

# The Double-Edged Sword: The Impacts of Social Networking Services on Modern Life

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## Abstract

This essay explains the two-faced aspect of social networking websites (SNS), which have become a part of life but also pose severe challenges. While Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter) enable social and professional connections, they also result in mental and physical illnesses and serve as tools for criminal acts. Social media overuse has been linked with low self-esteem, addiction, and fear of missing out (FOMO), particularly in youths, resulting in increased depression and anxiety. Physiologically, SNS usage disturbs sleep, lowers physical exercise, and facilitates sedentary life, all increasing the potential for chronic illness. Furthermore, SNS websites facilitate cyberbullying, deepfake crimes, and data breaches of personal details, particularly among susceptible youth. While these sites have their uses, they have deviated from their initial purpose and now are present as threats that are very imminent. To prevent harm, users have to manage usage, guard individual data, and be mindful of SNS's dangers. This paper identifies the necessity of reaching a balanced and ethical use of social media in the modern digital age.

## Introduction

Social networking services are now part of our everyday life, and living without them is now almost impossible. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have become crucial for our social connections, enabling us to meet new people and maintain relationships with friends and family. LinkedIn has become essential in the professional environment, as a growing

number of people are looking for a job online. Lastly, SNS such as X (formerly Twitter) are now used by many media, journalists, and even governments to share news and official announcements.

However, these platforms' promises come with significant drawbacks. They have become sources or catalysts of various problems, often causing mental and physical harm.

Additionally, SNS platforms have become tools for criminal activities, diverging from their original utopian vision.

### **Mental Health, A Collateral Victim of SNS**

Excessive use of social media has been associated with a variety of adverse mental health outcomes. One of the very big issues is low self-esteem. People can compare themselves with others in their perceived 'higher' realms due to exposure to the apparently perfect life on social media. It also has the drawback of making people feel inferior if they only see the positive side of other people's lives in terms of achievement, physical appearance and richness. This, in turn, results in increased rates of depression and anxiety in the long run. Research, for example, has shown that adolescents and young people who spend significant amounts of time on platforms like Instagram and Facebook often have higher rates of depression due to the pressures of living up to the selected lives they see online.

Another essential problem is SNS addiction and fatigue. Maintaining constant flow of information, notifications, and connections with others can lead to overwhelming mental fatigue, or SNS fatigue. Many users find it difficult to relax because they have to keep updating their social media, and this leads to social addiction, which makes them feel compelled to check their accounts regularly, even if it interferes with their daily activities.

The fear of missing out (FOMO) is another psychological phenomenon exacerbated by the use of social media. FOMO means that

individuals experience anxiety because their friends and acquaintances are often depicted as enjoying themselves, going out, or achieving things in which such individuals themselves do not participate. This feeling of isolation results in pressure whereby the main focus becomes developing a worry of what certain persons are missing.

These factors—lowered self-esteem, SNS addiction, and FOMO combine to create an environment where social media usage has significant adverse effects on mental health, particularly for young people who are more vulnerable to these influences.

### **The Physical Toll of SNS**

Social media not only impacts our mental health but also our physical health. It has physical consequences on sleep, our social life, and physical activity.

As various studies have shown that social media use can lower sleep quality and patterns. Teenagers, in particular, don't get enough sleep while using social media until late at night. One of the main causes is blue light. The blue light emitted from smartphones and computer screens affects our circadian rhythms and interferes with the secretion of melatonin, the sleep hormone. As a result, people cannot fall asleep easily at night, impacting the overall quality of their sleep. Irregular sleep patterns can reduce concentration and fatigue, negatively affecting daily life and studies. In addition, social media addiction more negatively affects sleep deprivation. This is because people are strongly urged to check for

notifications and constantly consume new content, making them use their smartphone until late at night.

Teenagers are influenced by society, and its members. This is because social media allows users to have easy access to other people's positive experiences and achievements, which can increase their anxiety. Teenagers may feel that they are being left out by watching their friends have fun. To counter such detrimental consequences, users need to make efforts such as controlling their social media usage time and not looking at the screen before going to bed in order to maintain healthier sleep habits. When these changes are made, both physical and mental health can be improved.

Lastly, the increasing use of social media leads to a lack of exercise for most people. Social media makes people consume content for long periods of time, sitting on sofas or beds. These habits reduce physical activity and cause various health problems. The lack of exercise increases the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity. Numerous studies have shown that the more time they use social media, the less physical activity they have. According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 80 percent of adolescents do not get enough physical activity due to their use of social media. Second, decreasing physical activity also has an adverse effect on overall health. Regular exercise helps maintain cardiovascular health, control weight, and improve mental health. However, people who spend a lot of time on social media often run out of time to exercise, which leads to muscle

weakness and decreased bone density. Finally, the use of social media reduces the frequency of social activities. This means that as face-to-face or outdoor activities with people decrease, the opportunity to exercise naturally disappears. This is especially important for adolescents, because relationships with friends directly affect them a lot. And since relationships formed through SNS do not have a good influence, this may intensify social isolation.

In conclusion, as social media use increases, it is a serious health problem that leads to lack of exercise. Users need to make efforts, such as controlling their social media usage time and including minimal physical activity per day. If these changes are made, not only physical health but also mental health can be improved. It is important to balance social media use and physical activity well for a healthy life.

### **SNS, The New Means of Criminal Activities**

Advances in social media have helped them be abused for crimes. In particular, problems such as school violence, deepfakes, personal information leakage, and invasion of privacy are becoming more serious with the increasing use of social media. These crimes can greatly affect the younger generation and cause them mental and emotional pain.

First, school violence is getting worse through social media. The anonymity of social media makes bullying more possible, which is called "cyberbullying." According to the study, 20 to 35 percent of teenagers have experienced cyberbullying damage. The perpetrators feel more confident because they can act

anonymously, and the victims are in a difficult situation to escape from this violence. Cyberbullying can lead to severe depression, anxiety, and, in extreme cases, suicide.

Second, advances in deepfake technology are also used in crime. Deepfake is a technology that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to create fake images by manipulating the face or voice of a real person. It can be exploited to defame an individual or to spread false information. For example, more and more cases are being made of fake pornographic images by illegally using the faces of celebrities or ordinary people, and such videos can cause serious psychological pain to victims. CBS News article about South Korea's deepfake issues mentioned "A total of 387 people have been arrested this year alone for crimes related to deepfake sexual content, with 80% of them teenagers, South Korea's national Yonhap news agency reported this week, citing police data."

Lastly, personal information leakage and invasion of privacy are also big issues. This is because many users excessively share personal information on social media. It helps hackers and criminals to use it for many crimes. Personal information leakage can also be abused for crimes such as identity theft and financial fraud. Also, if SNS's platform does not take sufficient measures to protect personal information, users' privacy can be seriously violated.

Social networking services have completely changed how we live today, making it easier to

connect with friends, find jobs, and stay informed with news. However, as we have seen, these platforms also have serious downsides. The consequences on mental health—from decreased self-esteem to social media addiction—alongside physical health implications like disrupted sleep patterns and reduced physical activity, reveal the broader toll of SNS usage. Even worse, social media has become a place where criminals can harm people through cyberbullying, deepfakes, and stealing personal information. While social media is going to remain part of our lives, we need to understand these problems better to make sure everyone can use it safely.

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