Literature Review: The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health

Introduction:

Social media has become an integral part of contemporary society, transforming the way individuals communicate, share information, and build relationships. While the benefits of social media are evident, concerns about its impact on mental health have garnered significant attention. This literature review aims to explore and synthesize existing research on the relationship between social media usage and mental health outcomes, with a focus on various dimensions such as psychological well-being, self-esteem, and emotional health.

Psychological Well-being:

Numerous studies have investigated the connection between social media use and psychological well-being. Twenge and Campbell (2018) observed a significant increase in mental health issues among adolescents, coinciding with the rise of social media platforms. Other researchers (Primack et al., 2017; Primack & Shensa, 2020) have found correlations between higher social media engagement and symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Self-esteem and Body Image:

The impact of social media on self-esteem and body image has been a subject of growing concern. Fardouly et al. (2015) demonstrated that exposure to idealized body images on social media platforms contributes to body dissatisfaction among users. The constant comparison with curated online personas may lead to unrealistic beauty standards and negatively affect self-esteem (Perloff, 2014; Fardouly et al., 2019).

Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:

The darker side of social media is evident in the prevalence of cyberbullying and online harassment. Numerous studies (Kowalski et al., 2014; Hinduja & Patchin, 2018) have linked these online behaviors to adverse mental health outcomes, including increased stress, depression, and even suicidal ideation among victims. The anonymity afforded by social media platforms often amplifies the negative impact of such experiences.

Social Comparison and Envy:

Social media facilitates constant comparison with others, leading to the emergence of the "social comparison theory." Researchers (Vogel et al., 2014; Tandoc et al., 2015) have explored how users compare themselves to others online, resulting in feelings of envy and inadequacy. Such emotional responses have been associated with diminished mental well-being over time.