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(IJEPC)**[www.ijepe.com](http://www.ijepe.com)**THE SOCIAL MEDIA PARADOX: NAVIGATING SELF-ESTEEM, PHUBBING, AND PROCRASTINATION IN A DIGITAL AGE**Hanani Hussin<sup>1</sup>, Nurliyana Abas<sup>2\*</sup>, Rahmat Yuliawan<sup>3</sup>, Hufiza Hussin<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup> Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah Branch, Malaysia  
Email: hanani12@uitm.edu.my<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah Branch, Malaysia  
Email: liyana322@uitm.edu.my<sup>3</sup> Vocational Studies, Universitas Airlangga (UNAIR), Indonesia  
Email: rahmat.yuliawan@vokasi.unair.ac.id<sup>4</sup> Marketing Department, University College of MAIWP International, Malaysia  
Email: hufiza@ucmi.edu.my

\* Corresponding Author

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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The extensive usage of social media has brought immense behavioral and psychological implications, primarily on self-esteem, phubbing, and procrastination. Although there are many advantages offered by social media, including connectivity and access to information, excessive use and misuse have raised concerns about their influence on mental health and productivity. The purpose of this research is to explore the interrelatedness of self-esteem, phubbing, and procrastination and the degree to which social media usage influences these behavioral inclinations. From an extensive literature review and theoretical analysis, the research concludes some of the key causes of adverse social media consequences, such as overuse of the internet, fear of missing out (FOMO), and social comparison. The research findings indicate that addiction to social media is strongly associated with low self-esteem since people keep comparing themselves with idealized internet photos. Moreover, phubbing in the context of neglecting face-to-face interaction in favor of online interaction was discovered to negatively affect social relationships and happiness. Additionally, procrastination through social media was observed to be an increasing problem among working professionals and students, decreasing work and academic productivity. The implications of the study are theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it adds to the overall corpus of literature on the psychological and behavioral impacts of social media, extending the dialogue on social comparison theory and self-determination theory. Practically, the implications identify the necessity for awareness programs, digital wellness programs, and interventions supporting healthy

social media use. These findings can be applied by educators, policymakers, and mental health practitioners to create programs that promote healthy online habits, healthier relationships, and better productivity. Long-term effects, cross-cultural differences, and possible coping strategies to offset the negative impacts of excessive social media usage must be addressed by future studies. In this way, individuals and society can move towards a healthier and more positive online environment.

**Keywords:**

Self-Esteem, Social Media, Phubbing, Procrastination, Psychology

**Introduction**

The advent of social media has fundamentally transformed communication, social interactions, and self-perception in contemporary society. With over 4.8 billion active users globally, social media platforms serve as both a medium for connection and a source of psychological and behavioral challenges (Anjum et al., 2024). While these platforms facilitate interpersonal connectivity and self-expression, they also pose risks related to self-esteem, social disengagement, and productivity losses (Shahzad et al., 2024).

When people use social media, it is difficult to define how it helps or hinders their lives. However, positive online interactions can result in improved social belongingness and positive subjective experiences, while negative interactions lead to adverse outcomes such as low self-esteem, social loss, and procrastination (Choudhary & Louis, 2024). Such mixed effects indicate that social media has a "paradoxical impact" on the center of it (Bitar et al., 2021).

This fluidity presents considerable difficulties when investigating the interface between social media use and important psychological variables such as self-esteem, phubbing, and procrastination. Recent studies show that positive effects arise from high-quality social media engagement (Anjum et al., 2024); at the same time, negative social media use, often defined as addiction and fake self-presentation, has adverse effects on youth self-esteem (Shahzad et al., 2024). Similarly, behaviors such as phubbing negatively affect face-to-face relationships, which are fundamental for healthy interpersonal connections, as well as hinder student and employee performance through procrastination due to excessive social media use (Bitar et al., 2021).

Earlier research examined the two-sided presence of social media. According to Anjum et al. (2024) and Bitar et al. (2021), active and meaningful use increases self-esteem. On the other hand, Shahzad et al. (2024) and Choudhary & Louis (2024) declared the following negative consequences of problematic use: addiction and alteration of self-perception. Similarly, procrastination associated with social media use harms academic performance (Dang, 2024), while multitasking can either be beneficial or detrimental depending on the specific task (Almurumudhe et al., 2024).

Although there are significant advancements in this area of research, there are still some limitations regarding the interaction among self-esteem, phubbing, and procrastination while using social media. Specifically, the processes through which these factors interact with each

other, as well as the situational conditions influencing their effects, have not been fully investigated (Shahzad et al., 2024).

The specific objectives of this research are to explore the mechanistic relationship between social media usage and self-esteem, to determine the impact of social media usage on phubbing behaviors, and to further explore the influence of social media on procrastination. The aims include identifying positive and negative outcomes, moderation factors such as self-presentation and anxiety, as well as practical recommendations on appropriate social media utilization.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 1 reviews existing literature on self-esteem, phubbing, and procrastination. Section 2 explores relevant theories and outlines the study's conceptual framework. Section 3 details the research methodology, while Section 4 presents the results and discussion. Finally, Section 5 concludes the study and offers recommendations for addressing the social media paradox.

## Literature Review

### *The Social Media Paradox and Psychological Impact*

The social media dilemma is akin to a duality of engagement, where social media platforms connect people and help in their development, yet these same actions can take a toll on their mental health to some extent. Investigations show that self-esteem increases through posting genuine posts and commenting on other users' walls, friends' profiles, or groups. According to Anjum et al. (2024), high-quality communication enhances self-esteem, thus increasing feelings of belongingness. However, problematic behaviors such as excessive use and self-comparison undermine self-esteem by fostering dangerous cognitive patterns (Choudhary & Louis, 2024). Such a division, therefore, raises the question of the positive and negative effects of social media on a user's self-image.

Moreover, research suggests that the frequency and type of social media interactions play a crucial role in shaping users' psychological well-being. Positive reinforcement through likes and comments can contribute to self-worth, while negative feedback, cyberbullying, or social exclusion can have detrimental effects (Rodríguez & Pardo, 2024). Additionally, the concept of fear of missing out (FOMO) has been strongly linked to social media use, where individuals constantly compare their lives with others, leading to anxiety and dissatisfaction with their own achievements (La-Rosa-Longobardi & Gallegos-Espinoza, 2024). This suggests that while social media has the potential to create meaningful social bonds, it can also reinforce negative psychological patterns.

Furthermore, excessive engagement with social media has been associated with increased symptoms of depression and stress, especially among adolescents and young adults. Studies show that compulsive use of social networking sites can lead to sleep disturbances, decreased academic performance, and emotional exhaustion (Shahzad et al., 2024). The constant need for validation through digital interactions may create a dependency that fosters anxiety and lowers self-esteem over time. Thus, striking a balance between online and offline interactions is essential for maintaining healthy psychological well-being and mitigating the adverse effects of prolonged social media exposure.

### ***Theoretical Perspectives on Social Media Usage***

Several theories help explain the psychological and behavioral effects of social media use. The Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests that individuals assess their self-worth by comparing themselves to others. This theory is particularly relevant to social media as users constantly compare their lives to curated online personas, which can lead to either self-enhancement or self-devaluation (Choudhary & Louis, 2024). The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) explains why individuals engage with social media platforms—to fulfill psychological needs such as social interaction, entertainment, and identity-building (Anjum et al., 2024). Lastly, the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) emphasizes the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are influenced by the way users engage with social media (Bitar et al., 2021).

In addition to these foundational theories, the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) has been applied to social media usage, explaining how excessive digital engagement can overwhelm an individual's cognitive resources, leading to stress and decision fatigue (Dang, 2024). The theory suggests that the sheer volume of information encountered on social media platforms can hinder effective decision-making and contribute to procrastination, particularly among students who rely on these platforms for both academic and leisure purposes.

Furthermore, the Dual-Process Theory (Evans & Stanovich, 2013) provides insight into the impulsive versus reflective nature of social media interactions. Users often engage in impulsive browsing and content consumption (System 1 thinking), which can lead to habitual and mindless scrolling. On the other hand, reflective engagement (System 2 thinking) can foster meaningful interactions and self-improvement when users purposefully engage with educational and motivational content (Rodríguez & Pardo, 2024). Understanding this interplay is essential for designing interventions that encourage mindful social media use while reducing its harmful effects.

### ***Social Media Usage and Self-Esteem***

Social media engagement can influence self-esteem in both positive and negative ways. While authentic interactions and self-expression can improve self-esteem and social connectedness (Anjum et al., 2024), excessive comparisons and online validation-seeking behaviors may lead to a decline in self-worth (Choudhary & Louis, 2024). The digital landscape thus plays a crucial role in shaping users' self-perception and mental well-being.

Recent studies highlight that the frequency and context of social media engagement significantly impact self-esteem. Positive reinforcement from likes, shares, and supportive comments can boost confidence and reinforce a sense of belonging (Rodríguez & Pardo, 2024). Conversely, social comparison bias—where individuals measure their worth against idealized portrayals—can lead to unrealistic self-expectations and dissatisfaction. Research has shown that adolescents and young adults who engage in excessive self-comparison experience higher levels of anxiety, body dissatisfaction, and depressive symptoms (La-Rosa-Longobardi & Gallegos-Espinoza, 2024). This indicates that self-esteem fluctuations due to social media are highly context-dependent and require more nuanced analysis.

Additionally, algorithm-driven content exposure plays a crucial role in self-esteem development. Platforms that prioritize engagement often expose users to curated highlights of others' lives, reinforcing a distorted sense of reality (Shahzad et al., 2024). As a result, frequent

exposure to unattainable beauty standards, wealth, and lifestyle achievements can contribute to negative self-perception and social anxiety. Strategies to mitigate these effects include limiting social media exposure, engaging in digital detox practices, and promoting digital literacy programs to help users critically analyze the content they consume.

### ***Social Media and Phubbing Behavior***

Phubbing, or the act of paying more attention to a smartphone than to the people nearby, is an emerging concern in digital communication. There is some evidence that malicious social media presence is associated with a prevalence of phubbing and negatively impacts face-to-face communication and participants' relationships (Bitar et al., 2021). These behaviors are correlated, but not directly, with self-esteem, as limited face-to-face interactions erode social connections necessary for mental well-being. For example, parental phubbing increases depressive symptoms and decreases self-esteem among adolescents (Shahzad et al., 2024). Such findings also show that digital engagement affects personal relationships across the board.

A growing body of research indicates that phubbing negatively affects relationship satisfaction, emotional closeness, and overall social well-being. Individuals who experience phubbing report higher levels of loneliness, social exclusion, and dissatisfaction in romantic and familial relationships (Rodríguez & Pardo, 2024). Additionally, workplace productivity has been linked to phubbing behaviors, as employees who frequently check their phones during meetings and collaborative tasks exhibit lower engagement and decreased interpersonal trust (Dang, 2024). These findings suggest that the consequences of phubbing extend beyond personal relationships and impact professional environments as well.

Furthermore, phubbing has been identified as a habitual and compulsive behavior reinforced by dopamine-driven social media notifications. The intermittent reinforcement of likes, comments, and messages triggers habitual checking behavior, making it difficult for individuals to remain present in offline interactions (La-Rosa-Longobardi & Gallegos-Espinoza, 2024). Research suggests that implementing social norms, such as device-free zones or structured digital breaks, can significantly reduce phubbing behaviors and promote healthier social interactions. Additionally, mindfulness-based interventions have been found to help individuals regain control over compulsive phone use, fostering greater engagement in real-world interactions.

### ***The Impact of Social Media on Procrastination***

Another long-term effect of social media addiction is procrastination. In their study, Dang (2024) established that social media use, particularly short video consumption, further increases procrastination levels among learners. What draws users to these platforms is that the impressions they create are realized in an instant, which negates the constructive purpose of such networks and affects academic and professional achievement. Furthermore, this problem relates to increased anxiety, as guilt born by the person who procrastinates increases stress levels (Almurumudhe et al., 2024). These outcomes show that students' misuse of social media affects major subjects such as time management and mental health.

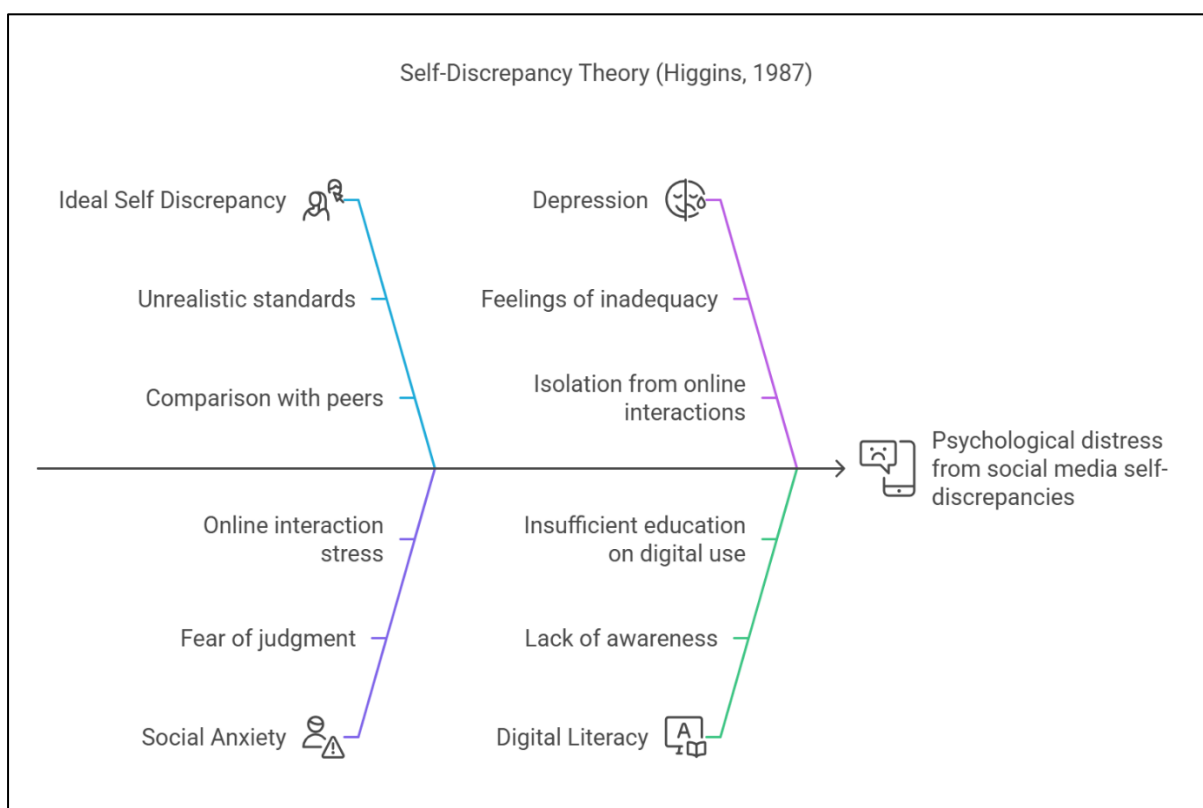
Additionally, Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel & König, 2006) explains the tendency of individuals to prioritize immediate rewards over long-term benefits, which is particularly relevant in the context of social media procrastination. The constant stream of entertainment



and social validation provides instant gratification, reinforcing habitual procrastination and delaying academic or professional tasks (Shahzad et al., 2024).

### ***Moderating Factors: Self-Presentation and Anxiety***

Several factors moderate the impact of social media usage, making both positive and negative results possible. Positive outcomes occur when individuals actively participate in meaningful online interactions, leading to enhanced self-esteem and belonging (Anjum et al., 2024). Conversely, problematic social media behaviors—such as excessive validation-seeking and fake profile creation—contribute to negative self-perceptions and harmful thought patterns (Bitar et al., 2021). Anxiety is another key moderating factor, with high-stress individuals often turning to social media during exam periods, exacerbating procrastination and emotional distress (Shahzad et al., 2024).



**Figure 1: Self-Discrepancy Theory**

Sources: Napkin AI (2025)

The figure 1 illustrates the application of Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) sheds light on the psychological distress caused by the gap between an individual's actual, ideal, and ought-to-be self as portrayed on social media. Discrepancies between one's real self and the idealized version presented online may lead to feelings of inadequacy, social anxiety, and depression (Rodríguez & Pardo, 2024). This underscores the importance of promoting digital literacy and self-awareness in social media users to mitigate its psychological burden.

### ***Summary of Past Findings***

To better illustrate previous research, Table 1 provides a summary of key findings related to social media and its effects on self-esteem, phubbing, and procrastination.

**Table 1: Key Findings Related to Social Media and Its Effects on Self-Esteem, Phubbing, and Procrastination**

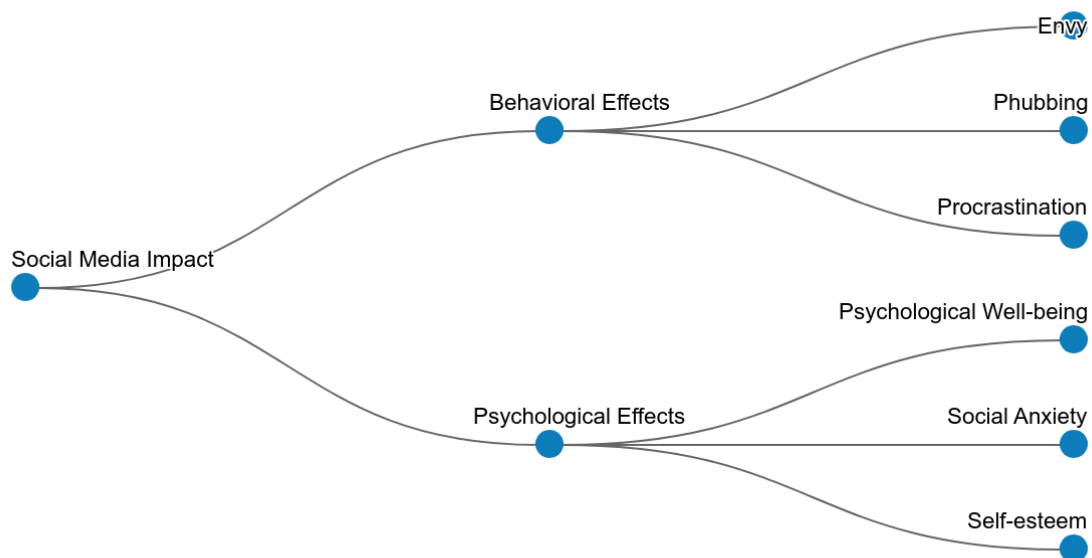
Study	Key Findings	Year
Anjum et al.	High-quality social media interactions enhance self-esteem.	2024
Choudhary & Louis	Problematic social media use leads to self-esteem issues.	2024
Bitar et al.	Parental phubbing increases depressive symptoms.	2021
Shahzad et al.	Social media addiction is linked to higher procrastination levels.	2024
Dang	Short video social media use increases academic procrastination.	2024
Almurumudhe et al.	Social media affects self-perception through self-presentation.	2024

In summary, the social media paradox illustrates a variety of outcomes depending on patterns of use. Intuitive self-approbation by active, intentional engagement enhances self-esteem and well-being, but addiction and excessive use contribute to phubbing, procrastination, and diminished efficiency. There is a need for further studies to evaluate potential usage interventions that will help reduce risks while tapping into opportunities afforded by digital technology.

The integration of theoretical frameworks and empirical findings in this review highlights the complex interactions between social media, self-esteem, phubbing, and procrastination. Understanding the moderating factors—such as self-presentation and anxiety—can aid in developing strategies for responsible and beneficial social media engagement.

### **Conceptual Map**

The conceptual map shows the vigorous consequences or effects of social media that are split into Behavioral Effects and Psychological Effects and presents the results under each heading. In the Behavioral Effects branch, social networking is associated with phubbing and procrastination, as well as envy, which refers to changes in interpersonal communication and productivity. All these behaviors demonstrate how excessive or unmanaged use of social media inhibits normal routines and interpersonal dynamics.



Powered by Scopus AI, Thu Dec 12 2024

**Figure 2: Mapping the Impact of Social Media on Behavioral and Psychological Effects**

Source: Scopus AI (2024)

Figure 2 highlights the psychological effects of social media use, including self-esteem, social anxiety, and overall psychological well-being. It illustrates the potential mental health risks, such as diminished self-worth and heightened social anxiety, alongside the possibility of positive or negative impacts depending on the intensity and manner of usage.

This visualization provides a very vivid representation of social media use, pointing to both the positive and negative outcomes of using the technology, which, in turn, calls for appropriate use to avoid the negative implications that are associated with its use.

### ***Linkages Between Social Media's Impact and Behavioral Effects***

Information on behavior, social network usage, and its impact on social media behavioral consequences, which is derived from the question regarding social media's interaction with behavioral effects, can be extracted from the abstracts of the academic articles.

**Perceived Influence and Behavioral Intentions:** Two experiments reveal that news articles with postings of social share counts boosted perceived media influence relative to oneself and others, first-person perception (FPP), and subsequently enhanced intentions to act on environmental hazards and health threats (Chung, 2018).

**Productive and Unproductive Behaviors:** Other research findings showed that through social media, workers displayed both physical and organizational work-related citizenship, as well as affirmative and negative workplaces that yielded deviance (Carlson et al., 2016).

**Content-Based Social Media Effects:** The arguments for choosing survey methods to research content-based social media effects were discussed, and a three-step procedure for examining these effects was suggested using digital trace data, automated content analysis, and linkage analysis tools (Pouwels et al., 2023).



Social Media Virality Metrics: High shares of a posting on Facebook made consumers feel the message's influence on themselves and others and showed a positive intention to change their behavior, whereas a third-person perception was only influenced when the likes were high, but the shares were low (Kim, 2018).

From the abstracts reviewed, social media affects behavioral consequences in terms of perceived media impact, behavioral inclinations, and workplace behaviors. However, the abstracts do not provide an understanding of social media's influence on other aspects of people's behavioral patterns in society. The abstracts provide insights into the behavioral effects related to certain aspects but fail to present an overall picture of the effect of social media on behavior in society.

**Table 2: Overview of Research Studies on Social Media Influence and Behavioral Outcomes**

Authors	Title	Year	Source Title	Cited By
Kim J.W.	They liked and shared: Effects of social media virality metrics on perceptions of message influence and behavioral intentions	2018	Computers in Human Behavior	96
Carlson J.; Zivnuska S.; Harris R.B.; Harris K.J.; Carlson D.S.	Social media use in the workplace: A study of dual effects	2016	Journal of Organizational and End User Computing	55
Benson V.	Handbook of Social Media in Education, Consumer Behavior and Politics: Volume 1	2023	Handbook of Social Media in Education, Consumer Behavior and Politics: Volume 1	0
Pouwels J.L.; Araujo T.; van Atteveldt W.; Bachl M.; Valkenburg P.M.	Integrating Communication Science and Computational Methods to Study Content-Based Social Media Effects	2024	Communication Methods and Measures	1
Chung M.	The message influences me more than others: How and why social media metrics affect first person perception and behavioral intentions	2019	Computers in Human Behavior	29

Source: Scopus (2024)

Table 2 presents a range of studies on social media and its impact on behavior and attitudes. Kim J.W. (2018) examined how attributes such as likes and shares affect perceived message power and behavioral intentions, providing 96 citations. Carlson et al. (2016) considered

multiple consequences of social media use at work, with 55 references. Benson (2023) contributed a book titled Handbook of Social Media in Education, Consumer Behavior, and Politics: Volume 1, which has not been cited yet. Pouwels and his team conducted a study on how communication science and computational approaches can be applied to analyze content-based social media impact, and the work was cited only once in 2024. Lastly, Chung (2019) investigated the impact of SM metrics on perceived and intended outcomes and received 29 citations.

### ***Linkages Between Social Media's Impact and Psychological Effects***

The current review clearly shows that social media usage has both positive and negative effects on psychological well-being. On the negative side, the addictive use of social media networking sites has been widely linked to increased cases of anxiety, depression, feelings of loneliness, and low self-esteem, with college students being major victims. These effects include comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), unrealistic expectations from social media platforms, and further intensification of feelings of inadequacy and loneliness (La-Rosa-Longobardi & Gallegos-Espinoza, 2024). Research also shows that social media dependency can lead to self-destructive thinking and a decrease in empathy, indicating that social media is toxic to mental health (Rawat et al., 2023).

Self-esteem is also not immune to the effects of social media usage, which are not limited to positive or negative outcomes. On the one hand, constant participation in social media activity reduces self-esteem, especially among university students, because most social media platforms involve comparison and illusionary reality. This is accompanied by a deterioration in self-esteem due to the absence of real social relationships and the appeals made with an emphasis on envy-inducing representations (Rodríguez & Pardo, 2024). However, social media provides an avenue through which people can find some sort of emotional support that will help alleviate the effects of low self-esteem. For instance, platforms enable the emancipation of one's voice as well as recognition, which has beneficial impacts on one's health and worth (La-Rosa-Longobardi & Gallegos-Espinoza, 2024).

The same positive psychological consequences of social media use are commonly manifested as social relatedness and support. These platforms can serve as a lifesaver, providing a means of finding support and a sense of comfort by knowing that someone is there for you, at least online, if real life does not provide it. Generally, the use of social media networks as a tool for community building enhances both the subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being (PWB) its participants gain from interactions with similar people in their community. In the same way, social media makes it easy to seek professional help, as well as other materials and access to treatment for depression and other psychological problems (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2020).

Such schisms are complemented by another factor, which is the importance of social media influencers. Anti-therapy is evident in social media influencers, as they report higher levels of negative affect and self-doubt for every thousand followers they have. They reflect the two main factors that dictate the activities of big brands: keeping up with the need for a friendly face to the public and constant posting. Nevertheless, representatives of the Golden Group are troubled, despite achieving states of consumer happiness and fostering interlinkage with their followers, which will minimize some of the negative implications of social media usage for them and their audiences (Azayem et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2021).

Therefore, social media has a twofold effect on general psychological health. Socially, it is an excellent way to find friends, emotional support, and even self-fulfillment; however, being empty most of the time has negative impacts on one's mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. That is why these two dimensions of the use of social networks must be stipulated, as well as developing careful approaches and usage patterns contributing to the minimization of negative impacts from the overuse of social networks (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2021). Findings that focus on the positive aspects of social media are just as important as moderating the risks to maintain a healthy relationship with social media.

**Table 3: Social Media Impact: Behavioral and Psychological Effects**

Authors	Title	Year	Source Title	Cited By
Lee J.A.; Bright L.F.; Eastin M.S.	Fear of Missing out and Consumer Happiness on Instagram: A Serial Mediation of Social Media Influencer-Related Activities	2021	Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking	24
Sadagheyani H.E.; Tatari F.	Investigating the role of social media on mental health	2021	Mental Health and Social Inclusion	53
Azayem A.K.; Nawaz F.A.; Jeyaseelan L.; Kair H.M.; Sultan M.A.	Beyond the filter: Impact of popularity on the mental health of social media influencers	2024	Digital Health	0
La-Rosa-Longobardi C.; Gallegos-Espinoza D.	The Role of Social Media in Mental Health in College Students: Impact and Intervention Strategies	2024	International Journal of Engineering Trends and Technology	0
Rawat V.; Amoli M.; Ruwari S.; Rajput S.	Impact of Social Media Apps on Public Health: An Overview with Analysis	2023	Proceedings of International Conference on Computational Intelligence and Sustainable Engineering Solution, CISES 2023	1
Rodríguez D.O.; Barranco-Pardo G.L.	The impact of social media addiction on state self-esteem; a cross-sectional study in university students from Samborondón, Ecuador; [The Impact of Social Media Addiction on State Self-Esteem: A Cross-	2024	European Public and Social Innovation Review	0

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### Sectional Study Among University Students in Samborondón, Ecuador]

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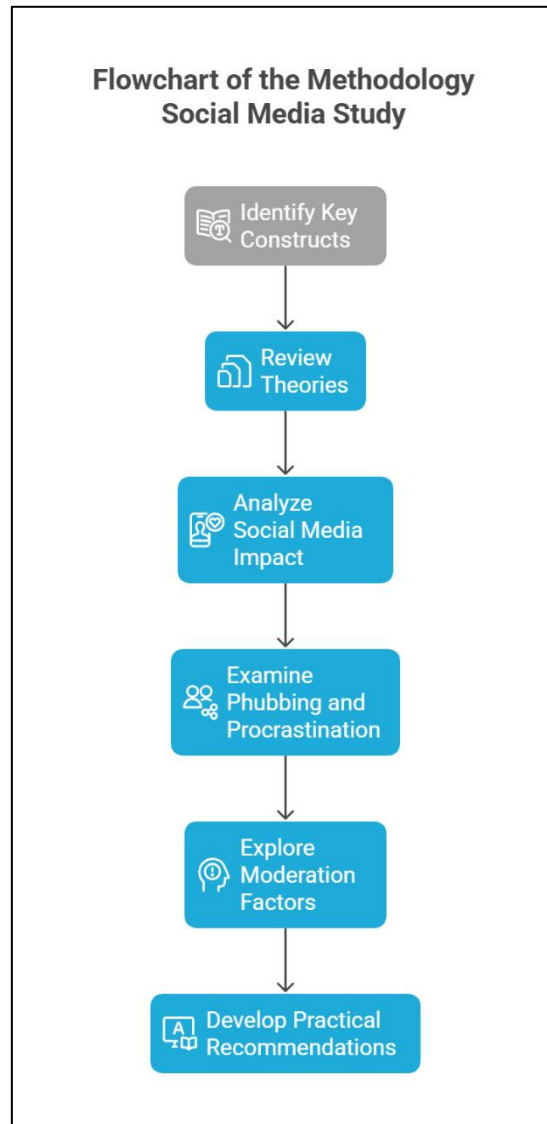
Source: Scopus (2024)

New studies reveal that social media has positive and negative effects on such aspects as mental health, esteem, and the public. Lee, Bright, and Eastin (2021) examined the impact of the fear of missing out (FOMO) on consumer happiness on Instagram, specifically on influencer-related activities. Their paper was cited 24 times in the *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* journal. Similarly, Sadagheyani and Tatari (2021) reviewed the role of social media on mental health, and the findings were published in *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*, which resulted in 53 citations. This is well illustrated by Azayem et al. in *Digital Health*, where they focused on the effects on mental health of popularity among influencers this year, but the writing is yet to gain recognition.

La-Rosa-Longobardi and Gallegos-Espinoza (2024) emphasized the mental health of college students, and they suggested the intervention methodologies in the *International Journal of Engineering Trends and Technology*, which is also unpublished and unindexed. Rawat et al. (2023) offered an understanding of the public health consequences of social media and published their work in the *Proceedings of the International Conference on Computational Intelligence and Sustainable Engineering Solutions*, which gained only one citation. Lastly, Rodríguez and Barranco-Pardo (2024) examined the moderating effect of social media addiction on state self-esteem in Ecuadorian university students for the *European Public and Social Innovation Review* but received no citations. Altogether, these papers reflect upon the social media and mental health interaction about different samples and conditions.

### Methodology

The methodology for this conceptual paper employs a rigorous approach to synthesizing existing research and theoretical frameworks, leveraging insights from peer-reviewed literature accessed via Scopus and other scholarly databases. The study's objectives are systematically addressed through a comprehensive review and analysis of prior empirical and theoretical works to explore the complex interplay between social media usage and self-esteem, the impact on phubbing behaviors, and its influence on procrastination.



**Figure 3: Flowchart of the Methodology**

Source: Napkin AI (2025)

Figure 3 shows to achieve these objectives, the methodology incorporates three primary phases. In the first phase, the identification of key constructs and theoretical underpinnings, the paper draws from established theories, including the Self-Discrepancy Theory, the Uses and Gratifications Theory, and the Social Comparison Theory, to form the foundation for examining the mechanistic relationship between social media usage and self-esteem. Relevant studies investigating the role of social media in shaping users' self-perception, including both positive aspects such as social support, and negative aspects like social comparison, are systematically reviewed and analyzed.

In the second phase, the study examines phubbing behaviors and procrastination as critical behavioral outcomes of social media use. It focuses on identifying the underlying mechanisms that contribute to these behaviors, such as the role of habitual social media engagement, fear of missing out (FOMO), and the design of digital platforms that encourage prolonged usage. High intensity of social media use is linked to increased FOMO and depressive moods, which



in turn can lead to adverse psychological well-being (Pang & Quan, 2024). Empirical studies highlighting the psychological and social consequences of phubbing and procrastination, including their impact on relationships, productivity, and mental health, are critically analyzed to uncover patterns and key influencing factors.

The third phase integrates insights from prior research to explore moderation factors, such as self-presentation and anxiety, which mediate or exacerbate the relationship between social media use and its outcomes. The study looks at self-presentation as both a source of empowerment and stress, whilst anxiety is examined as a driver of social media dependency that increases the effects of its use. Exposure to negative or antisocial content, such as cyberbullying on social media, can increase anxiety and lead to antisocial behavior. Such exposure can compound mental health measures and exacerbate stress levels (Galy & Hernandez, 2020).

The final section of the method outlines practical recommendations, synthesizing findings to propose strategies for appropriate social media utilization. This includes promoting digital literacy, encouraging mindful usage, and fostering interventions to mitigate adverse outcomes such as phubbing and procrastination while enhancing the benefits of social media for self-esteem. Adopting innovative instructional practices such as practical applications, interactive learning environments, critical thinking, and cybersecurity can help students develop digital literacy skills (Parveen, Bashir, Nazir, Zimik, & Jan, 2024).

By employing this systematic, theory-driven, and evidence-based approach, the conceptual paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamic and various relationship between social media usage and its psychological and behavioral impacts.

## Conclusion

This study highlights the complex relationship between social media usage and its psychological effects, demonstrating both positive and negative consequences. On the negative side, excessive social media consumption is associated with increased anxiety, depression, loneliness, and diminished self-esteem, particularly among college students. These effects stem from factors such as social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO), and unrealistic portrayals of life on digital platforms (La-Rosa-Longobardi & Gallegos-Espinoza, 2024; Rodríguez & Pardo, 2024). Furthermore, social media dependency has been linked to self-destructive thinking and reduced empathy, exacerbating mental health challenges (Rawat et al., 2023). On the positive side, social media fosters emotional support, enhances social connectivity, and provides access to psychological resources that can mitigate negative self-perceptions (Sadagheyani & Tatari, 2020). Thus, the dual nature of social media's impact suggests that its role in mental health is largely determined by how individuals engage with these platforms.

From a theoretical perspective, this study aligns with social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), emphasizing how social media influences users' self-perception and emotional well-being. It also supports the uses and gratifications theory (Katz et al., 1973), which explains how individuals actively use social media to fulfill social, informational, and psychological needs. Practically, the findings suggest the need for digital literacy programs that educate users on healthy social media habits. Social media platforms can also implement algorithmic changes to promote positive content and

reduce harmful exposure, while mental health professionals can integrate social media-based interventions to support individuals experiencing psychological distress.

Despite its valuable insights, this study has limitations that warrant consideration. First, the cross-sectional nature of most existing research makes it difficult to establish causal relationships between social media usage and psychological well-being. Second, self-reported data on social media engagement may introduce biases, as individuals might underreport or overreport their usage and emotional responses. Third, the diversity of social media platforms means that the effects may vary depending on platform-specific features, which were not separately examined.

For future research, longitudinal studies are necessary to determine long-term psychological impacts and causal relationships. Additionally, research should explore the role of personality traits in moderating social media effects, as some individuals may be more resilient to its negative consequences. Lastly, given the rise of emerging platforms like TikTok and AI-driven social media, future studies should examine how new technologies influence mental health and whether interventions can be tailored to mitigate adverse effects while maximizing the benefits of digital engagement.

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