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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS AMONG MODERN WOMEN

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Abstract:

Social media has become an integral aspect of modern society, profoundly influencing how individuals perceive success and navigate their professional and personal lives. This article explores the complex relationship between social media and the success of contemporary women, examining both the positive and negative impacts of social media usage on women's perceptions of success, self-esteem, and well-being. Drawing on a synthesis of existing literature, empirical research, and real-life examples, we delve into the ways in which social media platforms shape societal norms, cultural values, and individual aspirations, particularly among women. We discuss the role of social media in perpetuating unrealistic beauty standards, fostering comparison culture, and exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Conversely, we highlight the empowering potential of social media as a tool for self-promotion, networking, and community-building, enabling women to challenge stereotypes, amplify their voices, and pursue their passions. Furthermore, we propose strategies for harnessing the positive effects of social media while mitigating its negative consequences, including promoting authenticity, fostering digital literacy, and advocating for policy changes. Finally, we identify avenues for further research to deepen our understanding of the nuanced interplay between social media and women's success, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and ethical considerations in studying this complex phenomenon. By engaging in dialogue, research, and action, we can cultivate a digital landscape that empowers women to thrive, succeed, and authentically express themselves in the 21st century.

Keywords:

Social Media Influence, Women's Success, Gender Empowerment, Self-Esteem

Introduction

Throughout the last 20 years, social media platforms have risen to unprecedented heights, completely changing the worldwide landscape of communication, community development, and self-representation. These days, practically every part of everyday life is impacted by social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, which have over 5.04 billion active users globally (Kemp, 2024). Social media has become a potent force in determining what success means in this digital age. This is especially true for women, whose aspirations and experiences are becoming more and more entwined with their online persona (Tan, 2022).

Background Information On The Rise Of Social Media

The rise of social media has been a transformative phenomenon, reshaping the landscape of human interaction and communication in profound ways. Emergent from the advent of the internet, social media platforms have evolved from rudimentary networking sites to sophisticated ecosystems that facilitate a wide array of interactions, from personal connections to professional collaborations. Early platforms like Six Degrees, Friendster, and MySpace pioneered online social networking, demonstrating the internet's potential for global social connections.

Web 2.0 technologies further propelled social media's growth, ushering in user-generated content and interactive communication. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter capitalized on these advancements, introducing features such as status updates and photo sharing, transforming social media into dynamic hubs of activity. The advent of smartphones and mobile internet expanded social media's reach, allowing users to access platforms anytime, anywhere.

Visual storytelling platforms like Instagram and TikTok catered to the demand for multimedia content, further integrating social media into everyday life. Today, social media continues to diversify, with platforms like LinkedIn and YouTube offering opportunities for connection, expression, and exploration across various interests and demographics.

Statement Of The Problem

In the digital era, social media has become a dominant force shaping societal norms and individual identities, notably influencing how modern women perceive and pursue success. One primary concern is the proliferation of idealized standards propagated through curated online content. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok inundate users with meticulously crafted images and narratives that narrow success to external markers like appearance and possessions, fostering feelings of inadequacy and comparison (Nwankwo, 2023). This perpetuates a cycle of "compare and despair," undermining women's self-esteem and authentic fulfillment.

Furthermore, the pressure to maintain a flawless online persona can harm mental health (Wolfe, 2022). Seeking validation through likes and comments can lead to anxiety and depression as women internalize unrealistic standards. Social media's influence on women's perceptions of success also has broader societal implications, reinforcing traditional gender roles and marginalizing diverse voices.

It will take both proactive steps and rigorous analysis to address these issues. Encouraging digital literacy, diversity, and authenticity can counteract negative impacts while maximizing social media's empowering potential. Women may flourish genuinely in a more egalitarian digital ecosystem if we support resilience and welcome varied viewpoints.

Purpose Of The Article And Overview Of Main Points

This article seeks to explore the intricate relationship between social media and the success of modern women, with a focus on both the positive and negative implications. Through an analysis of scholarly research, anecdotal evidence, and real-life examples, we aim to elucidate how social media shapes women's perceptions of success, influences their aspirations and goals, and impacts their overall well-being. By unpacking the complexities of this phenomenon, we endeavor to provide insights that can inform strategies for navigating social media in a way that promotes genuine empowerment and fulfillment for women in the digital age.

The Role of Social Media in Shaping Perceptions of Success

Definition Of Success In The Context Of Modern Women

Conventional definitions of success frequently focus on accomplishments in the workplace, such as financial independence, career advancement (Guardian News and Media, 2015), and recognition in fields with a predominance of men. Even though these factors are still significant, contemporary women place more importance on other aspects of success. For contemporary women, success is defined by a wider range of accomplishments, such as finding personal fulfillment, striking a balance between work and personal life, and being able to follow interests and passions outside of conventional gender norms.

The concept of success is becoming more subjective and nuanced, recognizing that women have a wide range of objectives and aspirations that go beyond traditional success indicators. Relationships, family, and community involvement may be prioritized by contemporary women over career advancement, as they see success in both personal and professional domains as contingent upon achieving fulfillment in both (Zafar, 2024).

Furthermore, modern women typically define success as shattering social norms and conventional expectations, promoting gender equality, and encouraging other women to follow their dreams.

The Impact Of Social Media Platforms On The Definition Of Success

Social media platforms wield considerable influence in shaping the definition of success for modern women, often portraying an idealized version of achievement that significantly impacts perceptions and aspirations. Influencers and celebrities, with large followings across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube, frequently showcase seemingly perfect lives filled with luxurious vacations and glamorous events. This curated portrayal creates a perception that material wealth and physical beauty are essential markers of success, fostering feelings of inadequacy and envy among women (Chae, 2018).

Furthermore, social media incentivizes users to present only the most positive aspects of their lives, contributing to a distorted and unrealistic depiction of success. Filters, photo editing tools, and crafted captions enhance this illusion, fostering a sense of insecurity and dissatisfaction with one's own life. The pressure to "have it all" exacerbates feelings of guilt and self-criticism when women fall short of unrealistic expectations, fueling anxiety and undermining confidence (Guardian News and Media, 2023).

Additionally, social media's emphasis on engagement metrics such as likes and followers can distort perceptions of success, overshadowing meaningful indicators such as personal growth

and fulfillment (Altuwairiqi et al., 2019). However, social media also provides a platform for women to redefine success on their own terms by sharing authentic stories and experiences, challenging traditional notions of achievement.

In conclusion, while social media plays a central role in shaping societal norms and expectations of success, critical examination of its influence can promote a more inclusive and empowering definition of achievement that celebrates diversity and individual fulfillment.

Positive Influences of Social Media on Modern Women's Success

Access To Information, Resources, And Networking Opportunities

Social media platforms give modern women access to a wealth of information, resources, and networking opportunities that are essential for success. Women are empowered to stay informed and make informed decisions thanks to the quick dissemination of information on entrepreneurship, career development, and wellness made possible by social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Social media offers opportunities to establish connections with global industry leaders, mentors, and peers. Online communities provide support and collaboration, and platforms such as LinkedIn make it easier to access career opportunities and grow one's professional network. Through online forums, webinars, and virtual conferences, social media also makes resource sharing and collaboration easier, empowering women to overcome obstacles and accelerate their personal and professional growth.

Platforms For Self-promotion, Personal branding, And Entrepreneurship

Social media has revolutionized how modern women promote themselves, build personal brands, and pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Platforms like Instagram, Tiktok, YouTube, and e-commerce sites provide diverse opportunities for women to showcase talents, connect with audiences, and monetize skills. On Instagram, influencers like @gabbywhiten (Gabby White) and @emilyschuman (Emily Schuman) have amassed loyal followings by sharing lifestyle, fashion, and beauty content. Through strategic use of hashtags and captivating imagery, women establish themselves as authorities in their niche, attracting brand partnerships and sponsorships.

Women can create and share video content on a variety of topics on YouTube. Thanks to their distinct personas and storytelling skills, creators such as @lizakoshy (Liza Koshy) and @sophiachang (Sophia Chang) have amassed millions of followers. The monetization options of sponsored content and ad revenue make content creation a profitable venture. Sites like Shopify and Etsy give entrepreneurs easily accessible ways to market their handmade goods. By utilizing customizable storefronts and marketing tools, business owners such as @thesweetfeminist (Jasmine Cho) and @balm.labs (Alexis Smith) have established prosperous enterprises. For thought leadership and professional networking, LinkedIn is a useful resource. Women have the ability to exhibit their abilities and successes, interact with colleagues in the field, and open doors for career progression.

To sum up, social media platforms offer a plethora of opportunities for contemporary women to engage in self-promotion, personal branding, and entrepreneurship (Mađra-Sawicka et al., 2020).

Empowerment Through Visibility And Representation

Social media platforms are essential for modern women's empowerment because they provide them visibility and representation in the media and in public conversations. By giving women a strong platform to speak up, dispel myths, and share their experiences, these platforms help to create a more inclusive and diverse narrative of what it means to be a woman. Well-known individuals like @rupikaur_ (Rupi Kaur) and @badassboz (Bozoma Saint John) use social media sites like Instagram and Twitter to share their stories of empowerment, resiliency, and success, encouraging people to embrace who they are and reach their goals without boundaries. Additionally, social media amplifies the voices and experiences of marginalized communities, including women of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities. Figures like @theashleygraham (Ashley Graham) and @janetmock (Janet Mock) advocate for greater representation and visibility, challenging societal norms and promoting acceptance and inclusivity.

Social media also provides a forum for promoting structural change, gender equality, and social justice by giving a platform to marginalized voices and amplifying their messages to a wider audience (Mađra-Sawicka et al., 2020). Additionally, social media has the power to redefine success by challenging traditional notions of achievement and highlighting alternative forms of fulfillment and happiness (Olaniran & Williams, 2020). Women like @tarana.j.burke (Tarana Burke), the founder of the #MeToo movement, and @aliciagarza (Alicia Garza), a co-founder of #BlackLivesMatter, leverage social media to raise awareness about issues impacting women and marginalized communities, mobilize supporters, and drive policy reform. Influential figures like @glennondoyle (Glennon Doyle), an author and activist, and @cleowade (Cleo Wade), a poet and artist, use platforms like Instagram and Twitter to create spaces for women to come together, share stories, and uplift one another. Through affirming messages, vulnerability, and empathy, these women cultivate a sense of belonging and collective agency, empowering others to embrace their identities and advocate for change.

In summary, social media empowers modern women by giving them a voice, visibility, and a platform for advocating social change. Through storytelling, activism, and community-building efforts, women harness the power of social media to drive meaningful societal impact and create a more equitable and inclusive world.

Negative Influences of Social Media on Modern Women's Success

Unrealistic Beauty Standards And Body Image Issues

Social media perpetuates unrealistic beauty standards, leading to body image issues among modern women. Heavily filtered and edited images create a false sense of perfection, impacting women's self-esteem (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Influencers and celebrities often use photo editing tools to present flawless appearances, setting unattainable ideals. Constant exposure to these images can result in feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction. Social media comparisons to idealized representations exacerbate depressive and anxious feelings, while promoting disordered eating patterns and negative behaviors (Dias et al., 2021). Additionally, the normalization of cosmetic enhancements further reinforces these standards. It's crucial to challenge these ideals and promote a more inclusive definition of beauty to safeguard women's mental and emotional well-being. The impact of social media on the definition of success goes beyond beauty standards. It also extends to other aspects of life, such as career achievements, material possessions, and experiences.

The Pressure To Exhibit An Idealized Self-image

The pressure to present an idealized version of oneself on social media is pervasive and multifaceted, affecting women's self-perception and behaviors in various ways.

Firstly, social media platforms serve as tools for self-presentation and impression management, often leading women to carefully curate their online personas to conform to societal expectations (Hogue & Mills, 2019). This pressure to maintain a flawless image can result in feelings of inadequacy and insecurity as women compare themselves to the seemingly perfect lives depicted by others (Fardouly et al., 2015). Influencer culture and the pursuit of fame on social media further intensify this pressure, with influencers and celebrities showcasing glamorous lifestyles and achievements, creating unattainable standards of success. As a result, women may feel compelled to emulate these images in order to gain validation and approval from their peers (Hogue & Mills, 2019).

Additionally, social media platforms amplify the focus on physical appearance and beauty standards. Women are bombarded with images of perfectly filtered and edited bodies, faces, and lifestyles, which perpetuates unrealistic beauty standards. Moreover, the prevalence of filters, photo editing tools, and curated content on social media platforms has blurred the line between reality and fantasy. Women may feel pressure to enhance their appearance or stage their lives in order to meet the unrealistic standards perpetuated by social media. This constant striving for perfection can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and self-doubt as women struggle to live up to the unrealistic expectations set by the online world. This pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards on social media can lead to unhealthy behaviors and a preoccupation with appearance. Constant exposure to these idealized images on social media platforms can create a distorted perception of success, emphasizing the importance of physical appearance and material possessions.

Ultimately, the pressure to present an idealized version of oneself on social media can have detrimental effects on women's mental and emotional well-being. It's important for women to recognize the importance of authenticity and self-acceptance in the digital age, and to resist the temptation to compare themselves to others or conform to unrealistic standards. By prioritizing their mental health and embracing their true selves, women can navigate the pressures of social media with confidence and resilience.

Comparison Culture And Its Impact On Self-esteem And Mental Health

Social media comparison culture upholds unattainable ideals of happiness, success, and beauty, which negatively impacts women's mental and self-esteem (Chamsi et al., 2022). Regular exposure to carefully chosen photos and lifestyles warps reality and increases emotions of inadequacy and self-doubt. When people compare themselves to their perceived more attractive or successful peers, it can cause feelings of insecurity, envy, and low self-worth (Social Media and Mental and Physical Health, 2019). This is known as upward social comparison. Comparison culture is exacerbated by the pressure to receive online validation, which lowers self-esteem and encourages behavior that seeks validation (Guimond et al., 2007). This may intensify emotions of isolation and loneliness, exacerbating depressive and anxious symptoms.

A study of University of Pennsylvania on 2018 found that increased social media usage correlated with higher levels of depression and loneliness among young adults, attributing these findings to pervasive comparison culture. In summary, comparison culture on social media platforms profoundly affects women's self-esteem and mental health, perpetuating feelings of

inadequacy, insecurity, and isolation. It's crucial for women to recognize this harmful impact and prioritize self-care, authenticity, and healthy boundaries online to navigate social media pressures with confidence and well-being

Strategies for Harnessing the Positive Effects and Mitigating the Negative Effects

Promoting Authenticity And Diversity On Social Media

Promoting authenticity and diversity on social media involves encouraging users to share genuine and diverse representations of themselves and their experiences. This can help counteract the unrealistic beauty standards and curated images that dominate many social media platforms. For instance, initiatives like the "Body Positivity Movement" encourage individuals to embrace their unique bodies and share unfiltered images that celebrate diverse shapes, sizes, and identities. Additionally, brands and influencers can collaborate with content creators from marginalized communities to amplify underrepresented voices and promote inclusivity on social media.

Education And Awareness Campaigns

Education and awareness campaigns play a crucial role in informing users about the potential risks and benefits of social media use. These campaigns can provide users with tools and resources to navigate social media more mindfully and responsibly. For example, organizations like the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) run campaigns to raise awareness about the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem, providing individuals with strategies to challenge negative thoughts and behaviors. Similarly, schools and community organizations can incorporate digital literacy and media literacy programs to teach students critical thinking skills and promote healthy online behaviors.

Self-care Practices And Setting Boundaries

Self-care practices and setting boundaries are essential for maintaining mental and emotional well-being in the digital age. Women can prioritize self-care by taking breaks from social media, engaging in activities that promote relaxation and stress relief, and seeking support from friends, family, or mental health professionals when needed. Additionally, setting boundaries around social media use, such as limiting screen time, curating a positive and supportive social media feed, and unfollowing accounts that trigger negative feelings, can help women maintain a healthy relationship with social media while prioritizing their mental health.

Advocacy For Policy Changes Regarding Online Content Regulation

Advocating for policy changes regarding online content regulation is essential for addressing harmful content and promoting a safer online environment. This may involve advocating for stricter regulations on advertising and sponsored content, increased transparency and accountability from social media platforms, and stronger measures to combat cyberbullying and harassment. For example, organizations like the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) advocate for digital rights and privacy protections, while grassroots movements like #StopHateForProfit call for advertisers to boycott platforms that fail to address hate speech and misinformation. By lobbying policymakers and holding social media platforms accountable, women can advocate for changes that protect users' rights and promote a more positive and inclusive online community.

Conclusion

Summary Of Key Points

In summary, this paper has explored the influence of social media on perceptions of success among modern women. It discussed the impact of social media on the definition of success, including the promotion of unrealistic beauty standards, the pressure to present an idealized version of oneself, and the perpetuation of comparison culture. Additionally, it examined the positive influences of social media, such as access to information and networking opportunities, platforms for self-promotion and entrepreneurship, and empowerment through visibility and representation. Strategies for harnessing the positive effects and mitigating the negative effects of social media were also discussed, including promoting authenticity and diversity, education and awareness campaigns, self-care practices, and advocacy for policy changes regarding online content regulation.

Implications For The Future

In this paper carry important implications for the future of social media and its impact on modern women.

Firstly, there is a crucial need for increased awareness and education about the risks and benefits of social media use, particularly among vulnerable groups like young women. By empowering users with knowledge, we can help them make informed choices and mitigate negative effects.

Secondly, promoting authenticity, diversity, and inclusivity on social media platforms is essential. Content creators and brands must portray a realistic representation of women's experiences to challenge harmful stereotypes and foster acceptance of diverse identities. Furthermore, stronger regulation and oversight of social media platforms are necessary to protect users' rights and well-being. Collaboration between policymakers and tech companies can develop effective policies and guidelines for online content and user safety.

Lastly, continued research and innovation in digital psychology and mental health support are vital. Investing in evidence-based interventions can promote healthy online behaviors and provide support for those struggling with social media-related issues.

In conclusion, addressing these implications through collective action will create a more equitable and empowering digital environment for modern women to thrive.

Suggestions For Further Research

While this article has provided valuable insights into the impact of social media on modern women's perceptions of success, there are numerous avenues for further research. Future studies could investigate the lasting effects of social media use on women's mental health, self-esteem, and overall well-being, exploring how prolonged exposure to online platforms shapes individuals' psychological and emotional states. Additionally, there is a need for research examining the variability in social media usage frequency among individuals and its differential effects, as well as exploring the distinct influences of different platforms and sources on women's experiences. Furthermore, researchers could delve into the role of social media in shaping gender norms, reinforcing stereotypes, and exacerbating inequalities, while also examining its implications for women's professional and personal lives. By addressing these research gaps, we can deepen our understanding of the complex relationship between

social media and women's experiences, and inform efforts to foster a more equitable and inclusive digital environment for everyone.

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