys exaggerated the appeal of their lifestyles to outsiders. Conversely, females were more likely to think that other girls were having more fun than they were. Boys were more interested in sports, automobiles, action, and sexual material, while girls said they were more interested in family-oriented and nostalgic themes, pets, kids, and fashion-related postings (Figure 2).
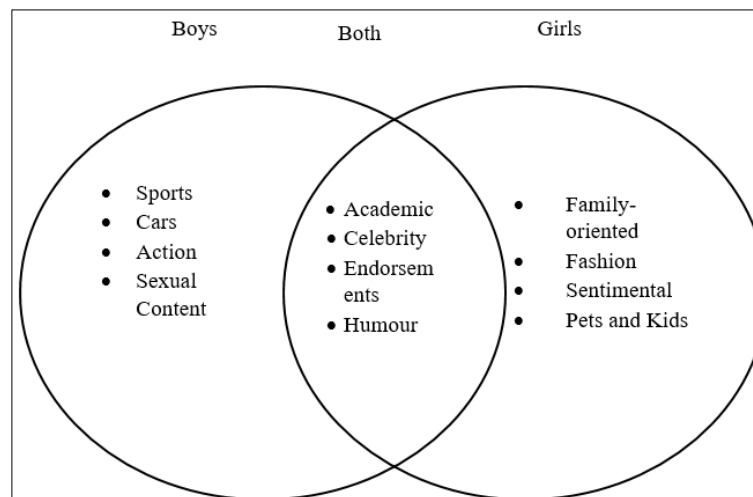
Fig 2: Gender differences in social media use among Adolescents

6. Conclusion and future directions

Today, social media plays a big role in our lives. Adolescents should make good use of their time to better their life and avoid wasting it. Youth must choose how to use social media to their greatest advantage because it is now a need. According to *Oberlo*, there will be 4.59 billion social media users globally in 2022, an increase of 7.8 percent increase from the previous year. While the number of social media users will grow in the future, the growth rate is anticipated to stagnate. Five percent is predicted as the average annual growth rate from 2023 to 2027. Seminars, audio-visual aids, group debates, and online reading resources are crucial in helping young people develop their identities. Social media has the potential to amplify hazards as well as benefits, therefore young people must actively and productively participate in this online environment.

The researcher thoroughly evaluated and summarised linked literature on social media and mental health issues. The topic's importance is determined by the relationship between social media usage and its effects. The usage of social media has a negative impact on the younger generation, causing mental health issues. Giving adolescents timely health advice and aiding them in coping with unpleasant emotions in good ways may reduce the chance of its detrimental effects. Excessive social media usage can lead to a variety of problems, including online harassment, depression, sexting, texting, stress, anxiety, loneliness, cyberbullying, emotion suppression, and attention problems. Faculty in schools and universities must take appropriate efforts, such as counselling sessions, to mitigate these risks. Social networking websites can also have an age restriction so that all are not exposed to the contents of the websites.

Regarding how social media may affect adolescent mental health, this review has categorized study findings. Technology is only a facilitator of human connection, neither encouraging the good nor the evil, and this fact must be acknowledged. Numerous conflicting pieces of research that suggested both negative and positive elements of social media were retrieved for this review. But it is important to note that there is not enough solid research to say how social media affects mental health or even in what direction. The technology landscape has altered significantly over the past few years as social media has come to play an increasingly significant role in young people's lives. Social networking has created new issues and wonderful opportunities. Recently, a lot of decision-makers, campaigners, and parents have expressed concern about the negative effects of social media use.

Spending less time on social media services is probably the most effective strategy for adolescents to make sure that their usage of the services has a good influence on their life. By turning off a smartphone's data connectivity at specific times of the day, such as while driving, at work, or in meetings, by turning off data connectivity while spending time with friends and family, by placing the smartphone out of reach while sleeping, by turning off notifications to make it easier to ignore the distracting beeps or vibrations, and by restricting social media use to a computer rather than a smartphone, an adolescent can make good use of social media. Adolescents can reduce FOMO, or the fear of missing out, and the negative impacts that go along with it, by restricting their usage of social media to 30 minutes per day. A person may see gains in their general mood, attention, and overall mental health by being more mindful of the time they spend on social media.

Adolescents should be conscious of how using social media affects them. They frequently compare themselves to others they contact on social media, yet doing so can be harmful to maintaining a positive self-perception. Another propensity is that adolescents are particularly prone to be caught in a vicious cycle of negativity. They must be made aware that what they see on social media is not reality but rather a skewed picture of events in the actual world to battle feelings of inadequacy or insecurity brought on by their usage of these platforms.

Moreover, parents need to be on the lookout for indications that their kids' usage of social media is harming their mental health. Children should be taught how to use the privacy settings on each social media platform. However, not even the strongest privacy settings can guard against the damaging effects of incorrect social media sharing. However, making a family social media strategy is the greatest method to make sure kids understand the benefits and drawbacks of using social media. Participating with their children in real-world activities is the greatest approach for parents to set limitations on screen usage. They ought to take advantage of the chance to spend more time with their kids in person.

Furthermore, many students' capacity to communicate with one another in class has broken down as a result of their usage of social media. The best instructors can do is listen to their pupils and reassure them that there are plenty of positive aspects of life that have nothing to do with social media. Teachers might assist by offering kids alternatives to classwork that stress interpersonal interaction and physical activity. Students can learn about cyberbullying and other hazards without experiencing them if social media is made available to them in a controlled environment like a classroom.

Additionally, the capacity of social media to promote self-disclosure through expanded social network size and composition is also intriguing. This might be helpful for medical experts trying to target typically difficult-to-reach groups like young men or those with mental illnesses. The formal and informal modes of online assistance may be the subject of future investigations. Social media is a relatively young field of study that is fast expanding and gaining prominence. However, the extent to which social media use affects the general population is yet to be identified.

7. Acknowledgement

8. Conflict of Interest
The author declared no conflict of interest.

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