

REVIEW ARTICLE

Social Media Exposure as a Public Health Determinant in Adolescents and Young Adults

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Social media is now a major part of everyday life for adolescents and young adults. It has changed the way they communicate, learn, and access health information. These platforms also influence their daily habits and overall lifestyle. Social media offers several benefits, including better communication, health awareness, and educational opportunities. However, excessive or inappropriate use has become an important public health issue. This narrative review summarizes current evidence on the effects of social media on young people's health. It explores its impact on mental, physical, behavioral, and social well-being. The review discusses the links between social media use and anxiety. It also examines challenges such as health misinformation, cyberbullying, privacy issues, and online exploitation. These factors can negatively affect the health and safety of adolescents and young adults. In addition, the review highlights public health strategies that can encourage safer social media use.

1. Introduction

Social media has become an essential part of daily life for adolescents and young adults. The rapid expansion of internet access and smartphone technology has transformed the way young people communicate, learn, and obtain information (Zimmermann & Tomczyk, 2025). Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, Snapchat, and YouTube have created digital environments. The users spend several hours each day interacting with peers, sharing personal experiences, and consuming large volumes of content. However, the uncontrolled exposure has raised significant concerns regarding its effects on health and well-being. Adolescence and young adulthood represent critical periods of physical, psychological, and social development. During these stages, individuals develop emotional regulation, decision-making skills, and personal identity. Exposure to continuous online interactions during these developmental periods can influence behavior, attitudes, and lifestyle choices. Unlike previous generations, today's youth experience a digital environment in which online activities are closely integrated with their everyday lives (Mcmillan & Morrison, 2006). This increasing dependence has shifted social media from a communication tool to an influential

determinant of health.

Recent reports indicate that the average daily time spent on social media continues to increase worldwide (Marzo et al., 2024). Many adolescents access multiple platforms simultaneously and remain connected throughout the day. Constant notifications, personalized content, and algorithm-driven recommendations encourage prolonged engagement. Researchers have reported relationships between excessive social media use and anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, poor academic performance, body image dissatisfaction, cyberbullying, and reduced physical activity (Lopes et al., 2022; Zubair et al., 2023). These findings suggest that digital behaviors should be considered alongside traditional lifestyle factors when evaluating adolescent health. The influence of social media extends beyond individual behavior. Health information spreads rapidly through social networks regardless of its scientific accuracy. Reliable educational campaigns may improve public awareness, whereas misinformation can contribute to unhealthy practices and delayed healthcare seeking. Adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable because they frequently rely on online sources rather than healthcare professionals when searching for health-related

information.

Social media also affects psychological development through mechanisms such as social comparison, fear of missing out, and the desire for social acceptance. The number of followers, likes, and comments often becomes a measure of self-worth among young users. Another growing concern is the influence of social media on health-related behaviors (Paul & Headley-Johnson, 2025). Digital marketing promotes energy-dense foods, sugary beverages, vaping products, alcohol, and cosmetic procedures through attractive visual content and influencer endorsements. Young audiences may adopt these behaviors without critically evaluating their long-term health consequences. Public health organizations increasingly use digital platforms to reach younger populations through targeted campaigns and interactive educational materials. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated social media use among adolescents and young adults (Bailey et al., 2022). School closures, social distancing measures, and remote learning increased daily screen time. These observations emphasized the importance of understanding both the positive and negative impacts of social media exposure on population health. Increasing evidence now supports the recognition of social media exposure as an emerging public health determinant. Understanding these complex relationships is essential for developing effective interventions that protect young populations while maximizing the educational and social benefits of digital technology. This review summarizes the current evidence regarding social media exposure among adolescents and young adults. The review also highlights future directions for research and policy development to improve the health and well-being of younger populations in an increasingly digital society.

2. Evolution of Social Media Usage Among Adolescents and Young Adults

The use of social media has increased rapidly during the past two decades. Adolescents and young adults represent the largest group of active social media users because they have easy access to smartphones. The widespread adoption of social media has fundamentally changed how young people interact with society and access information. Early social networking platforms mainly focused on connecting friends and family members. Over time, technological advances led to the development of highly interactive platforms that support photo sharing, short videos, live streaming, instant messaging, and personalized content. Applications such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, X, and Facebook have become an integral part of daily life. These platforms continuously evolve by introducing new features that encourage users to spend more time online. Personalized recommendations based on artificial intelligence further increase user engagement by presenting content that matches individual interests and viewing habits. The availability of smartphones has played

a major role in increasing social media use among young populations (Salehan & Negahban, 2013). Mobile devices provide uninterrupted internet access throughout the day. Notifications, messaging services, and automatic content updates encourage frequent checking of social media accounts. This pattern has created a culture of continuous digital connectivity where online interactions occur alongside school, family activities, and social gatherings.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this digital transformation. Social media became an important tool for maintaining friendships and obtaining news updates. Educational institutions also adopted digital platforms to share academic resources and communicate with students. Although these changes helped reduce social isolation, they also increased daily screen time and dependence on digital communication. Several studies conducted after the pandemic reported that many adolescents continued these high levels of social media use even after schools reopened (Nilsson et al., 2022). Another important factor contributing to increased social media engagement is the emergence of influencer culture. Influencers create content related to fashion, fitness, beauty, gaming, education, travel, and health. Their recommendations often influence purchasing decisions, lifestyle choices, and health behaviors among adolescents. Many young users perceive influencers as trustworthy sources because they present information in a relatable and entertaining manner. However, not all shared information is scientifically accurate. Artificial intelligence has further transformed the social media experience. Based on these data, personalized feeds are generated to maximize user engagement. Although these algorithms improve user experience by delivering relevant content, they also create digital echo chambers where individuals repeatedly encounter similar opinions and information. This selective exposure may reinforce existing beliefs and increase vulnerability to misinformation. Adolescents and young adults increasingly use social media for purposes beyond entertainment. Healthcare organizations, universities, and scientific communities have also recognized the educational potential of social media. Public health campaigns promoting vaccination, mental health awareness, nutrition, and disease prevention are now commonly delivered through these channels because they effectively reach younger audiences.

Despite these benefits, the pattern of social media use has shifted from occasional communication to habitual engagement. Many adolescents begin and end their day by checking social media applications. Frequent exposure to notifications, short-form videos, and rapidly changing content encourages repeated use throughout the day (Nguyen et al., 2025). This phenomenon has contributed to growing concerns regarding problematic social media use and behavioral addiction. The type of content consumed by adolescents has also changed significantly. Earlier platforms primarily supported text-based communication. Current

platforms rely heavily on visual and video-based content that is more engaging and emotionally stimulating. Short videos, live broadcasts, and algorithmically recommended clips capture attention quickly and encourage prolonged viewing. Interactive features such as likes, comments, shares, and virtual rewards further strengthen user participation and create a sense of social validation. Global variations in social media usage are influenced by socioeconomic status, internet accessibility, educational background, and cultural preferences. Developed countries generally report higher internet penetration and longer daily screen time (Bala, 2024). However, developing countries have experienced rapid growth in social media adoption due to improved mobile network infrastructure and affordable smartphones. This expansion has reduced geographical barriers and enabled young people from diverse backgrounds to participate in global digital communities. Gender differences have also been observed in social media behavior. Female adolescents often spend more time on image-based platforms that emphasize appearance, social relationships, and lifestyle content. Male users frequently engage with gaming communities, technology-related discussions, and competitive online activities (Salter, 2018). The continuous evolution of social media has introduced new opportunities and new challenges. Digital platforms support learning, creativity, entrepreneurship, and social connectedness. They

also facilitate rapid dissemination of health information and encourage community engagement during public health emergencies. Conversely, excessive use, exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, misinformation, and unhealthy social comparison have become increasingly common concerns. These complex effects highlight the importance of understanding social media not only as a communication technology but also as a significant factor influencing adolescent development and health.

3. Psychological and Mental Health Consequences of Social Media Exposure

The widespread use of social media has significantly influenced the psychological well-being of adolescents and young adults. Adolescents are particularly susceptible because emotional regulation and cognitive development are still maturing during this stage of life. Growing evidence suggests that prolonged exposure to social media may contribute to emotional distress through multiple pathways (Kelly et al., 2018). Constant online engagement can increase stress, reduce self-esteem, promote unhealthy comparisons, and interfere with normal psychological development. These effects often accumulate gradually and may influence both short-term well-being and long-term mental health.

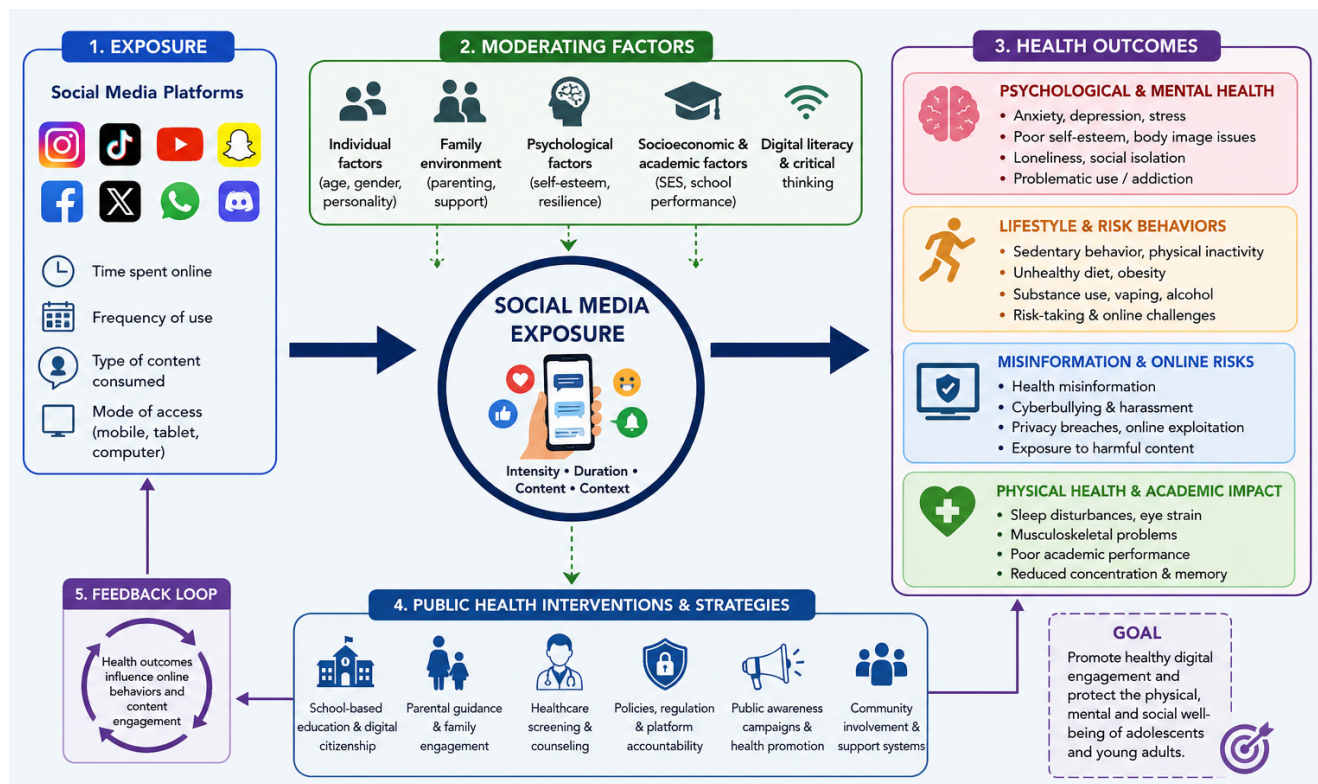


Figure 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the influence of social media exposure as a public health determinant among adolescents and young adults. The figure highlights the pathways linking social media use with psychological health, lifestyle behaviors, misinformation, cyberbullying, and online risk behaviors that collectively affect health outcomes.

3.1 Social Comparison and Self-Esteem

One of the most common psychological effects of social media is social comparison. Adolescents frequently compare their appearance, achievements, relationships, and lifestyles with those presented by others online. Most social media content highlights positive experiences, carefully edited photographs, and idealized lifestyles. These unrealistic portrayals often create unattainable standards that negatively influence self-perception. Repeated exposure to idealized images may reduce self-confidence and increase feelings of inadequacy. Young individuals may begin to believe that their own lives are less successful or less attractive than those of their peers. This perception can gradually lower self-esteem and reduce life satisfaction. Body image dissatisfaction is another important concern. Many platforms emphasize physical appearance through photographs and short videos. Beauty filters and image-editing applications further distort reality by creating unrealistic expectations. Adolescents who frequently view appearance-focused content are more likely to develop negative body image and unhealthy weight-control behaviors. The influence of social comparison is often stronger among individuals who spend several hours each day on image-based platforms. Studies have shown that higher levels of comparison are associated with lower self-esteem and greater psychological distress (Liu et al., 2017; McComb et al., 2023).

3.2 Anxiety and Depression

Anxiety and depression are among the most extensively studied mental health outcomes associated with excessive social media use. Several observational studies have reported that prolonged screen time is associated with increased symptoms of anxiety and depressive mood (Mougharbel, Chaput, Sampasa-Kanyinga, Colman, et al., 2023; X. Wang et al., 2019). One contributing factor is the constant need to remain connected. Continuous notifications and expectations of immediate communication may create psychological stress throughout the day. Fear of missing out, commonly known as FOMO, has emerged as another important contributor to anxiety. Many young users worry that they are missing enjoyable experiences shared by their friends online. This persistent concern encourages repeated checking of social media applications and increases emotional dependence on digital interactions. Depression may also develop through prolonged exposure to negative online experiences. Repeated social comparison, cyberbullying, loneliness, and reduced face-to-face interactions may collectively contribute to depressive symptoms. Although social media is not the sole cause of depression, excessive and problematic use may increase the risk among vulnerable individuals.

3.3 Social Media Addiction and Problematic Use

Social media platforms are intentionally designed to maximize user engagement. Features such as infinite scrolling, personalized recommendations, automatic video playback, and reward-based notifications encourage prolonged use. Some adolescents gradually develop problematic social media use characterized by an inability to reduce screen time despite negative consequences (X. Wang et al., 2019). They may experience discomfort or restlessness when unable to access their social media accounts. Daily activities, academic responsibilities, and family interactions may become secondary to online engagement. Unlike substance addiction, social media addiction is considered a behavioral addiction. Although diagnostic criteria continue to evolve, researchers recognize excessive and compulsive use as an emerging mental health concern. Several psychological mechanisms contribute to this behavior and emotional dependence on social approval. Problematic use has also been associated with poor concentration, reduced productivity, emotional instability, and impaired decision-making among adolescents and young adults.

3.4 Cyberbullying and Emotional Distress

Cyberbullying has become one of the most serious psychological consequences of social media exposure. Unlike traditional bullying, online harassment can occur continuously and reach a much larger audience within a short period. Hurtful comments, rumors, exclusion from online groups, impersonation, and the sharing of embarrassing content can have lasting emotional effects. Victims of cyberbullying often experience sadness, fear, embarrassment, anger, and social withdrawal. Persistent online harassment may contribute to anxiety disorders, depression, sleep disturbances, and declining academic performance. The anonymity provided by some digital platforms may encourage aggressive online behavior. Adolescents who experience cyberbullying may hesitate to report incidents because of fear of retaliation or social embarrassment (Martínez-Monteagudo et al., 2020; X. Wang et al., 2019). Early identification and supportive interventions from parents, teachers, and healthcare professionals are therefore essential.

3.5 Loneliness and Social Isolation

Although social media was originally developed to strengthen social connections and excessive online interaction may paradoxically increase feelings of loneliness. Digital communication cannot fully replace meaningful face-to-face relationships. Adolescents who rely heavily on virtual interactions may gradually reduce participation in family

activities and in-person friendships. Passive browsing, where individuals spend long periods observing others without actively engaging. It has been associated with increased loneliness and emotional dissatisfaction. In contrast, active and supportive online interactions may promote social connectedness and emotional well-being (Roberts et al., 2026; Yang et al., 2021). The quality of online relationships is often more important than the quantity of followers or online contacts. Genuine social support can improve psychological health, whereas superficial interactions may fail to satisfy emotional needs.

3.6 Positive Psychological Effects of Social Media

Despite its risks, social media also provides several psychological benefits when used responsibly. Many adolescents use digital platforms to maintain friendships and to participate in communities with shared interests. Online peer support groups can reduce feelings of isolation among individuals living with chronic illnesses or mental health conditions. Educational content, motivational campaigns, and mental health awareness programs have become increasingly available through social media. Healthcare organizations and mental health professionals use these platforms to promote early recognition of psychological disorders and encourage individuals to seek professional help. Social media also enables young people to express creativity and build supportive communities across geographical boundaries (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014). During periods of social isolation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, digital communication helped many adolescents maintain social connections and reduce emotional distress.

4. Impact of Social Media on Lifestyle Behaviors and Risk-Taking Behaviors in Adolescents

Social media has become an important part of adolescents daily routines. Beyond communication and entertainment, it influences several lifestyle behaviors that directly affect physical and mental health. Young people frequently use social media to obtain information about food, exercise, fashion, relationships, and recreational activities. Although these platforms can encourage healthy habits, prolonged exposure to inappropriate content may promote unhealthy lifestyles and risky behaviors. The influence is particularly strong during adolescence because this developmental stage is characterized by curiosity, identity formation, and increased susceptibility to peer influence. Lifestyle behaviors established during adolescence often continue into adulthood. Therefore, understanding how social media shapes these behaviors is essential for promoting long-term health.

4.1 Social Media and Sleep Disturbances

Sleep is essential for normal physical growth, brain development, emotional regulation, and academic performance. However, excessive social media use has become one of the leading causes of poor sleep among adolescents and young adults. Many adolescents use smartphones immediately before bedtime. Exposure to blue light emitted from electronic devices suppresses melatonin production and making it more difficult to fall asleep (Hatori et al., 2017). In addition, continuous notifications, online conversations, and video streaming encourage prolonged nighttime screen use. Several studies have reported that adolescents who spend more time on social media experience shorter sleep duration and poorer sleep quality (Woods & Scott, 2016). Sleep deprivation contributes to daytime fatigue, reduced concentration, impaired memory, mood disturbances, and decreased academic performance. Chronic sleep deficiency has also been associated with obesity, insulin resistance, cardiovascular disease, and depression. Night time social media use has become increasingly common because many adolescents fear missing important conversations or updates from their peers. This behavior further disrupts normal sleep patterns and creates a cycle of fatigue and excessive daytime screen use.

4.2 Influence on Physical Activity and Sedentary Lifestyle

Regular physical activity plays an important role in maintaining physical and mental health. However, prolonged social media use often replaces time that could otherwise be spent on sports, outdoor recreation, or exercise. Adolescents who spend several hours each day using social media are more likely to adopt sedentary lifestyles. Long periods of sitting while using smartphones or computers reduce overall energy expenditure and contribute to weight gain. Sedentary behavior has been associated with obesity, poor cardiovascular fitness, musculoskeletal discomfort, and metabolic disorders. The relationship between social media and physical activity is complex. While excessive screen time discourages exercise, some platforms actively promote fitness through workout videos, online coaching, and health challenges (AlNamlah et al., 2026). Fitness influencers often encourage users to participate in regular exercise programs and healthy lifestyle campaigns. The overall impact depends on the type of content viewed. Educational fitness content may motivate adolescents to become physically active, whereas prolonged passive scrolling contributes to physical inactivity.

4.3 Dietary Behaviors and Food Choices

Social media has become an influential source of information regarding food, nutrition, and eating habits. Adolescents are frequently exposed to images and videos promoting fast food. Attractive advertisements and influencer endorsements often encourage unhealthy dietary choices. Many food-related posts emphasize taste and visual appeal rather than nutritional value. Repeated exposure to unhealthy food marketing may increase cravings and influence purchasing decisions. Adolescents often imitate dietary behaviors demonstrated by celebrities, influencers, and peers without considering scientific evidence. Conversely, social media also provides access to nutrition education and healthy recipes. Healthcare professionals, dietitians, and public health organizations increasingly use digital platforms to promote balanced diets, healthy cooking, and obesity prevention. The effectiveness of these campaigns depends largely on the credibility of the information source. Dietary misinformation has also become a growing concern. Unverified weight-loss diets, detox programs, and nutritional supplements are widely promoted through social media (Raffoul et al., 2024). Following such advice without professional guidance may result in nutritional deficiencies and unhealthy eating behaviors.

4.4 Body Image and Weight-Related Behaviors

Appearance-focused content has become one of the defining characteristics of modern social media platforms. Images portraying idealized body shapes, flawless skin, and edited photographs may influence adolescents' perception of physical attractiveness. Frequent exposure to unrealistic beauty standards often leads to body dissatisfaction. Young individuals may become increasingly concerned about their appearance and engage in unhealthy weight-control practices. Body image concerns are generally more common among female adolescents, although male adolescents are increasingly affected by pressure to achieve muscular physiques. These concerns may contribute to low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders (Davies et al., 2024). Positive body image campaigns have emerged on several platforms to counter unrealistic beauty standards. These initiatives encourage body acceptance and emphasize health rather than appearance. Continued promotion of evidence-based health messages is essential for reducing body dissatisfaction among adolescents.

4.5 Academic Performance and Cognitive Function

Excessive social media use may interfere with academic achievement. Many adolescents frequently check social media while studying, attending classes, or completing assignments. Constant interruptions reduce attention span and impair

concentration. Multitasking between educational activities and social media decreases learning efficiency. Students often require additional time to complete academic tasks because their attention is repeatedly diverted by notifications and online conversations (C. Wang, 2022). Reduced sleep quality associated with excessive social media use further contributes to poor academic performance. Fatigue impairs memory consolidation, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities. Despite these challenges, social media can also support learning. Educational videos, discussion forums, virtual classrooms, and collaborative learning communities have become valuable academic resources. Students who use these platforms responsibly may improve their learning experience and communication with educators.

4.6 Social Media and Substance Use Behaviors

Social media platforms increasingly expose adolescents to content related to alcohol consumption, tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, and recreational drugs. Promotional advertisements and peer-generated content often portray substance use as socially acceptable or desirable. Repeated exposure may normalize risky behaviors and reduce adolescents' perception of associated health risks. Some studies suggest that young people who frequently encounter alcohol or vaping content are more likely to experiment with these substances (Jackson et al., 2018). Electronic cigarettes and vaping products are particularly popular on social media. Colorful advertisements, flavored products, and influencer marketing have increased their appeal among younger populations. Similar concerns exist regarding online promotion of cannabis and other recreational substances in regions where these products are legally available. Public health organizations continue to advocate for stronger regulation of digital advertising targeting adolescents. Social media has introduced new forms of risk-taking behavior through viral online challenges and trends. Many challenges are harmless and encourage creativity or physical activity. However, others involve dangerous activities that may result in serious injuries or even death. Adolescents often participate in risky challenges because of peer pressure or the desire for online recognition. The pursuit of likes, shares, and followers may encourage individuals to engage in behaviors they would normally avoid. Risk-taking behaviors promoted online may include dangerous stunts, reckless driving, excessive alcohol consumption, self-harm challenges, or hazardous physical activities. The rapid spread of viral content enables these behaviors to reach millions of users within a short period. Educational campaigns and parental supervision play important roles in reducing participation in harmful online trends.

4.8 Sexual Risk Behaviors and Digital Relationships

Digital communication has changed how adolescents develop interpersonal relationships. Social media and messaging applications facilitate communication but may also expose young people to inappropriate content. Some adolescents share personal images or engage in sexting without fully understanding the long-term consequences.

Once digital content is shared, it may be difficult to control its distribution and legal consequences. Online relationships may also expose adolescents to misinformation regarding sexual health and consent ([Mudogo et al., 2026](#)). Comprehensive digital literacy education can help young people recognize unsafe online situations and make informed decisions.

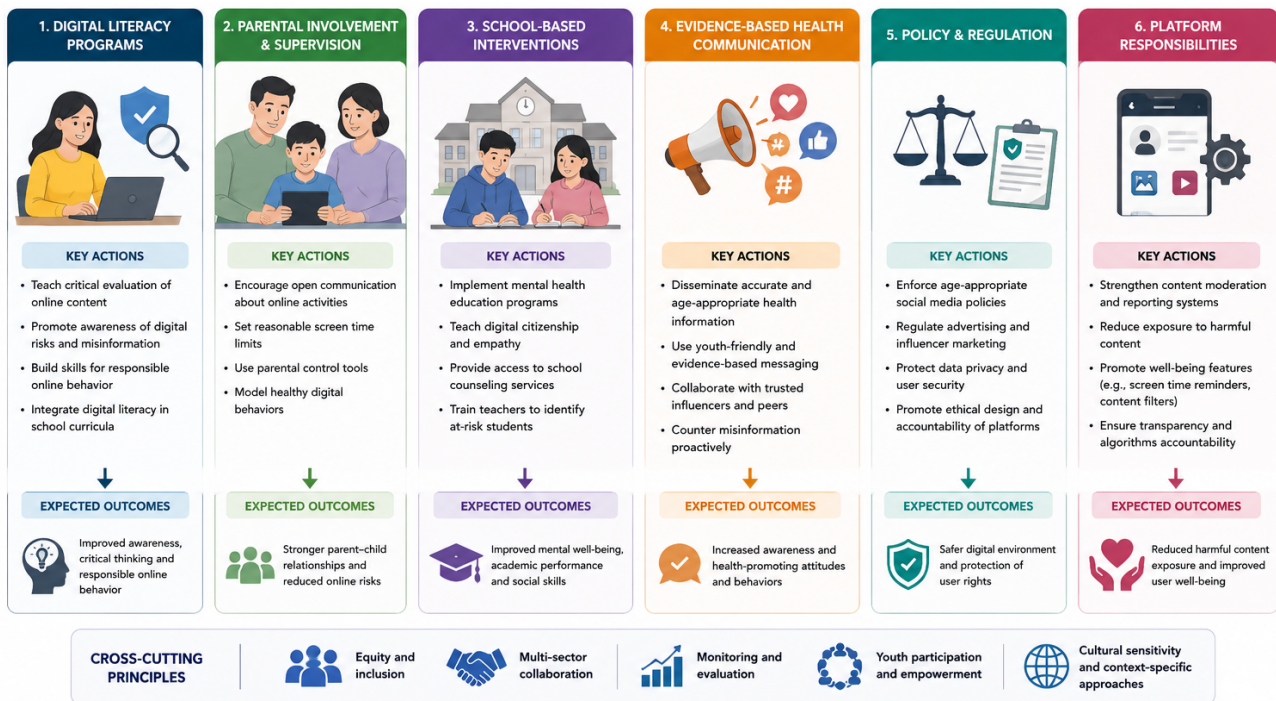


Figure 2: Public health strategies and interventions to mitigate the negative impact of social media exposure in adolescents and young adults.

5. Mental Health Consequences of Social Media Exposure

The rapid expansion of social media has transformed the way of adolescents and young adults to access information. The excessive exposure has raised concerns regarding their influence on mental health. Adolescence is a critical period characterized by emotional, psychological, and social development. During this stage, individuals are highly sensitive to external influences, including peer opinions and online interactions. Consequently, social media has become an important factor that can shape psychological well-being in both positive and negative ways. Recent studies have shown that prolonged social media use is associated with increased levels of emotional distress among adolescents ([Bottaro & Faraci, 2022](#); [Mougharbel, Chaput, Sampasa-Kanyinga, Hamilton, et al., 2023](#)). The relationship between social media exposure and mental health is complex because the effects depend on several factors. It includes the duration of use, type of platform, nature of the content viewed. Responsible and moderate use may provide emotional support and strengthen social relationships. However, excessive or problematic use often contributes to adverse mental health outcomes. One of

the most frequently reported psychological consequences is anxiety. Adolescents often experience pressure to remain constantly connected with friends and online communities. Many users repeatedly check their social media accounts even when no new information is available. This compulsive behavior increases stress and reduces opportunities for relaxation. Over time, persistent digital engagement may contribute to generalized anxiety symptoms and emotional exhaustion. Many adolescents believe that they may miss enjoyable experiences, important conversations, or social events if they are not continuously active online. This fear encourages frequent checking of digital platforms and increases emotional dependence on social media. Individuals experiencing FOMO often report greater dissatisfaction with their daily lives because they perceive others as having more exciting and successful experiences. These negative perceptions may gradually affect overall psychological well-being. Depression has also emerged as a significant concern among frequent social media users. Adolescents who spend long hours on social networking platforms often report persistent sadness, loneliness, and reduced life satisfaction.

One possible explanation is the continuous exposure to carefully selected images and achievements shared by peers. Most online users present only positive aspects of their lives while concealing personal struggles and failures. As a result, adolescents may develop unrealistic expectations and believe that others are happier or more successful than themselves. Repeated comparisons with these idealized portrayals may contribute to depressive symptoms and feelings of inadequacy.

6. Public Health Interventions Policies and Digital Safety Strategies

The increasing influence of social media on adolescent health has highlighted the need for effective public health interventions. Digital literacy education has become one of the most effective strategies for reducing the negative effects of social media exposure. Adolescents should be taught how to evaluate the credibility of online information and protect their personal privacy. These skills enable young people to make informed decisions and reduce their vulnerability to online risks. Schools play an important role in promoting healthy digital behaviors. Educational institutions can incorporate digital citizenship programs into their curricula to teach responsible online communication. Students should also receive guidance on balancing screen time with physical activity and face-to-face social interactions.

Parents remain influential in shaping adolescents digital habits. Open communication between parents and children encourages responsible social media use and allows early identification of problematic behaviors. Healthcare professionals also contribute to digital health promotion. Routine clinical assessments may include questions regarding screen time, sleep patterns, social media use, and online experiences. Early identification of excessive social media use allows timely counseling and referral when necessary. Mental health professionals increasingly incorporate discussions about digital behaviors into psychological assessments and treatment plans. Governments have introduced various regulations to improve online safety. Many countries have strengthened legislation addressing cyberbullying, online harassment, child exploitation, and digital privacy. Continuous evaluation of these policies is necessary because digital technologies continue to evolve rapidly.

Social media companies share responsibility for protecting young users. Artificial intelligence can identify harmful content and cyberbullying more efficiently than manual monitoring alone. Many platforms have introduced

reporting mechanisms, content moderation systems, and educational resources to improve user safety. However, additional improvements are needed to ensure consistent implementation across different platforms. Public health organizations increasingly recognize social media as a valuable tool for health promotion. Interactive educational content often reaches adolescents more effectively than traditional health education methods. Collaboration with trusted healthcare professionals and scientific organizations improves the credibility of these campaigns. Future interventions should focus on creating supportive digital environments rather than discouraging technology use altogether. Balanced social media engagement, improved digital literacy, stronger family support, and evidence-based public health policies can maximize the benefits of digital communication while minimizing potential health risks.

7. Conclusion

Social media has become one of the most influential components of adolescent and young adult life. Its widespread use has created both valuable opportunities and significant public health challenges. Responsible use can promote health education, improve access to healthcare information, and strengthen social connectedness. In contrast, prolonged exposure to harmful content and unhealthy online environments may negatively affect mental health, physical well-being, academic performance, and overall quality of life. Public health initiatives should focus on empowering young individuals to critically evaluate online information and develop healthy digital habits rather than discouraging technology use entirely. Future research should continue exploring the long-term health consequences of social media exposure through longitudinal and multicenter studies. Greater attention should also be given to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and personalized digital platforms. Understanding these evolving digital environments will be essential for developing effective interventions that maximize the benefits of social media while reducing its associated health risks.

Declarations

Ethics approval statement

Not applicable

Consent to participate

Not applicable

Consent to publish

Not applicable

Data Availability Statement

The data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

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Author contribution

Laiba Ali and Pavan Kumar contributed to conceptualization. Methodology was performed by Laiba Ali and Pavan Kumar. Investigation was carried out by Laiba Ali and Pavan Kumar. Data curation was conducted by Laiba Ali and Pavan Kumar. Laiba Ali and Pavan Kumar contributed to writing the original draft. Writing-review and editing were performed by Laiba Ali and Pavan Kumar. Supervision and project administration were carried out by Laiba Ali and Pavan Kumar. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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