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# Social Media Influences on Depressive Symptoms in Millennials: An Integrative Literature Review

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# Social Media Use and Depression in Millennials: An Integrative Literature Review

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## Abstract

The purpose of this integrative literature review is to use current studies and research to examine the association between negative experiences on social media and its influence on depressive symptoms such as anxiety, and social isolation in millennials. Six studies have met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Social media use was found to be directly related to depressive symptoms and anxiety in young adults. Social comparison and feedback seeking behaviors were associated with depressive symptoms in adolescents. Those with depression were high users of social media and some experienced negative social interactions and cyberbullying. Higher daily social media use was associated with greater anxiety symptoms and an increased likelihood of having an anxiety disorder. A negative experience on social media was strongly associated with depressive symptoms.



## Background

- Currently in the United States roughly 17.3 million adults have experienced at least one major depressive episode and this percentage was highest among young adults aged 18 to 25.
- Furthermore, the millennial population specifically has seen an increase in major depression by 31%.
- There is current research that dictates that social media use can negatively impact one's mental well-being and increase depressive symptoms in individuals in this generation.

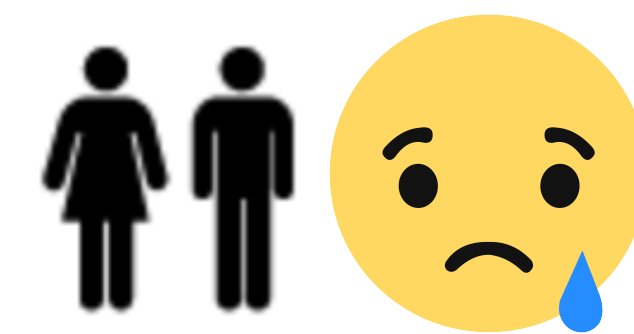
## Methods

- An integrative literature review was conducted through the DePaul University Library database and articles were obtained from CINAHL, Complete, Pubmed, and Psyc-Info.
- A search was conducted using the following terms: depression, anxiety, social media, Facebook, Instagram, adolescence, young adults, and millennials.

## Purpose

- The purpose The purpose of this literature review is to use current studies and research to examine the association between negative experiences on social media and its influence on depressive symptoms such as anxiety, and social isolation in millennials.

## Depression



## Anxiety



## Positive Outlet



## Findings

Studies have found that social media use can have detrimental effects on individuals with depression and “.... **that frequent use of social media may be associated with declines in subjective well-being and life satisfaction, and an increase in depressive symptoms**”.

Individuals who already suffer from depression “... **will have higher levels of social media addiction, will make more social comparisons, and will have fewer social interactions on social media than individuals without MDD**”.

Furthermore “ ... **adolescents who experienced high levels of psychological distress, unmet mental health needs, and suicidal ideation were more frequent users of SM such as Facebook**”.

Self comparison behavior and seeking approval were seen among individuals who already suffer from anxiety because, “**Individuals with anxiety may engage in excessive reassurance seeking to validate their self-worth or reduce intolerable feelings of uncertainty/worry through posting on social media sites more frequently to obtain comments and “likes**”.

However, seeking this reassurance didn't always provide a positive outcome as “... **social media has the potential to function as a source of stress or reinforce negative self-evaluations when individuals receive undesirable feedback from others or engage in negative social comparisons**”.

It has the potential to be a therapeutic outlet for individuals who are suffering from depression and for individuals who are potentially battling with their psyche.

Social media could be a positive and cathartic outlet for “... **promoting more positive social interaction through social media may help alleviate some of the symptoms associated with depression**”.

It could also be a place of solace for those suffering from mental illness and “... **these platforms may help people form connections with other individuals suffering from stigmatized health conditions such as depression**”

## Discussion

Current research describes social media use as associated with declines in well-being and an increase in depressive symptoms. Content on social media can trigger negative social comparisons, symptoms of anxiety and can interfere with daily life. Individuals who already suffered from depression or anxiety disorder developed unhealthy or “risky” online behavior and sought out social media platforms more frequently and therefore they were more prone to peer victimization and cyberbullying.

## Implications

- Social media use has to be integrated into the dialogue between patient and provider.
- Social media use should be incorporated into clinical evaluations when assessing for anxiety and depression as well as the manner in which social media is being used as a coping mechanism.
- Distinguish between negative behavior or negative interactions with social media versus positive behaviors.
- Use of social media as a positive coping strategy.
- Early identification of mental health disorders and early treatment is necessary.