

# The impact of social media and technology on mental health

The Standard (Zimbabwe) · 27 Jul 2025 · Social Commentary with Clever Marisa \*Clever Marisa (PhD) is a social scientist and public health practitioner. The views expressed here are his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of his affiliated institution or any other organisation.

In today's digital landscape, social media has become an indispensable tool for communication, transforming the way we interact, share, and access information.

This means that the digital age has revolutionised human connection, profoundly influencing our lives and mental well-being.

As social media and technology continue to evolve, they have become deeply ingrained in our daily routines, affecting our mental health in significant ways.

This profound impact underscores the importance of understanding the relationship between technology and mental health, particularly given the links between excessive technology use and increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

Therefore, maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline life is essential for overall well-being. The alarming statistics

Research reveals a disturbing correlation between social media use and increased anxiety levels in teens, with 70% feeling depressed, panicked, and helpless without their phone, and 94% reporting feelings of trouble.

This underscores technology's significant role in shaping emotional well-being.

Consequently, remote work often leads to burnout, impacting work performance and productivity, with many workers reporting mental health symptoms affecting their work.

Furthermore, excessive screen time increases depressive symptoms in teenagers, with those spending over

several hours daily on devices being 71% more likely to exhibit symptoms. Intrinsically, prioritizing digital wellness is crucial for mitigating these negative effects.

The dark side of digital connectivity Social media platforms are designed to trigger dopamine release, making disconnection challenging and fostering addiction.

This means that constant exposure to curated lives on social media fuels feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and depression.

Moreover, cyberbullying and online harassment have severe consequences, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation, with 59% of teens having experienced some type of cyberbullying, according to the Pew Research Centre.

Consequently, excessive screen time disrupts sleep patterns, contributing to fatigue, irritability, and decreased cognitive function.

In this case, individuals must prioritize digital wellness and take proactive steps to mitigate the negative effects of social media.

## Impact on youths

The impact of social media and technology on youths is particularly concerning, with excessive exposure to digital media leading to negative effects such as increased risk-taking behaviour, decreased attention span, and a distorted view of reality.

Social media facilitates engagement in unethical behaviour, including cyberbullying, online harassment, and exposure to explicit content whereas, heavy social media users are more likely to report feelings of loneliness.

Furthermore, research indicates that for every 10% rise in negative social media interactions, depression risk increases to 20%.

Gloomily, social media has also diverted the attention of youths, leading them to spend most of their time on online platforms without gaining meaningful experiences or developing productive skills, ultimately affecting their mental health and well-being.

This highlights the need for parents, educators, and policymakers to prioritize digital literacy and promote healthy social media habits among youths.

### The need for balance

In fact, maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline life is crucial for mitigating the negative effects of social media and technology.

In this case, there is need to implement effective strategies such as: setting boundaries, practicing digital detox, engaging in offline activities, monitoring usage, and seeking support.

These strategies foster resilience and promote overall well-being and individuals who prioritise digital wellness are better equipped to navigate the challenges of the digital age and maintain their mental health.

### Unique Perspectives

Social media's impact on mental health is complex, influenced by individual experiences and societal factors nonetheless, cultural and environmental factors shape how individuals interact with technology, affecting their mental health in profound ways.

Therefore, understanding these nuances is essential for developing effective strategies to promote digital wellness and recognizing the complex interplay between technology and mental health enables individuals to take proactive steps to promote their wellbeing and mitigate the negative effects of social media.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between social media, technology, and mental health is complex and multifaceted.

While technology offers numerous benefits, excessive use and digital overload have severe consequences.

Therefore, prioritising digital wellness, setting boundaries, and engaging in offline activities are crucial for maintaining mental health in the digital age.

These strategies foster overall wellbeing and mitigate the risks associated with excessive social media use.

Ultimately, a comprehensive approach that incorporates individual, social, and environmental factors is essential for navigating the challenges of the digital age and protecting mental health.